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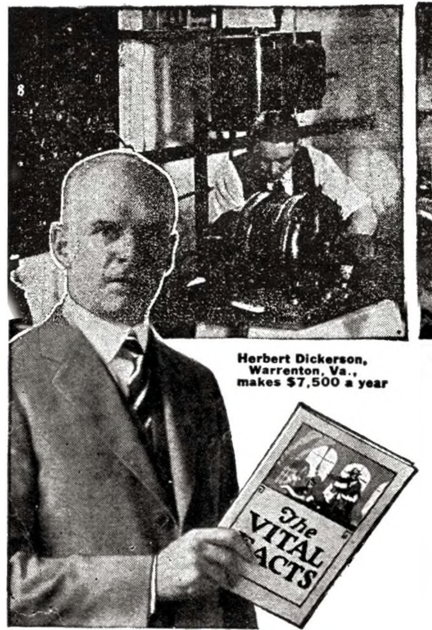

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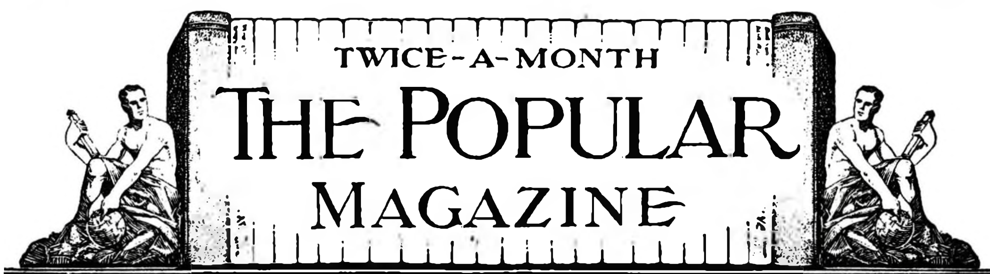

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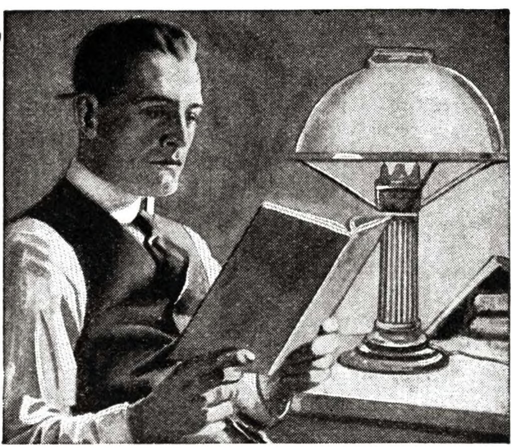

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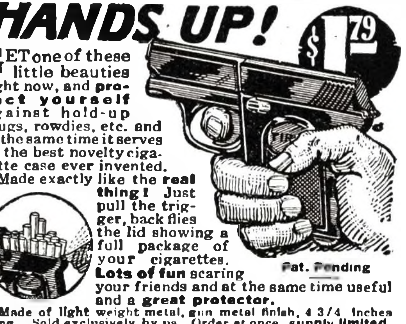

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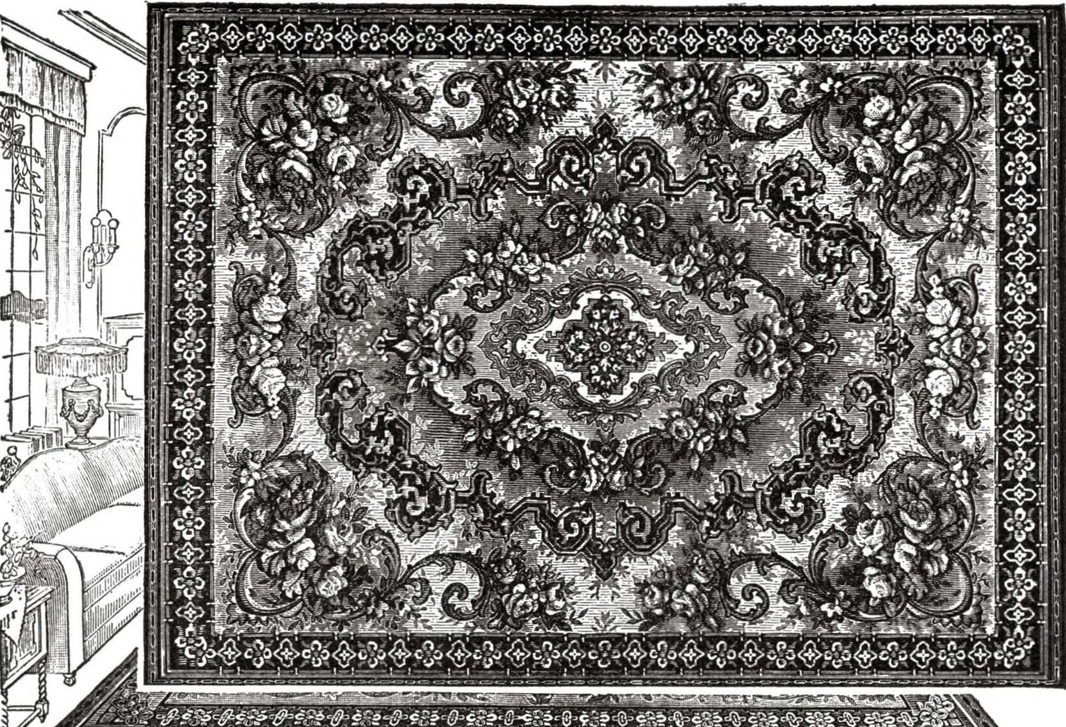

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXXII. JUNE 7, 1924. No. 4

The Glacier Gate

By Frank Lillie Pollock

Author of "Rainbow Landing," "Poison Key," Etc.

A story filled with mystery and adventure. In it the author tells of the strange pranks played by Fate, who having ruined and broken a man in a moment of malicious caprice, resurrects him by devious and violent means and leads him to even greater heights than those from which he fell.—THE EDITOR.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

DETERMINED DESTINY.

DESTINY knocked at his door, but Doctor Rupert Lang was not at home. At that very moment he was talking of his destiny to Miss Eva Morrison in the glassed gallery of the Bayview Hotel, four miles out of Mobile, where they had motored for tea.

It was not the first time they had drunk tea in this spot, and they had usually come to talk of Lang's dubious future, of what he might do with what a series of catastrophes had left him. Nervous and ill, his plans wavered. He had lately come to think of starting life afresh in a country medical practice far back up State, in the "piny woods."

"I'm not much good at general practice," he said. "Surgery is all I ever shone at. But up there they need doctors badly, men who can handle a big, rough practice, rough-and-ready surgery of all kinds——"

"You mean to bury yourself alive!" Eva interrupted indignantly.

He looked at her with sudden, nervous irritation. She had said the same thing

before. Bury himself alive? As if he didn't know it! But what else was left to him?

Nothing else seemed to be left. He would not have believed that a career could have been snuffed out so quickly. It was only a few weeks ago that his future had been all golden, a great, growing Boston reputation, even extending toward New York. He was one of the rising stars of surgery, a coming man, a magician of the knife, one of these modern gods who take men apart and reconstruct them with improvements. Still well under thirty, he enjoyed the respect, the admiration, the jealousy of men twice his age. His reputation increased; the big checks came in.

And then—a little carelessness or ill luck, an unregarded scratch on a finger that left it poisoned after an operation, and all at once he was confronted with the danger of losing his right hand. Good work had averted that; he recovered, but the poisoning left a slight stiffness of the fingers and thumb, a nervous cramp that would have meant nothing to a carpenter but was ruin to the delicate craft of a surgeon.

The bandages were not yet off his hand when the Automotive Fuel Company collapsed, following the disappearance of Arthur Rockett, its promotor, with all the liquid assets. Lang had spent the big checks freely as they came, and his sole investments, amounting to twelve thousand dollars, were in Automotive Fuel. The company had been touted as a good thing by people who should have known better, and wiser men than Lang were bitten.

For Lang the immediate result was a bad nervous breakdown. Winter was coming on. He was ordered to seek a mild climate, a moist, relaxing atmosphere, freedom from work and worry. Eva Morrison was acquainted with all this story, except the fact of his financial collapse, and she had no idea that all he possessed in the world was some fifteen hundred dollars in the Mobile bank.

"You mustn't give up. You mustn't bury yourself," she persisted.

"Why not? It's as good a life as any, maybe. I was born here in Alabama, you know—took my first diploma in Montgomery. I know the piney-woods country, the big swamps, the bayous and the great rivers, and the queer, good, primitive people. I'll drive a flivver over the sand roads, and hunt wild turkeys and never get my fees."

She saw through his affected lightness, and looked at him gravely, her chin on her hands.

"Your hand will get better. Your surgery will come back."

"Never. Perhaps in years. And what good then? A surgeon has to keep in constant practice, like a pianist."

Failing to find him at his hotel, persistent Destiny tried again, and a page summoned Lang to the telephone. He was away only a minute, and came back with an odd smile.

"A call. A patient—the owner of a yacht out in the harbor somewhere."

Eva made a delighted gesture, beaming suddenly.

"I declined, of course," he added. "I referred them to another physician. I'm not practicing in Mobile."

"But you might—you could—you're qualified!" Eva exclaimed, bitterly disappointed. "You must be mad! A yachtsman—likely a millionaire! They've heard of your reputation even here."

"But I tell you I don't want to practice in Mobile, or in any of these towns!" Lang exclaimed, again in sudden irritation. "I dare say they have heard of me. The doctors here know my name, and I don't want to face their sympathy for my comedown nor their curiosity. I had enough of that in Boston—the men who had always hated me, been jealous of me, coming with their crocodile sympathy, hoping that I'd soon be fit again, and praying that they'd seen the last of me. I'd sooner bury myself, as you say!"

He checked himself, quivering, angry and ashamed at his lack of control. Sick nerves know no reason. He looked at Eva Morrison again, wondering once more how she had come so deeply into his confidence, this girl of twenty, pretty as a picture, indeed, looking at him now with grieved brown eyes. But he had known her less than a month, and what could she understand, after all?

She had been a passenger on the steamer that he boarded at Boston for Mobile. He had not remembered her at first; he did not want to know anybody; but in inevitable companionship of shipboard she reminded him of past acquaintance. She had been a patient of his; he had treated her for some slight injury received in playing basket ball at the girls' college she attended, and he had met her afterward at somebody's house.

She had made no impression upon him, but somehow they drifted together in that

six-day voyage, more and more together as the steamer rounded Florida and the air grew warmer and they came into the Gulf seas. She had heard of his breakdown, as he gathered; but it was not spoken of between them until afterward, in Mobile.

He had a dim impression that she was to wait in Mobile for relatives from the North who were to join her there; and Lang stopped there because he did not know where else to go. He had no plans, but it was imperative to make some at once. He thought at times of becoming a ship's surgeon, then of retreating into the upriver woods and he came by degrees to talk over these plans with Eva, and so by degrees they arrived at this extraordinary pitch of intimacy.

A week passed, and her relatives did not arrive. She had established herself at the quiet Iberville Hotel, and Lang saw her almost daily, and often twice a day. They motored, boated together, went to the movies, dined out. Lang was far from being in love. Standing in the wreck of all his life he was far from thinking of love, but Eva was restful and comforting and she soothed his tortured nerves and his tormented spirit.

More than once he had been suddenly angry and rude to her, as just now, and had had to apologize.

"Sorry!" he said repentantly.

She smiled with complete comprehension.

"I only wish I could influence you a little," she said. "See, we must go. It's past five, and look at the bay."

The mellow, springlike Alabama autumn of the early afternoon had turned suddenly foul. Fine rain drove against the windows, and the broad surface of the bay beyond was blurred with squalls of wind and mist. They lingered, waiting for it to clear, and the small black page who had called Lang to the telephone came again behind his chair.

"Gentleman to see you, suh," he whispered confidentially. "Same gentleman what telephoned. Mighty important, he says, suh!"

He had evidently been scientifically tipped, for, before Lang could deny himself he perceived the persistent caller at the heels of the page. He turned with some annoyance.

"I'm sure I hope you'll excuse me, doctor, breaking in on you after what you said on the phone," said the caller hastily. "But if I could speak to you just half a minute—— My name's Carroll. I'm from the yacht, you know."

He was a good-looking young fellow, considerably less than Lang's age, brown-faced, black-haired, dressed in immaculate blue serge and fresh linen like a yachtsman; and he had a most plausible and ingratiating manner. Afterward Lang came to find the brown eyes rather hard, the smiling lips uncertain. But their smile was winning, and it was difficult to resist Carroll's address when he chose to please.

"Say what you like," said Lang. "But you know I'm not practicing here. There are plenty of good physicians in Mobile."

"Sure. Not in your class, though. We know you're not located here—just passing through—saw it in the paper, and we simply couldn't lose the chance of getting you. It looked providential. As for fee, you know —why we don't mind a hundred dollars, or anything you like to name."

"There's no question of that," said Lang stiffly. "What's the matter with your patient? I couldn't possibly operate."

"Oh, I hope it won't come to an operation. We don't know what's the matter with him. He's kind of paralyzed—some sort of stroke, I reckon. He hasn't moved nor spoken for days, and don't know anything. He's on his yacht, right out in the harbor."

Lang glanced furtively at Eva. Her eyes beamed, and she made a little surreptitious, imperative gesture: "Go—go!"

"Very well," he decided. "How do I get aboard your yacht? I must take this lady home first, of course."

"I can go alone," Eva said, eagerly; but Carroll broke in with still greater alacrity.

"My taxi is waiting down below, and I'll drive you and the lady wherever you want to go. I've got a motor launch near the foot of Government Street, and we'll be aboard the yacht in no time."

Plainly he was determined not to lose sight of his prize. Accepting his offer, they drove rapidly into town and put Eva down at her hotel, where Lang promised to come next day and report. Thence they went to Lang's own hotel, where he secured his black medical bag and a raincoat, and then to the wharf.

Carroll's boat was a small but speedy-looking craft, a trifle battered for a yacht's tender, but they got aboard, Carroll started the engine, and they nosed out past a couple

of moored freighters into the muddy bay. The weather had turned still worse, and driving sheets of mist and fine rain swept the water.

"I hope your yacht isn't far," said Lang uneasily.

"We'll be there before you have time to get wet," Carroll genially assured him.

Lang looked all about the harbor to espy the trim, white-painted craft he expected to board. The launch's engines hummed and she gathered speed, tearing down the harbor with a sheering wave thrown from her bow. It was very wet. Lang could feel the rain dripping from his hat brim, and he humped his shoulders and stared through the gathering twilight and the mist.

They were well clear of the harbor proper. A black anchored steamer loomed up, slipped past; a couple of bare-masted schooners lay still without a sign of life aboard. Nothing was in sight ahead but another big three-master lying close to the western shore. Dimly he made out the lighted windows of the Bayview Hotel, where he had sat with Eva.

He leaned over and spoke to his pilot with some irritation. Carroll muttered something cheerful about "There in a jiffy," and let her out another notch.

Lang huddled in his seat, wet, uncomfortable, growing more and more uncomfortable and indignant. He was sorry he had come. The bay widened; the shores were growing invisible, and the whole waterscape was darkening rapidly.

"Look here, where are you taking me?" he broke out at last. "You said it would be only a few minutes. I'd never have come——"

"For God's sake, shut up!" Carroll snapped back at him.

Lang subsided indignantly, unwilling to risk his dignity in altercation. Carroll suddenly sounded a siren that quavered and wailed piercingly.

Nothing answered it. Again and again the horn screamed over the turbid heave of the darkening water, and then the boat swerved in a wide curve westward.

It kept this course for more than a mile, and then began to sweep an equal curve the other way. At regular intervals Carroll blew the horn, but half an hour passed, and they had made several more great curves before a vast, hoarse roar sounded through the gloom, perhaps a mile away.

With a relieved exclamation Carroll headed the boat toward it. Nothing yet was visible, but the deep steam blast sounded again and again, always louder; and finally a spark began to show through the misty gloom ahead. It was not a ship's side light, but it developed into a lantern swinging close to the water; and suddenly there was a loom of something huge and black moving slowly through the darkness; and he saw a spot of great rusty steel hull in the glimmer of the lantern.

Some one shouted from high above. Carroll answered, slowing down, approaching a side ladder now visible by the lantern. The big ship was barely moving, and Carroll hooked on with a practiced hand. He indicated the ladder to his passenger, and Lang, though much tempted to refuse, managed to catch it as the trailing launch heaved and fell alongside.

Dripping wet, and in a state of the most extreme irritation and disgust, he scrambled up the ladder, felt himself gripped by the arm and helped over the rail, where he almost tumbled upon the deck.

A group of men in wet, shining waterproof coats surrounded him. Carroll had scrambled up at his heels. A light was turned on somewhere.

"Here we are!" Carroll cried triumphantly. "Got him. Gentlemen—Doctor Robert Long of Chicago!"

CHAPTER II.

FALSE COLORS.

LANG caught this amazing introduction, and if he had been less wet, less ruffled, less indignant, he would probably have instantly denied it. As it was, he shut his mouth, and limply shook hands with the three or four men who greeted him warmly.

He knew well the name of Doctor Robert Long, of course, and was thoroughly acquainted with that eminent Chicago specialist's success in nervous diseases. The resemblance of the name to his own had caused confusion before, and now he recollected that Doctor Long was said to be spending a vacation in the South, and might really be in Mobile.

The humor of the thing suddenly quenched his wrath. He had been half kidnaped, but he had turned the joke on his captors. Let them take what they had got, he thought. He would look at their patient,

charge them nothing, and go ashore again, recommending a good Mobile physician. He knew well that Doctor Long would never dream of accepting any such casual call.

He glanced sharply at the men before him, and up and down the steamer's dim-lit deck. Scarred planking, dirty paint, rusty metal confirmed his suspicions. Whatever this ship was, she surely was no yacht. The man they called "Captain" stood at his elbow, tall, rough-featured, mustached, dripping in his wet oilskins; another, dimly seen, showed a smooth face, owlish with large tortoise-shell glasses; Carroll stood in front, looking anxiously on. They were all waiting for him.

"Well, where's the patient?" he said sharply.

At once they were all alert to serve him. They guided him down the stairs to the saloon—a long, dingy, shabby cabin, with grimy white paint, and the usual fixed table, chairs, and a number of stateroom doors opening from either side. There was a strong odor of cigar smoke and spirits.

"The doctor's wet, Jerry. Give him a touch of something, can't you?" exclaimed Carroll, bustling to take Lang's dripping raincoat. Before Lang could decline the captain had produced a couple of bottles from a cupboard, and was pouring strong doses into a rack of glasses on the table; and in spite of the doctor's abstinence the rest of the company swallowed their drinks with alacrity.

"Better have some, doctor. It's the good stuff. We called at Havana last week," Carroll advised.

Lang again declined, and looked over the company as they drank standing by the table. Jerry, the captain, was tall and lean, with a long mouth, bad teeth, a truculent eye, and a seaman's heavy, horny hands. He with the big spectacles, Lloyd or Floyd, was a smooth-faced, neatly dressed man of over thirty, cool and contemptuous looking. Carroll looked most of a gentlemen of them all. It was an odd company, this "yachting" crew, and Lang thought ironically of Eva's hope that this might be the beginning of a wealthy practice.

One of the doors opened just then, and another man came out, whom he had not seen before. He came with silent swiftness like a cat, glancing furtively at the newcomer. He was not over twenty, lean and slouching, with a nervous hatchet face and a bad-colored skin. Lang recognized that skin tint that comes of cocaine and heroin, and he had seen that type of youth occasionally in his hospital work, generally in connection with bullet wounds. It was not a type likely to be found at sea, he thought, the youthful dope-addicted gunman and gangster; and his presence threw a point of light, perhaps, on the whole unusual company.

Nobody introduced the young man, who slipped behind the table and poured himself a drink, then lighted a cigarette. Carroll put down his glass.

"This way, doctor," he said, and reopened the door from which the young gunman had just emerged. Lang followed him in, and the others trooped after.

It was a rather large stateroom, painted white, with one berth, a rattan chair, and the usual basin, taps and stand. The port was open, letting in a cool, moist freshness; and Lang's eyes instantly fixed on the berth's occupant.

It was a big man, a man of perhaps sixty, with a great, rugged face and short, grizzled hair. His eyes were shut and sunken; he was considerably emaciated; he looked asleep. A gray blanket covered him to the chin, and one huge, inanimate arm lay outside.

The physician's instinct awoke in Lang as he bent over the cot. He touched the wrist a moment, pushed back an eyelid to look at the pupil, sniffed at the man's lips, and took out his clinical thermometer. While it rested under the patient's armpit he felt carefully over the skull in search of a possible wound.

"How long has he been like this?" he asked.

"Nearly a week now," Carroll returned.

"How did it start? What brought it on? Did he have any injury—any great shock?"

"No injury. You might call it a shock, perhaps," said Carroll. "It was ashore. He dropped like dead. We thought he *was* dead, at first. We brought him aboard, and now we've been expecting him to come to for days."

"Can you bring him to, doctor? We've got to have him brought to," put in the captain, anxiously.

"No, I can't," said Lang, crisply.

"He isn't likely to die, is he?" asked Carroll.

"Extremely so."

"Hell!" the captain exclaimed in disgust. "Can't you do something to revive him—electricity or some kind of stimulant? We'll send ashore for anything you need. We've got to wake him up, enough to talk a little anyway, before he dies. That's what we got you here for."

"You want me to rouse him violently, supposing I can. What if it cost him his life?" Lang asked quietly.

"Even at the risk of his life," said Floyd with a sort of energetic coldness.

Lang looked curiously at the speaker, who looked back unblinking.

"No physician would attempt such a thing," he said. "I want to give this man a thorough examination. The room's too full. Clear it out."

They went out obediently, and Lang sat down behind the closed door and studied the unconscious figure afresh. It was not at all his special sort of case; Long of Chicago would really have been the man, but he knew well enough how to make his diagnosis.

He tested carefully the knee jerk, the ankle clonus, all the reflexes, finding nothing out of the way; he took the pulse more carefully, listened to the breathing, and then bared the body and went over the whole surface of the skin. Several ribs had been broken within a few months, he noted, and knitted rather badly; and he discovered a large, fresh burn on the left arm, which he dressed. But these injuries could not account for this prolonged coma, and he could find no trace of others.

A tiny clot of blood on the brain surface might produce these symptoms, but only the X ray could discover it. It might be a purely nervous case, a neurasthenia, a brain shock, such as is called shell shock in war. He was doubtful; he had made no special study of these puzzling maladies.

And he wondered all at once why these men wished him to be brought to speech, even at the risk of his life.

He was aroused from his deep thought by a gust of cold wind and mist driving through the porthole. He went to close it, and saw at once that the wind must have changed—or the steamer moved. With his hand on the steel-ringed glass he paused, startled, for he could hear the thrash and beat of the propeller astern, throbbing swiftly, and he felt the vibration of the engines under his feet.

Perhaps they were heading landward, to put him ashore; but he felt a deadly certainty that it was not so. He tried the door. It was locked on the outside. He beat on the panels—louder—kicked the door and shouted. But it was fully five minutes before the door was unfastened and Carroll appeared.

"Where are we going? Are you going to land me? Let me pass!" Lang exclaimed, furiously.

"Hold on, doctor. We can't land you right now, but—— Hold on!"

Blindly angry, and half scared as well, Lang forced past him, crossed the cabin, and rushed up to the deck.

It was dark. Spray and mist drove in the air and he could see nothing overside, but from the force and freshness of the wind, and the salty smell, and the sense of space, and the great heave and fall of the ship, he knew instantly that they were no longer in Mobile Bay, but well out to sea.

He found Carroll and the captain at his elbow, and Floyd came hurrying from forward.

"You were to put me ashore at Mobile. You're heading out into the Gulf. Turn round at once and put me ashore!" Lang stormed.

"Don't get excited, doctor. You'll get ashore all right."

"You wouldn't leave a patient like this?"

"You're all right here, and we'll pay you well."

These soothing remarks only infuriated Lang the more.

"You damned kidnapers!" he spluttered, and, his excitement getting out of control, he drove a right-hand lunge at the man nearest him.

It was the captain, who dodged it neatly, laughing. Lang smashed out at Carroll, who ducked. Three pairs of hands gripped the unfortunate physician, and urged him toward the stairway again, in spite of his kicks and struggles.

"Easy, doctor. You mustn't beat up your officers," they adjured him.

They were extraordinarily patient with him, though he kicked their shins and struggled in an almost foaming rage. They piloted him down the stair, through the saloon and into a stateroom, still directing upon him a stream of the most mollifying speeches.

"We had your room all ready for you,

doctor," said Carroll, as they held him pinioned in the middle of the floor. "Here's your bag. There's pajamas laid out on the berth, and there's ice water and rum and soda water, and if you need anything more in the night, just shout for it. You'll be called for breakfast. Be calm."

They left him with a chorus of cheerful "Good nights," and he heard the door bolt click on the outside.

CHAPTER III.

ROCKETT.

LANG'S fury of wrath slowly cooled. He sat down on the berth, drank a glass of water, eventually laughed. These fellows had taken so much trouble over him, had been so patient, and all to get the wrong man. Evidently they intended to keep him on board, still hoping that he could restore their friend to life, or at any rate to speech.

He removed his wet clothes and lay down, hardly expecting to sleep. He listened to the throb of the screw, the wash of water, the occasional trampling steps overhead. He dozed fitfully, waking with a start, listening to the sea sounds, and at last found his room suddenly flooded with light.

A brilliant reflection of sunshine from the sea came through the port. He had slept after all, and more soundly than he had done for weeks, and he had a half minute of stupid bewilderment before the full memory of his predicament came back.

He rolled out of the berth, washed, dressed hastily, and was just ending his hurried toilet when some one knocked gently, then the door opened. A tall negro, clad in soiled white, appeared in the entrance and addressed Lang with tremendous suavity.

"Good mo'nin', doctah! De captain, he say yoh breakfus' served any time dat yoh desires fo' hit, doctah, suh!"

"All right!" Lang returned, and pushed past the steward into the cabin. No one was there; a white cloth was spread at one end of the table, but he made for the stairway and ran up to the deck.

A blaze of sunshine met him, and a glitter of sky and sea. The weather had cleared; the sun shone gloriously low in the east, and the ocean rippled and sparkled, frothing delicately in long, white-crowned lines. The air itself was warm, sparkling, exhilarating; it went through Lang's system like a stimulant. No land was in sight anywhere, unless a faint cloud astern meant the coast, and at first he saw no one on the deck.

Then, walking forward, he espied the youthful gangster, in a white jersey and cloth cap, a cigarette butt in his mouth, slouching over the rail. He glanced aside at the doctor, nodded furtively, and seemed to sidle off. Close to the bow Lang now perceived a couple of negro deck hands busied over something, and two men on the bridge.

He found Carroll unexpectedly at his side, but it was no longer the dandy yachtsman of the day before. Carroll now wore a faded greenish sweater, "pin-check" trousers and soiled tennis shoes, but he greeted the physician with the same extreme amiability.

"Well, are you ready to put me ashore?" Lang demanded, with an implacable air.

"Oh, come on, now, doctor!" Carroll pleaded. "Don't go back to that. Ain't you comfortable here? You wouldn't leave a sick man on our hands like that? He's desperate sick—you said it yourself."

"This is no yacht. Why did you say it was?" Lang pursued.

"Ain't it? Say, Floyd, he says the *Cavite* ain't a yacht," said Carroll, addressing the spectacled member of the crew who just then sauntered up.

"Well, what's a yacht?" Floyd returned. "The *Cavite* isn't anything else in particular, and she's got no business, and she isn't going anywhere, and what's that but a yacht?"

"No business? Nothing in wet goods?" inquired Lang.

"I don't know what you mean," returned Carroll blankly. "Had breakfast? We told the steward to call you. No? Come down and eat, then. A man shouldn't talk on an empty stomach—apt to say things he don't mean."

Lang had had no supper the previous night, and he felt very empty. It was not a breakfast to be despised, he found, when the suave steward produced it.

When he had finished he stepped into the sick room to glance at his patient. There was no change, except that they had turned the man over for greater comfort. Lang stood looking down at that massive, powerful, oblivious countenance, and went back to the saloon with his resolution fixed.

"What do you think? Is there any chance?" demanded Carroll anxiously.

"I think that you know more about this case than I do," said Lang. "I can't find any physical cause for his condition. Before I go any farther I'll have to know the history of the case—just what happened to him, how he came into this state. I want to know who this man is, and"—he hesitated, and then went on firmly—"why you are so anxious for him to speak before he dies."

Floyd blew a cloud of smoke, and glanced at the physician with a queerly mocking eye.

"I'm not surprised that you're curious," said Carroll directly. "It must look a queer mess, to an outsider. We talked it all over last night, and agreed that you'd have to be told sooner or later."

He stopped and glanced at Floyd's imperturbable face.

"You'll pledge yourself to the strictest secrecy, now and afterward?" he said.

"A physician doesn't make such pledges," said Lang stiffly. "His patients trust him, or they don't."

"Oh, we trust you, all right, doctor," Carroll hastened to say. "It's a matter of professional honor—we'll leave it at that. This man——" He hesitated again. "Did you ever hear of the Automotive Fuel Company of New Jersey?"

Lang barely repressed a startled movement.

"I have," he said calmly.

"Arthur Rockett, its president, wrecked it, and disappeared with around a quarter of a million."

"So I have heard. But what has that to do with this case?"

"Just this," said Carroll, motioning toward the stateroom door. "That man in there—that's Arthur Rockett."

Lang's brain suddenly seemed to swim slightly, yet he controlled his voice.

"Are you sure?" he said. "Rockett was supposed to have got away to South America."

"Absolutely sure," said Floyd, with his voice of cold certainty. "I've seen him often enough in New York to know him. I ought to—I had twenty thousand dollars in his cursed company."

"And I lost all I had saved up," put in Carroll eagerly. "It wasn't so much—only about seven thousand dollars. Rockett broke us all, the captain too. Jerry had to mortgage his ship."

"And your young friend in the white sweater?" Lang inquired. "Has he lost his savings too?"

Floyd smiled faintly.

"That's Louie Bonelli—'Louie the Lope,' they call him in Harlem. No, I don't think Louie ever had any savings, but he's been very useful to us, as you'll see, and he's going to share with the rest of us."

Lang leaned back, trying to look indifferent. He had never seen the fraudulent promotor, whose flight had taken all his own savings, but he had seen newspaper portraits, and he vaguely remembered an elderly man with a heavy, big-boned countenance, who might very well be this very man aboard the *Cavite.* This unconscious patient of his had a strong, audacious face, such as would have fitted the great wrecker.

"Dr. Long," said Floyd impressively, "all we want is justice. We only want to get our own back. We never expected to get a dollar out of it. It came by chance. Carroll and I were in New York. Louie was down around New Orleans, for reasons best known to himself, and he happened to spot Rockett at Pass Christian.

"All the cops were sure he'd left the country, but he hadn't. He'd grown a little beard, and browned his face and arms, and he had a bungalow and a fruit-and-truck ranch on the Gulf coast, and he dressed in overalls and really worked at his fig trees and orange grove. He must have had it all ready for months before, and it was the best sort of hide out, considering the sort of high roller he'd been up North—a spender, a prince, a man who couldn't walk but had a new car every week.

"Louie wasn't quite certain, but he sent for Carroll and me, and we came down. It was Rockett, right enough. Then we called in Jerry Harding, who was running his little freighter along the coast. We held a council. We knew Rockett had his plunder planted somewhere, and was lying low till the storm blew over a little.

"Well, what do you suppose we'd do? What would you've done yourself? Have him arrested, and take a chance of getting a dividend among the creditors—five cents on the dollar?

"We didn't see it that way. We studied his movements, his way of life. We hauled the ship close inshore one night, went up to his shack, and held him up. He lived all alone, and it was a mile to the next house.

We put it to him—what was he going to do about it? All we wanted was what we'd lost. He could keep the rest, for us.

"He was as stubborn as the devil. Can't you see it in his face? He denied that he was Rockett, denied everything. Finally he turned silent, and wouldn't speak at all. So we gave him the third degree."

"You mean you tortured him?" cried Lang, remembering the burn upon Rockett's arm.

"I wouldn't call it torture, exactly. Louie did it. We worked over him nearly all night. Maybe Louie got a little too rough at the last. We were all rather on edge. Anyhow, all at once he heaved up out of the chair where he was tied, and went over sidewise on the floor.

"He seemed to be stunned, but he didn't come to. We tried everything, but no use. It was getting daylight and we were afraid to wait any longer; so we searched the house without finding anything, and brought him on board here."

"We expected him to wake up any minute," Carroll went on, as Floyd stopped. "We watched him day and night. We knew he couldn't really be hurt. We tried an electric battery—thought he might be shamming. Then we got scared that he was going to die on us. He seemed to be getting weaker; twice we thought he'd passed out. We couldn't let him die till we found out where he'd planted the stuff. So it looked like a godsend when we heard that you were in Mobile, and read about the great work you'd done on just such cases."

"Yes, we were at our wit's end, doctor," said Floyd. "You mustn't hold a grudge against us for half kidnaping you. Really it's a compliment. And you won't lose anything. If you can help us, and get Rockett to talk, and we find out what he's done with his loot—why, you can ask for what you like, and get it."

They fixed intense eyes on the doctor. Lang shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't revive him, not at this stage anyway," he said. "I couldn't if I would, and I wouldn't try."

"But we've *got* to make him talk!" cried Carroll. "What's the chance that he'll come round?"

"About an even chance, I should think, whether he gradually improves, or gradually sinks and dies without ever regaining consciousness. Of course a moment might come when he could be revived with stimulants—you can't predict in these cases."

"But you won't desert us?" Floyd pleaded. "You'll see us through?"

Lang puffed his cigar, as if thinking about it. But he was not in any doubt. It was the most stupendous piece of luck, and Eva Morrison had been more than right when she urged him to accept this call.

Not that he believed half the story. He did not believe that any of this ship's company had ever owned Rockett's stock. They did not look like an investing class. Somehow they must have discovered Rockett's hiding place, and were trying to "hijack" him; or they might have been Rockett's own confederates, now turned against him. But however this might be, Lang was determined not to let Arthur Rockett out of his sight.

"It's an interesting sort of case," he said, with admirable detachment. "Yes, I'll stay with you till he speaks—or dies."

CHAPTER IV.

WRECK.

SO began Lang's strangest professional experience.

He got rid of his companions as soon as he could, returned to the hospital room, and studied the unconscious man with a doubled and most passionate interest. He could see no change in his condition; but he set himself to make a fresh and even more careful examination, recording temperature, blood pressure, pulse, reflex action on a sort of chart which he pinned to the wall for continual reference. When he had finished he pondered a long time, unable to make up his mind whether the state of coma was the result of some injury he had not discovered, or whether it was pure shock, neurasthenic paralysis, brought about by the strain of the "third degree." Neither theory was quite justified by the symptoms, and Lang even considered the possibility that the unconsciousness was shammed. But this was incredible; for to feign a week of complete paralysis would require a nerve control simply superhuman.

He went on deck afterward, still turning over the problem in his mind. He encountered Carroll, who took him up to the bridge, where Captain Harding kept a negligent watch, with a negro quartermaster at the wheel. Louie presently crept up the iron ladder also, looking silent and furtive as

usual, and then Floyd came with a bottle of rum and a pitcher of fresh orange juice. It appeared that the bridge was the accustomed lounging place, for within half an hour the engineer off duty appeared also—a sallow man in grimy overalls, whom Lang had not previously seen.

He stayed only a few minutes, however. The rest drank their rum and chatted openly enough now, since it was understood that Lang had thrown in his lot with them. They were all deeply disappointed that by some medical miracle Rockett could not be suddenly jerked back into consciousness. In fact, they still hoped for some such performance, and seemed to take it for granted that Rockett could be induced to part with the desired information as soon as his speech was restored. But Lang wondered. The face of the old wrecker was not that of a man easy to coerce.

"That bird's got two hundred grand planted somewheres," Louie muttered. "Leave me alone wit' him, and I'll make him talk."

And suppose Rockett talked—suppose the plunderer recovered—what would become of Rockett then? Lang had already judged his shipmates to the point of believing that a dark night at sea and a man overboard might solve the difficulty.

And his own position, for that matter, might prove difficult, in spite of all the lavish promises of the gang, when the time came for Rockett to speak or die.

But for the present he was safe enough, and the ship's company cherished him like gold. He felt in better health and spirits than for a long time. A new thrill of adventure entered into him. He had been violently wrenched away from the consideration of his own misfortunes, into a dangerous game whose stake might be anything, and his spirit had reacted to it. He thought with vivid anticipation of the tale he would have to tell Eva Morrison when he should at last present his promised report.

He lounged about the *Cavite's* decks, trying to kill time, and his mind reverted much to Miss Morrison. He missed her extraordinarily. It was wonderful how, within but a few days, she had come to be a comrade whom it was hard to lose even temporarily. Of course he was not in love with her. In the desperate condition of his affairs it was no time to think of love, much less of marriage. Hard work and hard struggle must be his program for the coming years. And then it crossed his mind that if he recovered his twelve thousand dollars he could really think of love and marriage too. It would be a very respectable starting capital for a country doctor.

But it was not a middle-aged wreck that Eva Morrison was destined to marry. He was startled at his own chain of thought, and went again to look at Rockett. The defaulter lay motionless, breathing slowly, unchanged in anything. Lang touched the grizzled head that must hold the secret of so much rascality and so much money.

"If you die, you're dead. If you wake up and talk you'll be murdered," he murmured. "Better stay just as you are, my friend."

He went back to the deck and basked in the fresh, warm sea air and the sun. It was hard to put in time on the *Cavite*. There seemed to be no books of any sort on board, but finally he discovered a pile of tattered old magazines in the cabin, and languidly turned them over in his deck chair. Every hour or so he visited his patient, without ever discovering any change. He dozed a little in the sun. Carroll and Harding seemed to spend most of the day on the bridge; Floyd disappeared into his cabin; and from time to time he caught sight of Louie prowling about the ship on affairs of his own, silent, secret, venomous.

There was a game of poker in the cabin that night, in which they all took part but Lang, leaving the steamer apparently in charge of the negro crew. Lang watched the game for some time, and went to bed late, but throughout the night he heard fitfully the mutter of voices, the rustle and click of cards and chips, the ring of glasses, and once the sound of a sudden, sharp altercation, immediately stilled.

They were a rather weary and heavy-eyed crew at breakfast. Carroll told him afterward that Floyd had won heavily, that he almost always won, that Louie was a bad-tempered loser, and that they always had to take his gun away from him when they played cards.

After breakfast Lang again visited his patient, and methodically took pulse and temperature, recording them on the chart. He looked again into the blind eyes, tested the reflexes, and found no change. He had been turned over, and that was all. Some one visited him periodically, every hour or

two, Carroll had said, in hopes of a change, and this had been kept up day and night ever since he came on board.

That day was very much a duplicate of the one before it. The ship's company left him to himself. Carroll invited him to the bridge, but he did not care for these rum gatherings, and declined, lounging in his deck chair, smoking, meditating. The company gathered for dinner and scattered again; and the *Cavite* continued to plow forward, at half speed, through ever-bluer seas where porpoises plunged looping, and flights of flying fish glittered past. They were heading nowhere. It was a real yachting cruise after all, Lang thought, complicated with medicine and something like piracy.

It turned hazy toward sunset and they ran into fog. All the same there was poker in the cabin that evening, though to Lang it seemed monstrous that the navigation of the ship should be abandoned to an ordinary sailor in such weather. It was hot and damp; the cabin reeked with whisky and tobacco smoke, and when Lang went on deck about nine o'clock he found the air close and muggy, and so dense with fog that each of the ship's lights glowed in a cottony ball of vapor.

He looked on at the card players for an hour, tried to read, went on deck again, took a last look at Rockett, and finally went to his berth, trying to believe that Jerry Harding knew his business.

The noise of the gamblers beyond the door kept him awake for some time, but he slept soundly at last. A frightful roar awakened him that seemed to shake the whole earth. It was their own siren, blowing appallingly up above; and he heard startled exclamations in the saloon, a crash of glasses upset, and a rush of feet to the deck.

The next moment another steam whistle mixed with the bellowing uproar of their own—right overhead too, it seemed—and as Lang jumped from his berth he was pitched across the stateroom by a terrific shock.

The floor tilted under him, heeling over, over, till it seemed as if the ship were capsizing. He heard a tumult of yelling that seemed over him, under, he knew not where. And then, with a terrible grinding and rending, the *Cavite* reeled back to an even keel, and he heard a cataractlike splashing of water.

Lang righted himself too, pulled on trousers and coat and rushed out and up, barefooted, to the deck. The ship's electric lights went suddenly out, flickered, and then shone again. He could still hear an uncertain throbbing of the engines.

A dark scrimmage of men surged over the deck, apparently to no purpose. The fog hung blindingly close, but perhaps a quarter of a mile away loomed and shone a vast glare of white light. It was the vessel that had run into them, her outlines invisible in the fog. He could hear her steam blowing off with a roar, and even the sound of furious shouting aboard her; but she showed nothing but the diffused glow of all her lights.

The *Cavite* was still moving ahead slowly, under her momentum now, for her engines had stopped. Lang could hear water cascading into her. It sounded as if she had been cut half in two. She was lower in the water already; and Lang suddenly remembered his patient below, likely to be drowned like a rat in his berth.

He rushed down to the cabin again. The lights were out; he slipped on spilled liquor and scattered cards, and groped into the hospital stateroom. At the door he stopped short, dizzy, as if he saw a resurrection from the dead.

Rockett was sitting up, on the edge of the berth. There was a dim glow in the room from the porthole. He was moving; he seemed to be trying to get to his feet.

The next instant it flashed upon Lang that the shock of the collison had worked the miracle, had startled the stunned nerves out of their paralysis. He rushed to the berth and seized the man around the big chest.

"Are we—going down?" he heard a thick, lifeless whisper.

"I think so," said Lang, too flurried to realize the queerness of the colloquy. "You must get on deck. Here, lean on me. Can you stand?"

"Hold on," said Rockett, in his thick mutter. "Got to—beat these pirates. Listen—you know—north of Persia——"

"Do you want to tell me where you've hidden the money? Be quick!" said Lang sharply.

"Wait. Six to—nine. Twelve o'clock. Remember—noon——"

A rush of feet outside, and Carroll plunged into the room. He checked short with an astounded cry, as Lang had done.

"By God, he's alive! He spoke. I heard him. What did he say?"

"Delirious. Raving," Lang snapped. "Here, help me get him on deck."

A sudden wild stampede of yelling men thundered across the deck overhead. There was no time for talk. Between them they gripped the big man around the body, and half dragged, half carried him across the cabin. He was enormously heavy, and seemed to sag back into paralysis again, so that it was with the utmost breathless straining that they got him up the stairs to the deck, where all hell seemed to have broken loose.

The other steamer, more distant now, had turned a searchlight on her victim, dimly illumining the *Cavite's* decks, and began to sound her roaring siren again, as in desperate signaling. Lang's first glance saw the black water. It seemed almost up to the level of his feet.

A dark scrimmage of men was surging about the motor launch that was hoisted in amidships. They hacked savagely at the tackle, with curses and shrieks, black faces and white, a shifting, squirming medley. Lang caught a glimpse of Harding hitting out. Knives flashed. A figure in a white sweater was shot out of the mob, falling on the deck. Louie raised his arm and projected two tiny red flashes, the reports drowned by the uproar.

Then the motor boat went over with a great splash, and the wave of its launching surged over the *Cavite's* deck.

"Keep out of that. This way!" Carroll was saying, dragging him toward the other side.

Here hung the other boat, seldom used, and forgotten at the moment. Letting go Rockett, Carroll strove to loosen the tackle, which seemed jammed. The *Cavite* lurched heavily forward. A surge seemed to wash clear over her.

Lang snatched a life belt and slipped it over Rockett's shoulders. He could see no other. Carroll was still wrenching desperately and swearing at the boat. Leaning heavily on his shoulder, Rockett muttered hoarsely in Lang's ear.

"I'm going under. Remember—I trust you. Go to—my house north of Persia. See six and nine—the digger—twelve o'clock. Noon. Remember—the negro digger——"

The whole deck suddenly tilted forward as the ship plunged bow first, till Rockett and Lang tumbled together down the slope into black water. Lang went under, came up; Rockett had gone. Everything was black, and in terror of being drawn down with the sinking ship he struck out desperately, blindly.

He was no great swimmer, but he made headway with sheer energy. He found himself suddenly clear of the ship. A long way behind him she towered up, standing on end, her stern rising yards into the fog, towering like a skyscraper, as she hung balanced before finally sinking. He saw the rusty hull, the screw, the rudder hanging high overhead—he took it all in with one terrified glance, and the same glance showed him a floating object a yard away, a big deck chair which he gripped.

The next minute the nightmare figure of the steamer plunged down, in a vast flood that seemed to carry him with it. He clung like death to the wooden chair frame, almost beaten out of consciousness, holding his breath, hardly realizing it at last when he found himself afloat again. A heavy swell went over him; another heaved him and dropped him; and his blurred eyes saw again the great blurred glow of the strange steamer, much more distant now, and all around him a frothing welter.

He still held the chair, but he was almost too weak to cling to it. Boats would be coming, he knew; he had only to keep afloat a few minutes more. The swell of the *Cavite's* sinking was subsiding. But his hands slipped from the chair frame; he almost went under, recovered himself with a wild clutch, almost gave up hope. Dimly he heard a shout. Something was floating within a few feet. It was an overturned boat, with a man dimly outlined astride the keel. Lang could never have reached it unaided, but somehow, he knew not how, he found himself supported, assisted, half dragged upon the rounded boat keel.

"Where's Rockett?" his rescuer shouted in his ear. It was only then that he recognized Carroll, but Lang was too exhausted to do more than shake his head feebly.

CHAPTER V.

THE DIGGER.

LATE the next afternoon they were taken into Gulfport on board a Grand Cayman schooner laden with Jamaica timber.

What had become of Rockett, or of any of the rest of the *Cavite's* crew they had not

the slightest idea. From the upturned boat the sea was a blur of fog. They must have been drifting with some current, for the far-away steamer seemed continually to grow more distant. Expecting her boats, they shouted with what faint voice they could muster; but nothing came of it. If she had sent boats they were invisible; and after nearly an hour they heard the starting of the steamer's engines, and her pale glow melted into distance.

Tropical though the latitude was, it seemed bitterly cold that night. Lang wore only a coat and trousers over his sleeping suit, and he felt numbed and stiff to the bone. He might have perished, but Carroll, who was fully dressed, had a pocket flask of rum, and pulled him periodically back to life with fiery sips. The bottom of the boat was a most awkward refuge, for they were in constant danger of slipping off; and once Lang, faint and dozing, did go into the sea, to be hauled out again by his companion.

That night seemed longer to Lang than all the rest of his life. The shore seemed a remote impossibility, but he did not know that much-frequented part of the Gulf. When the sun rose there were no less than three ships in sight, all miles away, indeed, but the sight of them was enough to put heart into him, together with the warming effect of the strong sunshine. Carroll, who had expected rescue, was not surprised; and seemed only impatient at the delay before the Grand Cayman schooner came alongside, and her crew with the kindliest solicitude took them aboard, and appropriated the *Cavite's* boat as salvage.

During that endless, freezing, hopeless night the two castaways had scarcely exchanged a dozen phrases, yet Lang's mind had continually reverted in a numb way to Rockett's last incomprehensible words. "Twelve o'clock—nine and six—the negro digger——" There was no sense in it, and yet the defaulter had evidently been trying to convey some meaning. His house—to the north of Persia—what could that have to do with Automotive Fuel? No meaning could be tortured out of it, and yet Lang's dazed mind circled round and round the insoluble problem.

But on the schooner, warmed and fed and smoking a Jamaica cigar, he conceived more hope. Rockett had said he trusted him—Heaven knew why! He had said to go "to his house," and Lang determined to go, if he could find out where that house was. Yes, and he would be there at noon, at nine and at six, and see what these mystic hours might bring.

He turned this over in his mind while, with his surface faculties, he idly discussed with Carroll the probable fate of their shipmates. They had no idea whether the motor boat had been successfully launched, or whether any one had escaped in it. As for Rockett, his fate was hardly even doubtful. Unless picked up at once he could never have survived the plunge and exposure.

"He did speak, you know," said Carroll suddenly. "I heard him say something to you. What was it?"

Lang felt no call to share his knowledge, such as it was, nor his shadowy theories.

"Clean out of his head, apparently," he replied. "He muttered about the time of day—said it was nine o'clock and six and noon at his house in the north of Persia. And something about a negro. Has he ever been in Persia?"

Carroll seemed to reflect, and observed Lang's face with a sidelong glance.

"Persia was Rockett's post office," he said at last. "It's a country store west of Gulfport and about a mile north of the coast road. He lived about two miles north of Persia. We went up the bayou in the launch on our visit; it took us within a hundred yards of his house."

"A shack and a truck farm, you said?" remarked Lang, trying to look indifferent to this priceless information.

"A little bungalow, rather neat, painted brown with green trimmings. It had an iron fence in front and two magnolia trees at the gate, and a grove of small orange trees at one side. There was a little garage with a Ford in it, too. We left it there."

"I suppose all that will be sold for the benefit of the creditors," said Lang.

"I suppose so—if they ever discover that Rockett was the truck farmer. It may be a long time before it's noticed that the house is deserted. Few people come that way, and the next house is a mile or more away."

Lang was afraid to fish for more information lest he rouse Carroll's suspicion. They continued to chat at random, of the *Cavite,* of her crew, of the failure of their whole scheme, to which Carroll now seemed entirely resigned. They sighted land about

the middle of the afternoon, and it was toward sunset when the good sea Samaritans put them ashore on the lumber wharves at Gulfport, refusing any suggestion of reward.

In fact, Lang had only fifteen dollars, which happened by luck to be in his trousers pocket, and he urgently needed to buy a shirt, collar, hat and footwear, though the sailors had given him a worn-out pair of tennis shoes. He walked with Carroll from the water front up to the main street, and there they halted.

"Well, it's all over," said Carroll. "I'm going to New Orleans. What do you do? I suppose you've lots of friends who'll be worrying about your disappearance, and medical societies and meetings waiting for you to give them speeches, Doctor Long."

Lang softened a little to that parting smile. After all, they had been through peril together, and Carroll had almost, if not quite, saved his life after the shipwreck.

"I'm not Doctor Long," he said with unpremeditated frankness.

Carroll's expression hardened. He fixed Lang with a sudden, intense stare.

"Then who the devil are you?"

Lang explained briefly, almost apologetically.

"The most curious thing," he finished, "is that I'm really one of Rockett's creditors myself. I've got twelve thousand dollars of Automotive Fuel certificates in my trunk. You can imagine how interested I was, then, when you——"

Carroll listened, and then exploded into the most uncontrollable laughter.

"Double crossed, by gad!" he ejaculated, choking. "What a—a stroke of luck! You one of Rockett's suckers! But say, it's a good thing you didn't let it out on board that I'd brought the wrong man. Louie'd have put a bullet into me."

"It made no difference, after all."

"Not a bit. Lang or Long, it's all the same, and it's all over now, and no harm done to anybody, except that we're all out the money we might have got. But mind, not a word, now! Professional secrecy, you know."

"Trust me," said Lang. "I'm not proud of the affair."

Carroll shook hands with him and went off, still laughing. Lang proceeded to make his few purchases, secured a room at a cheap hotel, where he made himself as presentable as he could, and had himself shaved. He thought of wiring to Eva Morrison, but reflected that he would surely see her the next day. He dined at the hotel, a much worse meal than he had been accustomed to aboard the *Cavite*, strolled about the street for an hour, and found himself dead weary.

He went to bed before nine o'clock, unstrung and exhausted. He would have to get up long before daylight, he knew, for he was determined to be at Rockett's bungalow, "north of Persia," from six to nine.

He needed sleep but sleep would not come. By fits and starts he dozed, waking from nightmares of the wreck and horrible suggestions of incomprehensible peril, hearing again Rockett's thick mutter in the darkness, feeling the heave of the drifting boat. Toward morning he did sleep soundly for an hour or two, awakening in terror that he had overslept, but a struck match showed him that it was hardly four o'clock by the dollar watch he had bought the evening before.

He got up wearily, feeling now that he could sleep for ever. He dressed and went downstairs, and out upon the dead and deserted streets. An all-night lunch room provided him with breakfast, and, feeling a trifle refreshed, he boarded the west-bound interurban electric car that skirts the coast between Biloxi and New Orleans.

He was the only passenger, and he dozed again in his seat, until the conductor told him where to get off for Persia. The east was turning pale as he started up the road leading inland, a sandy road in the twilight, plunging apparently into a dense forest. It turned out merely a belt of swamp bordering a deep, narrow bayou, very likely the one which Carroll's crew had ascended to reach Rockett's dwelling. Beyond it the road ascended a little, and the air grew momentarily more transparent. The wayside objects came out ghostly, then solidly, trees, scattered shacks, trim bungalows at far intervals; then in the gray light Lang perceived a wayside store, shuttered and sleeping, with two or three small houses close by.

This must be Persia, and beyond it the dwellings grew more rare. There were strips of pine woods, stretches of peach orchard, fields of last fall's cornstalks or cotton shrubs, silent and dewy in the pallid daybreak. Lang's blood quickened and his spirits rose as he tramped on through the intense freshness of the air. Incredible possibilities rose in his mind, things that he

might unearth at "six, nine and twelve o'clock," and he glanced every few minutes at his watch to make sure that he was going to be in time.

He passed a belt of tall, long-leaf pines, stately as palms, a quarter of a mile of desolate, picked cotton bushes, and then he halted, with a sudden catch of his breath.

It must be the place. There was the iron fence, the two magnolia trees at the gate, the plantation of small orange trees, and, fifty feet back from the road, a trim brown bungalow with green doors and window casings. All the blinds were drawn; it looked empty and dead. But, for that matter, so had all the houses he had passed.

Lang glanced furtively up and down the road, and stepped inside the gate. He felt uncommonly like a criminal as he skulked up the walk, and stepped on the veranda, shooting scared glances in every direction. It took all his nerve to lay hold of the doorknob. It gave; he drew a hard breath, opened the door, whipped inside, and closed it quickly after him.

He was in a small square hall, almost entirely dark, with a door dimly visible on each side. He listened; the house was dead silent. He cautiously pushed open the door at his right.

The air was heavy and rank with stale cigar smoke. All the blinds were close drawn, and the room was dim, but he knew at once that he had come to the right place.

Apparently this was the dining room, square, well furnished, but in great disorder. The round table was shoved back against a wall, and smeared with cigar ash. The rug was kicked into a heap; the sideboard's drawers stood wide open, half their contents on the floor. A paper rack, a shelf of books, had been thrown pell-mell; and the brick open hearth held a pile of wood ashes and was littered with innumerable cigar stubs.

"This must be where they questioned him—tortured him," Lang reflected, picturing that scene of ten days ago; and then beyond he saw the open door of the bedroom where they must have awakened him.

The bed was tumbled back, as Rockett must have been dragged out, with a flash light and a pistol in his face. A lamp stood on the small table, with a pipe, a pouch, a turned-down book—a work on geology, as he noticed with surprise. This room also had been ransacked, the bureau drawers emptied on the floor, the clothes closet turned out, with the contents of a trunk and a couple of suit cases in a huge, mixed heap of clothing and all sorts of miscellanies.

Beyond the dining room was the kitchen, into which he merely glanced. Returning to the hall, he opened the other door, which let him into a room containing little furniture beyond a tripod easel and a palette lying beside it, smeared with caked colors, a chair or two and a table littered with paint tubes, brushes and all the apparatus of an artist. On the walls were pinned a score or so of sketches, not clearly visible in the curtained room, but each of them bore a numbered paper label, as if in reference to a catalogue.

Lang was astonished to find that Rockett had dabbled in art, but the room contained nothing of significance. Beyond it was another bedroom, torn pell-mell like the first by the searching of the *Cavite's* crew.

They had found nothing, nor did Lang, and he did not clearly know what he had expected to find. He went back through the other side of the house, into the kitchen, and let himself out the back door to have a look at the exterior.

The air was wonderfully sweet after the foulness of the close rooms. The yard was of smooth, hard sand, running over to a row of peach trees, with a long strawberry plot beyond it, and the orange grove lay beyond. A bed of brilliant cannas grew by the house, and a driveway led toward the rear, to a small garage, empty now, with wide-open doors.

There was a shed with a quantity of gardening tools. Further back stood an unusually large wild-orange tree, with dozens of the glowing golden globes still hanging in the glossy foliage. Beyond it stood two cement posts, perhaps intended for a future gateway, each overgrown with a climbing rose vine; but the earth between them had been made into a bed of winter lettuce, just sprouting aboveground.

Lang glanced at his watch, and saw that it was five minutes to six. He darted back into the house, sat down in the dining room and waited, almost holding his breath, watch in hand.

The pointer crept slowly past the XII on the dial. Five minutes past—ten. The silence hung dead. Nothing happened. He did not see how anything could happen in this deserted house, but he sat, still waiting, though he put the watch away, till of a sudden he had a revelation.

He saw the negro digger!

It hung on the wall in front of him, over the mantel, in a brown frame. It was a vigorous, if somewhat crudely painted sketch in oils of a negro laborer, bare armed and barenecked, up to his waist in a hole in the earth. An orange tree full of fruit was over his head; on either side was a pillar thick with climbing roses. He was looking upward at the sun with a pleased grin, and the title was painted on the picture frame: "Twelve o'clock."

Time for dinner; that point was plain enough. Plain enough, too, was the scene—the cement gateposts Lang had seen behind the house. With a glimpse of the reality, he rushed into the studio room again, pulled up the curtains, and looked at the sketches numbered from six to nine. They all represented the same spot in the garden, from different angles, but without the digger.

Lang caught the hint, unmistakable now. He ran back for another look at the digger, then burst out through the kitchen into the garden. He seized a spade and pick in the tool shed, hurried to the rose-crowned posts, and began to dig between them.

The earth was soft and sandy, easy digging. He threw it out furiously, going down a couple of feet without striking anything but stones. Then he lengthened the excavation like a trench and got into it, using the pick now. He went another foot deeper, sweating and excited, and then the tool struck something hard, and slipped. He had it uncovered in another moment; it seemed black and square, and, getting the spade under it, he heaved it out.

It was a metal box, about a foot square and six inches deep, one of those sheet-steel boxes used for valuables. He heard something rattle inside it, but it was not very heavy; and it was disappointingly evident at once that it could never hold all the plunder Rockett was said to have carried away. It was locked, of course. He fumbled with it for a moment, and then, becoming conscious that he was in full view of the road, he hastened into the house to examine it.

He put it on the kitchen table, and brushed off the clinging earth. The lock did not look very elaborate, and he took out his own bunch of keys that had luckily stayed safe in his trousers pocket all through the wreck, and began to try one after another.

One of them almost fitted. He could feel the lock give, but it stuck. He was twisting it to and fro, wholly absorbed in the effort, when the front door of the house suddenly, sharply opened and shut again.

Every atom of breath seemed to leave his body. He sat benumbed with fright, as paralyzed as Rockett himself had been, unable to get up, or escape or try to conceal the box. A quick step crossed the dining room; the door opened, and Carroll stepped into the kitchen, surveying Lang smilingly and without surprise.

CHAPTER VI.

YUMA OIL.

THE blood rushed through Lang's veins again. His face, which had been cold, felt suddenly flaming.

"Just as I expected," said Carroll. "I see you've found his cache. Don't look like much, does it?"

"So you trailed me out here?" Lang found voice to say.

"Not at all. I didn't trail you. I was sure you'd be here early this morning. Of course I knew the old man passed some kind of tip to you. That was why I was so careful to tell you just how to find the house. Didn't have any trouble, did you?"

Lang had a humiliating consciousness that he had been played with, and he kept angrily silent.

"Let's have a look at it," Carroll continued, coming to the table. "Keys won't open it? Let me try."

He fumbled with the lock for half a minute and gave it up. Searching about the kitchen he found a heavy steel screw driver, and by inserting the blade at the back he was able to break a hinge. The other followed, and the lid swung open, still held by the lock.

Together they peered in eagerly. Lang had had visions of bales of yellow-backed notes, but there was nothing of the sort in sight. There were a few envelopes like old letters, a thick package of engraved documents resembling bonds, a couple of smaller packages, and several lumps of metallic-looking rock.

Lang snatched out the larger bundle. The papers were not even bonds. They were stock certificates—hundred-dollar shares in the Yuma Southwestern Oil Company, a name which he had never heard, but which

had a most worthless sound. The ten thousand dollars' worth of script was probably worth less than as many cents.

Carroll glanced briefly at the certificates, smiled, and went on examining the other parcels. One was a package of small water-color drawings, apparently by Rockett's own hand, depicting a series of rocky and forbidding coast scenes. Another packet contained photographs of much the same sort of landscapes; the third was negatives, in labeled groups, and the odd envelopes held more sketches, photographs, and a couple of rough sketch maps.

Lang was bitterly disappointed. There was no value in the whole box. He had approached burglary for no reward. Carroll looked up with a smile at his disgust.

"Oh, I don't know," he remarked. "I never expected to find much plunder planted here, anyway. Let's see that stock again. Gad! that old man always was lucky. He must have had a private tip. Bought it outright, too."

"It isn't worth anything, is it?"

"It's worth what it'll bring. It was selling at around twenty-five a few months ago, when Rockett must have picked it up. The last I heard, it was about sixty. It's a manipulated stock, fixed to skyrocket and then break, I guess."

"This block of stock may be worth six thousand dollars, then?" said Lang, with more interest.

"Can't say. It mayn't be worth anything. We must see a broker about it right away."

He crammed the sketches and photographs into his pockets, and tipped up the box. Nothing was left but the bits of rock, dark stones bearing greenish crystalline veins and nodules. Carroll looked at them with a good deal of interest, and pocketed them with the rest.

"Some sort of specimens, I suppose," he commented. "The old man was bugs on rocks, I've heard. You can keep the valuables and I'll take charge of this truck. Let's get out of here."

Lang was overjoyed to get out of there. He was in terror lest some one else should enter unawares. He had cold chills at the thought of being arrested for housebreaking, a newspaper exposure, his career doubly ruined. He tucked the stock certificates in his inside pocket, and after reconnoitering the road they slipped out and started for the Gulf coast shell road.

It was still early morning when they reached the electric car line and rode into Biloxi; and still early in the day when the railway placed them again in Mobile. Carroll was impatient to visit a brokerage office at once; he knew the cashier at Norcross & Dixon's, he said; but Lang insisted on a delay while he revisited his hotel room and changed his water-stained suit, had a shave and his shoes shined, put on a better hat, and made himself look fit for business negotiations. Afterward he congratulated himself a thousand times on this forethought.

Norcross & Dixon dealt principally in cotton and grain, and there was a flurry on the cotton exchange that day. The customers' room was crowded; prices were rushing up. Farmers, planters, smart city men, shabby hangers-on, bulls all of them, watched the blackboard and applauded wildly at every advance, and the wires to New Orleans were hot with orders.

Lang looked on while Carroll went to find the cashier he knew, and presently Carroll came back and conducted him to Mr. Dixon's office. The broker was a little dapper man, with a pointed black beard, and a dry, punctilious manner. He looked wary and nervous and tired, and he acknowledged the introduction curtly.

"How's Yuma Oil?" Carroll inquired.

"It closed yesterday at 63; opened this morning at 60½. It's now at"—he went to look at the ticker—"the last quotation was 59¾."

"We want to sell," said Carroll promptly.

"It's a lively proposition just now. I'd have to ask ten or fifteen points margin."

"Oh, we've got the certificates," Carroll returned. "Get them out, doctor."

Lang had not expected to be rushed into action so quickly. He produced the stock reluctantly.

"I don't know—what would you advise?" he hesitated.

"Oh, you've got the script," said the broker, flipping the papers over. "A hundred. If you want to sell you'd better be quick. We never advise our customers. We only give them the facts as we see them. But the bottom's dropping right out of it."

Still wavering uneasily, Lang gave the order to sell.

There was nothing then but to wait till it was executed. They lighted cigars and added to the volume of smoke that swirled through the excited room of the cotton

gamblers. The market was still going up; the excitement was crescendo. But Lang and Carroll continually returned to watch the New York stock ticker.

Yuma Oil read 59¼, then 59⅛, then 59, then up an eighth, then it broke all at once to 58¾. At what price their stock had been sold they could not tell.

But they got quick action, after all. Within half an hour Dixon announced that he had sold at 58¼. By the time they got the news, the stock had sunk to 57½. Clear of all commissions, the sale would net about five thousand eight hundred dollars.

"Good!" exclaimed Carroll. "But this is only a start. It's going lower—a lot lower. Now's our chance for a killing!"

He spoke in an intense whisper; his face was flushed. The broker came back holding the slip.

"Do you want your check, gentlemen, or are you trading again?"

"Again? That's all the stock we have," said Lang, not understanding, but Carroll broke in eagerly.

"We'll go short now. She's going lower. What margin——"

"I'll sell for you on a ten-point margin. Yes, I'll make it eight points, on this market. I'm selling myself."

Dixon's manner was perceptibly livelier. Lang protested, startled at the idea of using the money as gambling margin.

"Oh, just as you like," said the broker with impatience. "I never advise customers. I only tell 'em what I think. I think the time has come for Yuma Oil to break. The ring up North has let go. I think it's good for ten to twenty points down. I'm playing it across the board, myself."

"Don't be a fool!" insisted Carroll explosively. He chewed his cigar in one corner of his mouth and spoke with the other, feverish, hungering. "Don't you see the chance we've got? With a run of luck we'll wipe out Rockett's whole loss."

The excitement of the game was beginning to gain upon Lang himself. He made a rapid calculation.

"Eight points? We might sell—let's sell five hundred shares, then."

If they lost it there would be still nearly two thousand dollars left. Dixon snapped at the order slip and had it almost instantly on the wire. They got it executed at 57, and the stock was still falling by eighths. Then in a flurry it dropped half a point at a time, rallied a little, and broke heavily to 55, then to 54, and within fifteen minutes to 53. They were two thousand dollars ahead—on paper.

As comparatively high players now, Dixon installed them in armchairs in his private office, close to the New York ticker. His cold punctiliousness of manner broke down; he hurried from them to his cotton customers, almost excited, almost talkative, and they watched the chattering tape slowly spinning out its cabalistic figures straight from the great gambling house in lower New York.

Fifty-two and a half—51—and then it rallied strongly, and almost touched 53.

Dixon came and stood holding the tape, looking anxious. For some twenty minutes the stock held firm, up an eighth, down an eighth, and then broke half a point, and then another. The broker let out an explosive sound of relief.

"That's its last dying kick. It had me scared for a minute. But she's on the toboggan slide now, and she won't stop till she hits bottom."

Lang had held his breath while the wheel of fortune had seemed to be turning the wrong way. Triumphant excitement rushed over him again as the downward rush of the stock was resumed. Every point lower meant a win of five hundred dollars. He fixed his eyes on the printing point of the tape, impatient as other stock quotations came out, hardly hearing the racket of the cotton speculators, watching for the letters YU OIL—52—51—50½—49. They had made eight points. They had doubled their money.

Then all at once, as he watched the unrolling paper, a destructive thought came to Lang's mind. It was not his money. It belonged to the general assets of the Automotive Fuel Company. He could not take his losses out of it. It would be his duty to turn every cent in to the official receivers.

His legal share of these gambling gains would be hardly anything. The golden prospect turned blank. He forgot the game for a moment.

"Sell another thousand. We've got enough ahead to margin that much," said Carroll, poking his side.

"Sure you have. That's the stuff I like. Make it or lose it!" exclaimed Dixon.

Lang made no objection, though he had a dull sense that he ought not to risk his fellow

creditors' money. But they did not seem to be going to lose it. The order was put in at 48, and within ten minutes it was at 47½, and thence dropped by quarter points.

Lang began to forget again that it was not for himself that he was winning. The fascination of the game took hold on him. He imagined the swirl and flurry at that moment on the New York Exchange, where some manipulation must have culminated, where mighty operators had come out into the open and were devouring their prey as it ran. With their tiny speculation they were jackals on the edge of that killing.

Down it went—46—45. Dixon had sold a large block for his private account. Flushed and excited, he camped beside the ticker, ceasing to take any interest in the cotton market, chewing a dead cigarette to pieces, talking incessantly. Lang and Carroll ceased to be "gentlemen." He called them "boys," and Carroll addressed him as "Dix," and hit him furiously on the back when the stock made a half-point drop at once. With a thousand shares at stake, every point down meant a win of a thousand dollars.

Where would it stop? Where was the bottom? Forty-four—43—42½—43 again.

Lang drew himself painfully out of the pit of fascination.

"We must get out of it—cover our sales. It's rallying," he exclaimed.

"Nonsense! Don't be a quitter!" Carroll snapped.

"Don't worry," said Dixon. "It's only the rally before the closing market—people taking profits. I expected it. It'll open down to 40 to-morrow morning. Let it stand over night."

Forty-three—43⅛—43¼, then down an eighth, up a quarter, a rally, forty-four.

"Sell out!" insisted Lang.

He had a sudden amazement at what he had done, at what he had risked. Suppose they had been wiped out—how could he ever have explained the transaction?

Carroll protested wildly, drunk with winning. It was the chance of a lifetime; they stood to clear a fortune; but Lang was inflexible. Desperately anxious to close before the stock could rally further, he insisted on instant buying in, and Dixon sent the order.

While they waited, the stock swayed up and down by fractions, and their covering was not made at one point, but between 39½ and 44½. Dixon calculated the commissions, and wrote the check. It came to twelve thousand five hundred and twenty-seven dollars—just enough to cover his losses in Automotive Fuel, Lang reflected.

The sunlight and air seemed strange after those smoky, excited rooms. Lang felt slightly dizzy and drunk, and remembered that he had eaten nothing since before dawn. The bank where he had his small deposit was only a block away, and they went there at once, while he wondered uneasily as to the next development. Carroll assuredly expected the money to be divided; and, slight as his own rights in it might be, Lang was perfectly convinced that Carroll had none at all.

The check was made out to them jointly, and they both indorsed it. Lang presented it to the cashier, who knew him, and who made no difficulty. The money was counted out in hundred-dollar bills, a hundred and twenty-five of them, with the twenty-seven dollars odd.

Lang separated the five hundred and twenty-seven dollars from the rest. It did seem that they deserved as much as that by way of commission. Carroll clung to his shoulder as he moved from the wicket, his eyes on the money. Lang handed him half the share he had separated, which Carroll took, looking puzzled.

"We'd better not split it here," he murmured. "Let's go to your hotel, or somewhere."

Lang stowed the rest of the money in his inner pocket.

"Look here, Carroll!" he said, "this money isn't ours, you know. We can't split it. I'm going to turn it all in to Rockett's receivers, all but the odd sum, which perhaps we might stretch a point and hold out."

"Are you joking—or crazy?" exclaimed Carroll, looking absolutely dumfounded.

"Neither. I'm sane and serious. We can't keep this money. I'm going to put it in safe-keeping till I find out where I ought to deliver it."

Carroll's handsome face turned ugly.

"Great heavens, what a bluff to try and pull! I think I see you turning any of it in to the creditors! Want to put it in safe-keeping? I guess not. I'm not a fool. Come now, split that cash, fifty-fifty, or I'll see that—well, it'll never do you any good. Do you hear, damn it?"

He had raised his voice, his temper out

of control. Several men turned to look. A uniformed bank guard, who had been watching, moved over to them.

"Now, gentlemen!" he said.

"I want to rent a safe-deposit box," said Lang, seizing this opportunity. "Please show me the wicket."

"You can't put that across——" began Carroll furiously, then stopped and followed Lang and the porter to the vault office, where he again began to protest. The clerk looked dubiously at the two of them.

"It's trust money that I want to put away," Lang explained. "This gentleman here has some claim on it, but I've no authority to pay any of it. I'm a customer of this bank. Here's my card."

The clerk surveyed them both again—Lang immaculate in a freshly pressed suit and white linen, Carroll still in the faded sweater and shapeless trousers that he had worn through the wreck, wrinkled and stained with sea water. He looked both alarmed and threatening and evil, while Lang had assumed his utmost professional dignity of manner; and appearances carried the day, as usual.

"We can't refuse to rent boxes," said the clerk to Carroll. "It's not our business what's put into them. If you want to, you can leave your name; and you can get an order from the courts to have the box sealed and your claim adjusted. Please sign this, doctor."

Lang went back into the vault, and delayed as long as possible in stowing away the twelve thousand dollars. But when he came out Carroll was awaiting him on the steps of the bank. He had calmed his temper, but his voice was hard and menacing.

"Don't you touch any of that money, Lang," he said. "Leave it where it is. Don't think of sending it to Rockett's creditors. You don't know what you're monkeying with. I tell you, it'll fly up and hit you. You've no idea of the inside of this business yet, and don't you do anything foolish till you get your eyes open.

"I'll be at the St. Andrew Hotel," he added. "You'll see me again. Take my tip or you'll regret it all your life, Doctor Lang."

He went down the street, leaving Lang really impressed by his tone of cold earnestness. He did not blame Carroll for being bitter and disappointed. He was bitterly disappointed himself, and of course it looked plain to Carroll that he was confiscating all the profits of their common gamble.

He felt tired and irritable, and knew that he must be famished. But when he went to a restaurant he could swallow nothing solid. He managed to take a glass of hot milk, and went wearily home to his hotel room, where he called up the Iberville, and asked for Miss Morrison. It seemed the only bright spot in a disappointing world.

She was out. She had left the hotel. The clerk did not know whether she would be back. She had left town, he thought. Her address? He could not say, but any letters would be forwarded.

He hung up the receiver, in a state of weary disgust that was like prostration. Eva's relatives had called for her at last; they had taken her away. He would not see her again. He might write. But what was the use?

The whole thing was over, the farce—drama—tragedy. He had taken risks, nearly lost his life, skirted the edge of crime, all for less than nothing. He was back where he had started, *minus* several dollars, a suit of clothes, a gold watch and a medical case. Then he recollected his half of the odd five hundred and twenty-seven dollars—a gain, indeed, but it was not pleasant money. He felt disposed to give it away, to clear away the whole wretched business, which, according to Carroll, he had not yet fully plumbed.

He lay down on the bed and closed his eyes. The chatter of the stock ticker echoed in his ears—forty—forty and an eighth—forty-one——

He awoke and found the room pitchy dark. It was hardly five o'clock when he had lain down. He must have fallen into a dead slumber. He got up drowsily, switched on the light, and found to his amazement that his watch said nine o'clock.

He was still stupid with sleep, but he felt refreshed. He decided to go definitely to bed, began to undress, and removed the small articles from his pockets, as he most methodically did every night. He wound up his dollar watch, laid it on the bureau, took out his money, felt for his bunch of keys.

They were not in his trousers pocket. He must have left them in the other trousers when he changed. The crumpled, sea-stained clothes from the *Cavite's* disaster lay on a chair; but the bunch of keys was

in none of the pockets. He had had them last in Rockett's bungalow, while trying to unlock the box; and he realized with cold consternation that he must have left them there.

It was not the loss of the keys, but the fact that the key ring bore a celluloid tag with his full name and address. It would be found, sooner or later, along with the disordered house, the smashed strong box, the hole in the garden—evidence enough to convict him of burglary several times over.

He cursed himself for his carelessness. Chance seemed determined to seize every opening to ruin him. But now there was only one course—to go back to that house and recover the keys before any one else could find them.

He shrunk horribly from the thing. He would have done almost anything else rather. But there was no possible choice. Grimly he resumed the garments he had taken off, and went downstairs to consult the night clerk about trains to Biloxi.

There was none, it appeared, before five next morning. Lang could not wait. He wanted to finish with this whole episode, clear it away forever. He telephoned for a taxi, specifying a good car and a good driver, for a long-distance trip.

While he awaited it he went to the lunch counter, hungry now, and consumed coffee and thick ham sandwiches. This refreshment reanimated him; he remembered that he would need a flash light; and he brought one down with an overcoat as the car arrived.

It turned out to be a really good car, and, once out of the city and upon the good shell road they made fast time. Lang told the driver to cut loose, and he dozed periodically behind the closed curtains as the big machine roared and swayed down the coast road, past Grand Bay, Pascagoula, Biloxi, steadily through the quiet night, with the sea occasionally flashing on their left. Good luck was with him for once, for without a single breakdown and only one stop for gas and water they came to the side road that led up to Persia.

Lang was afraid to drive to Rockett's bungalow and he feigned that Persia was his destination. The car was to wait till he came back—till morning, if necessary. He got out and walked around the store in the dark to conceal his direction from the driver, and started rapidly up the road.

He was stiff and sleepy, and it was barely light enough to see the road. All the houses along the way were dark; it was well after midnight. Strangely enough, a man seems to walk faster at night than by day, and he reached Rockett's house before he expected it. There was no light; it looked dim and deserted. He had no doubt that no one had approached the place since he and Carroll had left it—only that morning, though it seemed an eternity ago.

He did not approach the front door. He knew that the keys must be in the kitchen, whose door, he was sure, was not locked. It held when he tried it, however, and then yielded suddenly with a loud crack that echoed through the empty house.

Lang paused, his heart thumping. Dead silence followed. He entered the room, turning on the flash light.

The keys were not on the table, as he had expected. They must have fallen to the floor. He stooped, crawled under the table, turning the light this way and that, growing more perturbed. He was on his knees, groping along the wall, when he half heard something like a light step. Before he could rise, a brighter flash light than his own blinded him with its blaze in his face.

For a moment he crouched there, paralyzed with the shock and the terror. He could half see the dim figure behind that white beam. He expected a threat, or a bullet, but he heard nothing except a sound like a faint moaning.

Then with the courage of despair he turned his own light on the antagonist.

Eva Morrison stood there, in a long blue dressing gown, one sleeve falling back from the arm that held the light, the other hand holding a little shiny revolver half hidden in the folds of the gown. The two light rays crossed like swords between them; the girl's face looked deathly pale, and he heard, tongue-tied himself, again that faint moaning from her lips.

"You! You!" she whispered, and the horror and amazement in her tone were echoes of Lang's own emotions.

CHAPTER VII.

ROCKETT-MORRISON.

THE flash light dropped out of Lang's hand. The girl's light shifted; he heard a quick movement, the scrape of a match, and the yellow glow of a lamp shone out. She set it on the kitchen table, and

stood gazing at him, still amazed, as if beyond speech.

"Is it possibly you, Doctor Lang?" she said unsteadily. "I found—I thought—— Oh, what does this mean? Are you insane?"

"I came back for the keys," Lang stammered. It was all he could think of to say. He tried to pull himself together, and got upon his feet. What was she doing here, for that matter, in Rockett's house?

"It's all a mistake," he tried to explain. "Rockett himself told me to come here—his last words. It wasn't for myself. The creditors' money——"

"I don't know what you mean. Creditors? Why did you come here at all?"

"Well, if it comes to that, how do you come to be here yourself?" returned Lang, driven to defense.

"Here? In my own father's house?" she exclaimed in the most genuine amazement.

Lang's brain almost turned dizzy again. The wildest suppositions flashed through it. Was Eva really Morrison, or was Rockett really Rockett? Could she be the daughter of the Automotive Fuel defaulter without knowing it?

"Oh, I want to know what it all means!" she cried distressfully. "I waited in Mobile for my father. He never came. At last I came out here, to our house. Thieves had been through it; it was turned upside down. Father's money box was in this room, burst open. I found the keys—with your name. I couldn't believe it. I thought they had been stolen from you. I can't believe yet. Why don't you speak?" she cried passionately. "Say it—it wasn't you!

"You must know something," she went on, after waiting in vain for Lang to answer. "Father had been here; his things were here; his bed had been slept in, and he's gone. Where is he?"

"I don't know," Lang groaned. He was so bewildered that he felt incapable of clear thought.

"It isn't as bad as it looks. Don't think the worst of me. I didn't ransack the house. I had authority to come here. And I have the money safe."

"I don't care about any money. It's my father!" she reiterated. "Have they murdered him?"

"I don't know!" exclaimed the surgeon in despair. "Wait—who was your father? What was he like?"

"You don't know?" She stared amazed. "Why, Edward Morrison, the explorer. Don't you know his books?"

She turned and ran into the next room, returning immediately with a large volume, and showed a portrait frontispiece. It was a book of South American travel and archæology; Lang remembered Edward Morrison's name very well now, though he had never read any of his books. But he did not think of that at the moment; for the half length of the portrait, though well clad, healthy, with open, frowning eyes and resolute countenance was beyond any doubt the figure of the haggard and unconscious patient of the *Cavite*.

"Oh, Lord!" Lang groaned, taking this in.

"You know him? You've seen him?"

"Yes—I've seen him." Lang cast about for softening phrases. "I was aboard a steamer with him, only the other day. Why," he cried, remembering, "it was the yacht, you know—that call that you urged me to accept. He was the patient I was to treat, only they didn't tell me his right name."

"My father?" said Eva, dazed. "How did he get on a yacht? But that man was very ill—paralyzed."

"Yes. Not seriously, though, as I think now. "But—but the yacht was run down two days later, in a fog. I helped get your father on deck; I tried to save him. The ship went down under us. I never saw him again. I don't know whether anybody was saved but myself and one other."

He felt the cool bluntness of his story, but he could think of no other words. Eva Morrison searched his face with wide, imploring eyes which he could not meet. She turned about slowly, and went back into the darkness of the dining room, putting out her hands as if blinded. She did not come back.

Left alone with his confusion and wretchedness, Lang waited for several minutes. He thought he heard a suppressed noise, hesitated a little longer, and then took the lamp and went after her. The devastated room had been put into order again, and Eva was huddled on a wide couch, her head buried in her arms, trembling with gasping sobs.

He spoke gently to her. She did not move, perhaps did not hear him. He stood over her uncertainly for some seconds, tortured.

"Don't sorrow so—not yet," he tried to

comfort her. "We don't know that your father is lost at all. Most likely he has been picked up, as I was. That ocean swarms with ships. I'd have plenty of hope. He may be ashore by this time."

Still she made no sign whatever of having heard, except that her convulsive sobbing subsided a little. Unbearably wrung by her suffering, Lang knelt down impulsively and put his arm over her shoulders.

"Don't grieve so, for God's sake!" he said. "I'll help you—everything I can do. Have courage! Your father can't be drowned."

She did not move from him; in fact she seemed to nestle into his protective arm. She grew quieter, presently turned her head, and sat up.

"Do you think there's any—any hope?" she stammered, looking at him helplessly.

It was no time for truth. Lang lied boldly.

"Every chance. There were boats out at once. Your father is most likely ashore now."

He had a vivid mental picture of the semiparalyzed man on that dark deck, as the *Cavite* plunged bows down. He shuddered; but Eva seemed encouraged, and spoke more collectedly.

"Oh, I hope it may be so!" she said. "I won't give up. yet. Couldn't I telegraph to all the places where he might have come ashore?

"But—but," she faltered, shaky again, "to think that I hadn't seen him at all for nearly a year! Father and I were always such friends and comrades. My mother died years ago. We two were everything—just all each other had. I let him keep me up North at college when I should have been with him. But he was away on his expeditions so much. He built this house for us to live in; we made plans for our life here. And he was just beginning to get credit for the great work he'd done—for all his exploration in South America—and now, to have it cut off—it leaves all the world empty. But it can't be! He can't be drowned!"

"Of course not!" Lang cried. "Nobody could have missed being picked up on that sea. Why, it's almost like a crowded street, with ships. We'll telegraph to all the ports, as you said. Good idea! I think you'd better go back to Mobile with me. I've got a car down the road. You can't stay alone here."

"I'm not afraid. I've been here alone before," said Eva. "But," she went on, "I don't understand yet how you came to be here. And then, what was my father doing on board that yacht? It all seems a puzzle."

"It's more than a puzzle."

Anything to distract her mind now, and he plunged into an account of his adventures on board the *Cavite*. He had to tread warily. He suppressed the fact that her father had been tortured, that he was unconscious and paralyzed; he represented that Morrison had been obstinately keeping silence. And when he came to the man's last incoherent instructions, Eva interrupted, anxiously.

"He wanted you to find something important. He must have meant you to pass it to me. What did you find?"

"It was that steel dispatch box; it had some stock certificates—nothing else but a bundle of drawings and photographs. We sold the stock. I didn't understand, of course. I thought it was for the Rockett creditors. We were lucky enough to catch it just at its high point and we—well, we speculated on it a little. Eventually we got out with over twelve thousand dollars. It's all in the bank at Mobile. It's all yours, of course. I'll have it transferred to you to-morrow."

What luck, he thought, that he had neither split it with Carroll nor turned it in to the courts! Eva was reflecting gravely.

"That was the money for his next expedition. It's more than he often had. His expeditions generally cost far more than they brought in. He's just come back from southern Chile, you know. He was going again this season, and he was going to take me with him, as far as Valparaiso, anyway."

"Well, the money is here all waiting for him," Lang returned.

"And the photographs and sketches you spoke of—have you them safely too?"

"No, I believe Carroll still has them," he admitted. "I've not thought of them since. But I'll get them back for you. Do you suppose that gang imagined that your father had large quantities of valuables hidden? Surely they didn't take all that trouble for his little block of oil stock! Why should they have carried him off against his will? Or, did they? What were they trying to get out of him? Have you any idea?"

Eva seemed to reflect long, and then shook her head silently.

"Is it possible that they really thought he was Rockett?" Lang surmised, thinking hard; and in the ensuing silence the little clock on the mantel tinkled three times.

"Three o'clock!" he exclaimed. "Too late to talk of all this any longer. You can't stay here alone. I've a car waiting, and I'll take you back to town with me. Get your things together."

"No, I'll stay here, at least till to-morrow night. If father should be found word will probably be sent here. I'm not in the least afraid, and you were the only burglar, after all."

Lang tried hard to persuade her, but she insisted. He gave up at last. After all, the night was nearly over.

"You'll be back at the Iberville in Mobile to-morrow without fail, though," he said. "If you're not I'll be out here to bring you. To-morrow I'm sure we'll have good news."

He did not feel equal to any more argument or encouragement. Eva jumped up and came after him as he turned to go, holding something in her hand.

"I'm so glad you did come—even as a burglar," she said, with a faint smile. "You've been very kind and cheering, and —here are your keys."

Lang groped down to the gate in the twilight, and looked back at the lighted window blind. He could not quite make up his mind to leave the girl alone with her grief, nor could he venture to go back. He lingered about the gate, and finally sat down on the ground, with his back against a tree.

The light in the house presently went out. Eva had gone to bed—probably not to sleep. Lang felt an extraordinary tenderness and pity for the girl. She was brave; she had come out boldly with her flash light and revolver when she heard him in the house. Her father was almost surely drowned. He would have to help her through the coming bad days, as she had helped him through his own.

He half dozed, wondering why the *Cavite's* crew had wanted to make her father talk. He would see Carroll and get the truth out of him—get the photographs, too. He dozed again, awoke and dozed, till the pale dawn caught him asleep.

He got up, cramped and very cold. Morrison's house was dim and dead in the dawn. He started down the road, shivering, sleepy, half starved and irritable.

He found his taxi at Persia, the driver asleep on the cushions. The long drive back to Mobile was too much to contemplate. He told the man to drive to the nearest hotel, and dozed off in the car.

He awoke among streets, trees, houses. He did not know where he was, nor care. A greasy all-night lunch counter met his eye, where he swallowed rolls and hot milk. They told him that there was a hotel in the next block. He never learned its name, but he woke up the night clerk and secured a room. He felt incapable of thought; the Morrison-Rockett imbroglio in its last development was too much for him. He tore off his clothes in a sort of fury of perplexity and fatigue and tumbled between the sheets, where he fell instantly into a deathlike sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

GREEN STONES.

HE slept right through the morning, dimly heard noon whistles blowing, and slept again. About two o'clock he awoke, rising out of a deep pit of utter unconsciousness, with a vague feeling of awful and momentous things impending, unrealizable.

Then his mind dropped into gear. As in a flash of moving pictures he saw the last crowded hours—the sinking steamer upheaving in the water, the night on the cold Gulf, his housebreaking, the excitement of the stock gamble, and, strangest of all, his midnight encounter with Eva Morrison and the amazing revelations.

He felt rested; the stiffness had been slept out of him. He jumped out of bed, having no idea where he was. Peeping through the window blind he saw an asphalted street in the sun, moving automobiles, palms and giant cacti, and he found himself ravenous for food.

When he went downstairs he learned that he was at the Hotel Royal in Pass Christian. It was too late for lunch, but he went out, found a restaurant, and ate two meals in one. Refreshed and walking in the sunlight, he came back to a sense of reality, after the phantasmagoria of unlikely happenings.

That meeting in the lonely bungalow last night seemed now half incredible. But it was real, and half horrible and half poignantly sweet. Mystery still involved it, and suffering was bound to come after it. Morrison was dead, and his daughter would have to be helped, comforted, looked after. She had said that she had no one in the world

but her father. Well, she would have now what he could do. He could help her with money, at any rate; and he blessed the luck now that had led him to play for the fall in Yuma Oil, and even felt softened toward Carroll for having urged it.

Carroll would have to surrender those photographs, those mementos of the dead. And explanations were due from him also, in plenty. Lang was eager to get back to Mobile at once. He wanted to be there before Eva should return; but the first train was at three forty-five. It was a fast train, but it went all too slow for his impatience; however, when he arrived at the Mobile depot and telephoned the Iberville Hotel he was told that Miss Morrison had not yet returned.

He left a message for her, requesting her to call him up as soon as she came in; and went up to his own hotel where, he reflected, he was paying twenty dollars weekly for a room which had lately been of very little value to him.

At the desk the clerk told him that a gentleman had been twice inquiring for him that day; in fact, the gentleman was perhaps somewhere about the lobby at that moment. Lang looked. Only one man was likely to be seeking him there, and he was not surprised to sight Carroll seated beside a pillar at some distance, at a strategic point to observe the desk.

Lang went to him at once. The young adventurer had a new suit of clothes, and looked very different from the shipwrecked mariner of the day before. He had lost, or controlled, his resentment too, for he rose and gave the physician an affable greeting. Lang did not wish to quarrel, and he accepted it on the same terms.

"I wanted to see you," he said immediately. "Those things in the iron box—photos and such—I think you have them. I want you to give them to me."

"Not quite, doctor," Carroll returned, blandly. "You put it over me once, but I have a safe-deposit box of my own now."

"It isn't for myself. I promised Miss Morrison that I'd get them for her. They were her father's, of course."

Carroll took it without blinking.

"Miss Morrison?" he said, questioningly.

"His daughter. Why," he added, "you've seen her. She was the lady who was with me at the Bayview Hotel, when you came to call me to your 'yacht.' "

At this Carroll did look startled.

"You say that was Morrison's daughter? Great heavens! The devil's in this whole thing, Lang!"

"That's what I think. And now, come out with it! Why did you give me that faked tale about Rockett? What did you want Morrison to tell you before he died? What was his secret? Were you after his Yuma Oil?"

"Oh, I'll tell you, all right," said Carroll. "I meant to, anyway. We can't talk here, though." He looked vaguely about the noisy hotel lobby.

Lang led him up to his room.

"What has that girl told you?" Carroll asked cautiously.

"Enough for me to check what you say. I've got to have the truth this time, Carroll. You've lied to the limit, so far. Suppose I put the whole matter into the hands of the police?"

"Oh, you couldn't do that. You're implicated almost as deep as any of us, you know. Besides," he added, without boastfulness, "the bulls have found me hard to catch before now. But I'll hand you the straight goods. I knew I must. There's only us two left in it now, and we've got to come to an understanding."

"We've got a long way to go. Proceed," said the doctor.

"Well, of course we handed you a ghost story when you came on the *Cavite*. But we had to tell you something. And then you let us go on thinking you were Long, so that squares that.

"It all came through Floyd. He was in South America; he had some kind of job up in the copper mines, and got fired. He was on the beach at some Chilean port when he met up with Morrison. The old professor was out on an expedition; I expect you know he was an eminent exploring guy and book writer. Morrison wanted another white man with him who knew something about prospecting, and he made a deal with Floyd to go with him, on a fifty-fifty basis of any mineral or anything valuable they located.

"They didn't locate anything for a while. They had a sort of small schooner and coasted down, going ashore every day or so, and sometimes camping for a week, while the old professor explored. It's an awful country, according to Floyd—all rough islands and narrow channels, and the moun-

tains right down to the sea, rocks and big glaciers, and fog and rain all the time. It was early in the spring; they have their summer down there in the winter, you know."

"So I've heard," said Lang, dryly. "But what did Morrison locate?"

"Well, it seems he went ashore one morning at the head of a little bay that split right into the hills. There was a valley beyond, and a big glacier coming down like a wall right across the valley. Floyd left him there, and was to come back with the boat to bring him off in the evening.

"He went back around sundown, and found the old man down and out. He'd been climbing up on the rocks and ice, and had fallen and busted several ribs, and was stunned and bruised all up. He had a lot of bits of rock in his sack, stones full of green crystals—well, you saw some of them in his box the other day. And in his pocket he had a couple of big green stones the size of small potatoes."

"Floyd went through his pockets while he was insensible?"

"Sure he did. He pocketed one of the big stones, too. He left the other. He was on a half-share basis, you know. Then he got Morrison back on the schooner, and they fixed up his hurts.

"He asked Morrison about the stones when he was better, but the old professor said they were mere crystals that weren't worth anything. Floyd thought different, though, and spent a good deal of time going ashore by himself and hunting around, but he never could find where Morrison had located them. It might have been anywhere within a mile.

"The old man never seemed to remember that one of the stones was lost. He was too sick, maybe. His ribs didn't heal very well, and they had to make for Valparaiso, where there were doctors.

"In Valparaiso, Floyd took his green stone to the best jewelers there. It was just as he thought; it was an emerald."

"Nonsense!" Lang interrupted. "Emeralds don't come in those sizes. Why, it would have been worth a fortune."

"So it would—only it was plumb full of little hair-line cracks and flaws and veins of rock. It wasn't worth a nickel. The one Morrison had was the same. But, as I said, it was the size of a little potato."

"Floyd said that?" Lang inquired.

"No, I saw it myself. Floyd had it with him. It went down in his pocket with the *Cavite,* I expect. We had two of the best jewelers in New Orleans look at it too, and they said the same as the Chilean ones.

"Floyd kept after Morrison to live up to his agreement, and go back and clear out the emerald mine between them. But Morrison always stalled him off, and at last he slipped away and came north before Floyd knew he was gone.

"Floyd followed him up, of course, and located him here on the coast. Of course he knew the old man was getting ready to go back to Chile after the emeralds. Then he ran across Jerry Harding and Louie and me at New Orleans; we'd all known him before, and we made up a partnership."

"Your crowd had been rum running, I take it?" said Lang.

"Jerry owned the *Cavite,*" replied Carroll, after a pause. "He's in her at the bottom of the Gulf now, and Floyd too, and what we used to do is nobody's affair."

"Why didn't Floyd go back to Chile by himself? He knew the way."

"He was broke. He hadn't the money for any sort of vessel. We were going to sail the *Cavite* there. Besides, he didn't know the way. It's all a tangle of islands and channels, that Chilean coast. You'd lose yourself in an hour, unless you're a good seaman with good charts. And besides that, if he got to that glacier valley he couldn't tell where Morrison dug up the stones. It might have been two or three miles from the sea. He'd been away all day.

"So you see," he went on, "that we had to make Morrison talk. We offered him a third share to go back and guide us. I don't think anything could have been squarer. Well—you know about all the rest. When he had his stroke, or whatever it was, we tried every way to bring him to. At last we pinned all our hopes to the great Chicago specialist, Doctor Robert Long, and got him aboard!"

"Long couldn't have done a bit more than I did," said Lang abstractedly, thinking hard. "But now Floyd and Morrison are both gone—the only men who knew anything of the place. There's no chance of finding it. The game is up, it seems to me."

"Ah, that's the very point!" cried Carroll. "I knew, as soon as I set eyes on

them, what those photos and pictures in the iron box must be. I've gone over them all. There's a series of photos of the coast, the glacier valley—water-color drawings too—and a couple of sketch maps. I'm no sailor, but I know I can find my way there; and if I once get to that valley I'll find the emerald mine, if I have to turn over all the ground with my bare hands. It can't be far, after all; and the old professor did no blasting nor digging."

"Carroll," said the surgeon, "so far you've told me nothing but lies. This yarn is the wildest-sounding of all. I'm damned if I believe a word of it!"

"Good God!" Carroll cried. "Can't you recognize truth when you see it? Of course I told you a crooked yarn. We couldn't have let out the truth then, could we? But now it's different. There's just you and me left in it. I've got the maps and prints. You've got the money, and half of that is coming to me, you know very well. It'll take five or six thousand dollars to fit out our expedition. I've got less than two hundred dollars in the world. Neither of us can do anything alone. Why, man, in a case like this you'd make a partnership with the devil, wouldn't you?"

"Well, that's as it may be," said Lang. "But you're making one great mistake. That money in my trust box isn't mine. It belongs to Miss Morrison. If there's anything in this emerald story, it belongs to her too. I have absolutely nothing to do with the whole thing. Go and talk to her about it."

"I don't talk to any woman about such a thing!" Carroll ejaculated, staring. "Are you clear crazy, Lang, or are you trying to put another bluff over me? Look here, if that stone of Floyd's had been perfect it would have been worth fifty thousand dollars. Emeralds come high; they rank next to diamonds. We've been studying up about them. Most all the emeralds of the world come from the west coast of South America. There's an enormous mine in Colombia. I've got all the right dope. Morrison hit on a pocket, or deposit. Those bits of rock were what they call emerald matrix. There's dead sure to be plenty more where those big stones came from, and good ones too. It wouldn't take many of that size to make a million dollars."

Carroll's olive face was deeply flushed. His eyes positively glowed with earnestness, and his hands trembled. Lang was secretly impressed and less incredulous than he appeared. It was impossible that any one could so feign emotion.

"I tell you that I've got nothing to do with it," he said again. "It's all in Miss Morrison's hands."

Exasperated, baffled, evidently believing not a word of it, Carroll looked at him.

"Give the girl the price of the oil stock," he said. "Half the money. That's all that's really coming to her, anyway. We'll use the rest for the trip. Oh, give her a share, if you want to. Let her have a third of what we find. I won't do it for less. If you won't meet me on that you'll never see any of those papers of Morrison's again. I'll raise the money somehow myself.

"Look here, do you know Louie's ashore? Yes, he is. He's in Mobile now. I saw him myself. He came ashore in the motor launch—the only man in it. I told him the emerald game was up. But if you go back on me I'll call him in. Now I don't want to do any crooked work. I'll share with you fifty-fifty, or thirds all around with the girl, but if not, then I swear I'll have the whole thing, crooked or straight!"

Lang shook his head.

"I can't bargain. The police will make you give up those photos, you know, if it comes to that. Maybe Miss Morrison——"

The bell of his room telephone interrupted him. He went to its stand and took the receiver. The clerk at the Iberville was calling. Miss Morrison had just come in, and left word that she would be glad to see Doctor Lang.

He hung up, delighted, impatient.

"I can't make any sort of deal with you, he said to Carroll. "I'll put it before Miss Morrison if you like. You'd better think it over and let me hear to-morrow. Now I've got to go out."

They went downstairs together and parted at the hotel entrance. Lang felt Carroll's eyes following him as he went up the street.

CHAPTER IX.

DISAPPEARANCES.

LANG was astonished to find that Eva had already gone to the Mobile police headquarters and induced the authorities to telegraph to all the Gulf ports and coast-guard stations for news of her father. His respect for her practicality increased im-

mensely. She had had no replies as yet, but she looked hopeful, cheerful, and glad to see him when she came down to the little sitting room on the second floor, where they had often met in the past fortnight.

"That's the right spirit," he encouraged her. "Don't be disappointed if we don't get any news at once. Your father had a life belt on and would float for hours. And the Gulf is a tropical sea, you know—not cold like the Atlantic."

Remembering the night he had spent in it himself, Lang wondered that this lie did not freeze on his lips. He hurried past it.

"I hope you slept last night—this morning, rather."

"I'm afraid, not very much. Nor you." An uncontrollable smile curved her lips, and then she laughed outright. "I looked out the window before daylight and saw you."

Lang felt his cheeks reddening.

"I hated to leave you all alone," he stammered. "I wasn't much of a sentinel, though —went to sleep on my post."

"It was awfully foolish of you, and—and simply wonderful," she said, no longer laughing. "I nearly cried. I went to make hot coffee for you, and when I came back you were gone."

"I wish I'd known. I drove to Pass Christian and slept nearly all day. I'm a dormouse when I get a chance. Enough of that. I've got something to tell you."

"Some news? Something about father?"

"No news. About your father, in a way. It's a romantic tale that Carroll has just told me. It'll amuse you at least. You're going out to dinner with me and I'll tell you while we eat."

"Do tell me now," she pleaded.

"No, it'll be for a digestive. I'm the doctor. We'll go out for a short walk now for an appetizer, please. I know what's best for you."

She went to get her coat and hat, obediently. Lang had planned to take her to the largest hotel restaurant in the city, with the masculine idea of cheering her; but at the sight of the great dining room, tricked with palms, crammed with Michigan tourists, deafening with the shriek and clash of a jazz orchestra, she turned in horror and begged to go to another place. Discomfited, Lang led her in search of quiet; and after long wandering they came into a little, rather shabby, unfrequented eating place on Royal Street.

Here was quiet at any rate. It was growing late and not another table was occupied. They had a wholesome, vulgar meal, fairly cooked, badly served, and Lang saw to it that his companion ate. He also ate, being again surprisingly hungry, but he refused to tell his story till they had almost finished.

Then, over a cup of coffee, he lighted a cigarette, and recounted Carroll's revelations, which he had come more and more disposed to consider a work of imagination.

Eva listened with the utmost attention, but without comment. She did not display quite the surprise that he expected; and at the end she fixed her eyes upon him and asked:

"What do you think of it?"

"I don't believe it. The question really is, what's under it? For it's obviously designed to conceal something else, like Carroll's first romance of Rockett and the yacht."

Eva appeared to ponder, looking down at the spotted tablecloth.

"That story is all true," she said at last.

"What? You think so?"

"I know it. You see—father wrote me from Valparaiso, while he was ill there. He told me he'd been hurt and was coming north; and he said he was on the track of a deposit of precious stones that would make us rich. I was to meet him in Mobile. But he didn't say anything about any man named Floyd."

"Well, that puts a different face on it," said Lang, greatly taken aback. "As for Floyd, of course he may merely have learned of the thing by some chance."

"I know father wouldn't have engaged any mining prospector," Eva went on. "He wasn't interested in such things. He was an explorer, an archæologist. He believes that the old Inca civilization extended away south into Patagonia, and perhaps originated there, and that is what he's trying to establish. He has gone farther toward deciphering the Inca *quipus*—the knotted-string records—than any other man. He must have merely chanced on the emeralds."

"Well, now it seems that Carroll has the only clew to where they are," said Lang, reviewing the situation mentally. "It's my fault; I shouldn't have let him pocket them; but just then my mind was full of nothing but Rockett's money. I suppose you don't feel inclined to accept his proposition of going shares on the enterprise?"

"Shares with that man? I should think not!" she exclaimed. "Why, you know he's a thief, almost a murderer. He almost killed my father. Fancy what father would say when he found that we'd given a share in his discovery to the man who robbed him!"

"Carroll's got a strong position, though. We might buy him off. Possibly he'd accept five hundred dollars or maybe a thousand dollars for the maps and photos, if he was made to see that there was no better to be had."

"But why should we?" rejoined Eva, "when my father will be back here soon, and he will know the way exactly to that place in South America."

There was no possible answer to this. Lang could not tell her that Morrison would never come back to guide them, and he began to wonder if he had not been too lavish with his optimism.

The astonishing fact that Carroll's tale was substantially true had hardly yet established itself in his mind, but now it began to grow and develop its glittering possibility. An almost incalculable treasure in emeralds, emeralds as big as small potatoes—it was romantically incredible. Yet it might be so. Indeed, lives had been lost, crime committed, a ship sunk for its sake already, and without knowing it he had himself been circling on the vortex of its fascination.

But Eva did not seem much interested in it. To her, everything in the world was postponed until Morrison's return. And now she was growing restless, afraid that telegrams might have come to the hotel for her, and presently Lang took her back to the Iberville.

Replies had, indeed, come in from the police at Pensacola, Fairhope, Bayou la Batre and Pascagoula, but nothing had been heard of any castaway coming ashore. Eva, however, was disappointed but not discouraged, and Lang wondered apprehensively what the final reaction would be when hope had to be given up.

He stayed with her for an hour in the second-floor sitting room, talking casually and cheerfully, and then left her. He would see her again in the morning, but for once he was impatient to leave her. He wanted to be alone, to think.

Eva evidently had no comprehension of the case. Her whole mind was fixed on her drowned father, everything else excluded. She would delay, let the moment slip. And Morrison's find was not a thing to trifle with.

Magnificent plans had risen in the back of his mind even while he talked to her. He might buy off Carroll himself; he would have no scruple in utilizing a portion of Eva's twelve thousand dollars thus for her own good. He might even gamble a part of his own slender capital on it. Once in possession of the guiding charts he would go south himself, hire a schooner, find the treasure, return and hand it over to Eva—quarts of emeralds as large as potatoes. What he would get out of it himself did not trouble him.

It was boyish and impracticable. He laughed at himself, though still fascinated by the idea. But at any rate he felt that Carroll must be dealt with at once, and he went to the St. Andrew Hotel on his way home. But the young adventurer was out.

But he found him next morning, at a late breakfast in the hotel dining room. Carroll greeted him with his never-failing smoothness, did not seem surprised, and offered coffee, which Lang declined.

"I've come to have an understanding with you, as you said."

"Good. Well?" said Carroll, alert.

"I've talked to Miss Morrison. She'll give you five hundred dollars for her father's papers and photos."

"Nothing doing!" Carroll returned.

"You'll have to give them up anyway, you know. Miss Morrison can identify them. So can I. You don't want to be arrested, I take it?"

"And how will Doctor Lang like having his part brought to light?" Carroll inquired ironically. "Burglary. Gambling with Morrison's stock."

"What I did was under Morrison's orders. His daughter will testify to that. She'll back up everything I say. I told her you'd probably refuse her offer, and she agreed to go the length of one thousand dollars, but that's the limit. I advised calling the police at once."

"Never in my life did I see a shark like you, Lang," said Carroll earnestly. "I show you how to make ten thousand dollars and you hog it all. I tell you where you can make maybe a million, and now you try to hog that too. Gad! I thought doctors were supposed to be an unselfish class! Now I tell you, you can't hog this. I've told you my terms—one-third shares. Otherwise I'll

take it all. You can't do anything without what I've got. But if you insist on cutting your own throat—why, go to it."

"Well, you can consider whether your record will stand police investigation," said Lang. "I've given you our terms, too. Will you make an offer, if they don't suit?"

"I've told you—a third of the haul. You won't consider that? Then do go away. You're spoiling my breakfast."

As he went, Lang was doubtful whether he had been diplomatic enough. He was unaccustomed to negotiations with criminals, and to big bluffs. It was really a bluff; the police could hardly recover what Carroll chose to hide but he still expected the adventurer to come to terms. And then a consideration flashed upon him which he had overlooked entirely.

Carroll undoubtedly would have all the photos and other matter copied before he sold them. Thus he could sell them and still keep them.

Even so, however, Carroll would be badly handicapped by lack of capital. If it came to a race Lang felt confident that he could win. But this new consideration made him sure that, within twenty-four hours, Carroll would come to sell.

Going to the bank, he took out ten thousand dollars from the vault and deposited it in Eva Morrison's name, reserving two thousand dollars for possible emergencies. He called at the public library, secured a large atlas and studied with some apprehension the tangle of islands and channels belting the south Chilean coast; and later he asked for Miss Morrison at the Iberville.

He found her looking worried, and she admitted that she had slept little. She had dark lines under her eyes, and her beauty was in eclipse. He made her go out with him—first to the bank, where she completed the formalities of taking over the account; and then on a motor run for ten miles down the bay road. She had received several more replies from the Gulf ports—negative, all of them; but she persisted in an appearance of optimism.

"You're wonderfully good to me," she said gratefully, as they returned to the city. "You mustn't take up all your time with my affairs. You've your own concerns—your own plans to make."

"My concerns, my plans are all for you," he almost answered; but he restrained himself wisely.

"I haven't any," he said. "I'm not a physician any more. I'm an adventurer, a chevalier of industry, a burglar, a stock gambler, a treasure hunter—all my boyish dreams come to life."

She smiled. "How about your medical practice up in the woods?"

He had almost forgotten it. That scheme now seemed utterly remote and impracticable, tame and unalluring besides. But her words reminded him sharply that life was life, after all, and that he would have to think of unalluring and practical matters. Much, it struck him, depended on Carroll; and again he regretted having been so crudely unconciliatory with that young man.

He fully expected to hear from Carroll that night, but no word came. He did not want to make advances again. He waited till the next morning. Again he took Eva out, once for a long walk, then across to Fairhope on the afternoon boat. She looked more depressed than ever, did not respond to his cheerfulness, and he foresaw the moment when hope would die.

That evening he took the step of telephoning to the Hotel St. Andrew, and was told that Carroll had departed the day before, leaving no address.

Violently Lang cursed his own clumsiness. Carroll was frightened off, with his indispensable documents. For a moment Lang pictured him starting immediately for South America; but this could hardly be, unless, with Louie's assistance, he had managed to commit some lucrative crime. But he had passed out of sight, probably forever, and Lang felt deeply thankful that he had told Eva nothing of his high-flown projects, now made impossible.

Lang put in a bad night himself, but the morning mail brought a letter. It was a brief note from Carroll, posted in New Orleans, and with no address but the general delivery. Lang breathed more easily as he glanced over it.

> Meet me at the St. Charles here Friday afternoon. We can make a deal, if you bring fifteen hundred dollars cash—no checks. If I am not there, wait a day. Am going out of town and may be delayed. This is your last chance.

It was then Thursday. Lang spent part of that day with Eva as usual, mentioning casually that he was going out of town for half a day or so; and left for New Orleans late that night.

He established himself at the Hotel St. Charles, and was not disappointed to find Carroll not known there. All the next afternoon he spent within sight of the desk, or in his room, with instructions to have any caller sent up to him immediately; but he waited in vain. The evening was equally blank. Carroll had said he might be delayed, and Lang repressed impatience and growing doubt until the whole of the next day had passed. He spent that night with a feeling of being somehow taken in, but next morning he was given a note.

It had been brought in very early by a negro boy, was scribbled in pencil and bore no date nor address. It said:

Sorry to keep you waiting, have been delayed. Will meet you to-day sure. Hope you have brought the money. C.

Reviving in hope, Lang waited all that Sunday, again in vain, and the morning brought neither message nor caller. Fuming with wrath, he left a curt and angry note for Carroll at the desk, and took the train back to Mobile, certain now that he had been maliciously played with.

At his hotel among his letters, he found one with the stamp of the Iberville, which had been personally left. He knew at once who had left it, and he tore it open with a sense of dream.

Dear Doctor Lang: Father is alive. I have just had a message from him at Colon. He was picked up by the ship that ran you down, and has been very ill. I am to join him at Panama. There is a ship from New Orleans to-morrow which I can catch if I hurry. I am so sorry not to have seen you. I tried everywhere to find you. I am too excited and overjoyed to write, but I will send you word from Panama. I took all the money out of the bank.
Yours most gratefully and joyfully,
Eva Morrison.

Emotion and haste were in every line of the shaky script. She had passed through New Orleans while he waited there. Lang put the letter in his pocket, glad, indeed, but with a crushing sense of finality.

She was gone. Carroll was gone. So far as he was concerned, the emerald treasure was gone. Life returned to its normal, blank and uninteresting outlines.

Doubtless she would write to him from Panama. She would go to Chile with her father; doubtless she would return. But Lang had a feeling that, even if he met her in the future, this episode was ended, closed like a magic ring that could never be reopened.

He must leave Mobile. He was a poor man now and must make his living. The prospect looked dreary. He had not realized how the green glow of the Chilean stones had dazzled him. He had been thinking of late like a millionaire, and dimes and dollars were now his standard. He was no longer an adventurer.

He left his hotel and moved to an inexpensive boarding house. He called on some of the local physicians, made inquiries about professional prospects. The idea of work in the piney woods did not attract him now. He was restless; he thought of going West. Though he quailed at the idea of handling a scalpel, he could practice medicine well enough in one of the new towns in Texas, he thought.

No word came from Eva. He still lingered in Mobile, unable to come to a decision. More than a week had passed when he received a cablegram from Panama.

Will you come to Panama first possible steamer, at my expense? Important.
Edward Morrison.

CHAPTER X.

MORRISON.

LANG arrived at Panama hot and sticky and full of mixed expectations. He had not delayed a day; he had taken the first steamer for Colon, with the remaining two thousand dollars from Yuma Oil belted round his waist. From Colon he had traveled by the Isthmus Railway and his mind was still dazed with heat and hurry, and the unfamiliar Spanish talk, and the wild scenery of the Isthmus and the glimpses of the great engineering work that seemed the sole interest in everybody's mind. And he scarcely ventured to foresee what he might be going to meet.

He had not the slightest idea how to find Morrison, but he was told that he could find anything at the Hotel Tivoli. Taking a taxi at the landing stage therefore, he was driven to this ornate establishment, where he found that Morrison's name was indeed known. He was not at the hotel, but at Mrs. Leeman's boarding house, which seemed to be also a well-known institution. Lang engaged a room, had his baggage sent for, and requisitioned the Ford again.

It was half an hour's drive, by what seemed devious ways. He felt oddly, nervously in suspense. His lips were dry as the car stopped in front of a huge, rambling

bungalow, screened on all sides by a vast veranda, heavy with vines and gay with great red blossoms.

He went up the walk. A barefooted Jamaican negro was pottering about some duties at the steps, and he paused to make inquiries. He hardly understood the queer, clipped half-English accent of the servant, but just then a white-dressed figure came quickly around the corner of the house, on the dim veranda. It was Eva.

She stopped short, in silence. As he saw her Lang felt suddenly full of a brimming satisfaction, a pervading, full content, such as he had never known before in his life. They gazed at each other in silence, for a single, magnetic instant that seemed full of a mysterious implication; and then Lang, a trifle dazed, saw that Eva was holding out her hand and greeting him with hurried words that he barely took in.

"I never thought I would see you again," he stammered awkwardly.

"You haven't much faith in me."

"I have far more faith in you than I have in anything else in the world," he returned.

She searched his face for a moment, looking almost startled, hesitated, and then turned quickly, still holding his hand as if to guide him.

"Come this way and see father. He'll be so glad you've come. We didn't look for you for days—the next steamer."

She conducted him back round the corner of the veranda, and far toward the rear of the building a big man dressed in white duck was sitting in a steamer chair, a litter of newspapers around him. He looked up sharply. An immediate look of recognition came over his face, and he put out a big, bony hand. It was a very different man from the haggard, unshaven, blind-eyed "Rockett" whom the physician had studied with such intentness on the *Cavite,* but he recognized that big, grim, but not wholly unkindly countenance, though the piercing gray eyes were, of course, strange to him.

"Your patient again, doctor!" said the explorer, still with a slight stammer and thickness in his articulation.

"Not my patient any more, I hope. You seem to have made a recovery," said Lang cordially.

"A little shaky, a little t-tongue-tied yet. I was in the—the w-water half an hour, and it d-didn't d-do me any good. Better, though, than when I used to s-study you through my eyelashes and t-try to size you up on that damned steamer."

"So you weren't unconscious at all! I half suspected it at times," Lang exclaimed.

"Oh, partly, partly. I was d-dopy a good d-deal. I must have had"—he stopped and seemed to collect himself—"some sort of fit or stroke ashore, when those pirates were —er—cross-questioning me. I didn't know about being taken to sea—couldn't make out where I was. Came to myself slowly —couldn't move at first—afraid to try to speak—decided that it was safest to play dead——"

"I think you shouldn't talk much now," Lang interposed. "You can tell me all the story when you're a bit better."

"Then when I tried to speak to you at the last, wanting to give a message to Eva, I couldn't get the words together. The——"

"Hush!" Eva put in. "I'll tell it. Father had seen Floyd a few days before at Biloxi, and knew that he must be hunting him. So he buried the things hurriedly, for fear of anything happening, and he painted the negro. He knew that I would catch the idea. It used to be a game with us, you know —puzzle pictures. Father has been an artist all his life. Isn't it strange? He was at the bungalow all the time we were in Mobile, and we didn't know it. There had been some mistake about the dates. He didn't expect me South till two weeks later—but we're mixing the story all up. Of course you know why he sent for you now?"

"Well, I might make a guess," Lang admitted.

"It's like this," Morrison began again, haltingly. "I'm getting better fast, but the doctor here says I can't travel for a week, and that I must avoid exertion for a month. I can guide, but I won't be much good else. Eva says you're temporarily out of medical work. Fate has thrown you in with us, and you might as well go the rest of the way. I pay expenses; you're chief mate, and you get a one-third share of whatever we find. What do you say?"

"There isn't any doubt about what I'll say," said Lang. "It's a remarkably generous proposition. Too generous, I'm afraid, for I don't know anything about mining work. But I'll do my best, and I'll climb rocks and chop ice till I drop. I suppose," he added cautiously, "that there isn't any doubt about the genuineness of the emeralds? I could hardly believe the story."

"Absolutely none. I had them ex-examined by the best men in Valparaiso. In fact, the word g-got out that I'd made an emerald strike, and I had all sorts of fellows after me. When we start again we'll have to be secret or we'll have a fleet trailing us down the coast."

"By Jove! we may have some one before us," Lang exclaimed, suddenly remembering. "Carroll has all your maps and photos, and he's disappeared—Lord knows where."

"It doesn't matter. He'll never find it," Morrison declared. "It isn't where any one would think. It's a wild, g-glacier——"

He stuttered, and stuck fast.

"It's a wild, rough coast," Eva took up his words. "Small mountainous islands, a steep slope, and a rainy climate. They had trouble to find anything dry enough to burn for their fires, until they came on an outcrop of coal right on the coast. There's a long valley running to the sea, and a wall of ice right across it, like a great gate—the head of the glacier that goes away up the mountain to the top, where there's a pass. It was the pass that made father stop to examine it. He thought there might be traces of an ancient seaport—his prehistoric Chileans, you know.

"The glacier was melting away at the bottom, of course. The valley was choked with gravel and stones that the glacier had cast out through years and years. Here he found an old copper knife, and then he found the emeralds, right at the foot of the ice. They had come out of the ice."

"Out of the glacier?" Lang exclaimed.

"It's my belief," Morrison broke in again, "that the glacier had gathered them up with all their surrounding rock and gravel, somewhere high up the mountain. The ice had torn up an emerald pocket, carried it down slowly, maybe through centuries, till at last it came near the bottom, and was washed out by the melting. Streams of water were flowing out of the glacier wall everywhere.

"Floyd stole the best of the two stones I found. He lied if he said that he was working on shares with me. I was paying him two hundred pesos a month, and nothing more. Those emeralds—would—would have——"

He stuck again, and glanced helplessly at Eva.

"Father means," the girl assisted, "that they could have been cut to I don't know how many hundred carats if they hadn't been flawed, and they would have been worth at least twenty thousand dollars apiece. He didn't have them examined till after he was out of the hospital at Valparaiso. He would have gone back then, but he wasn't strong enough, and besides he didn't have the money. He had to go North to get that oil stock and sell it. He had bought it for thirty dollars a share, and was told that it would go to one hundred dollars."

"That reminds me that I have about two thousand dollars from that stock in my belt now," said Lang.

"Keep it, for the present," said Morrison. "Plenty of time. We have a week here to wait for me. I'll tell you the whole story of the thing to-morrow, perhaps, if my tongue loosens up. You must be completely confused with these snatches and scraps."

There were many points that Lang wanted badly to have explained, but he postponed them. Evening was falling, suddenly, darkly, like a velvet curtain. Over a decorative row of palms in the distance he caught a glimpse of a fiery red streak of sky above the sea. He had heard several other men coming up the steps to the house—no doubt Mrs. Leeman's boarders. The sudden heavy roar of a steamer approaching the Canal made the dead, moist air vibrate. It was almost dark on the shaded veranda.

"Is it far south of Valparaiso?" he asked. "How do we go?"

"A long way—over a thousand miles. It's between Punta Reale and La Carolina, about halfway. We must get a comfortable craft; I'm not in condition for roughing it, this time."

A gong boomed mellow toned from indoors.

"That's for dinner," Eva exclaimed. "We'll let the rest of the story and all the plans wait till to-morrow. Doctor Lang will stay and dine with us, of course. Mrs. Leeman will give you a better dinner than the Tivoli, and afterward you can telephone for a car to go to the hotel."

Lang did not hesitate to accept, and Mrs. Leeman, a plump and obviously prospering Los Angeles widow, made him welcome. There were three other boarders besides the Morrisons—two young American engineers from the harbor, and the second officer of an American steamer in port, who always spent his days ashore at this house.

The dinner was good, an attempt at American cooking in the tropics, and every one was jovial. Lang felt in tremendous spirits; the future suddenly had turned rainbow colored again. He astonished himself with his own hilarity, and even Morrison released a somewhat saturnine and stammering vein of chaff. Eva said little, laughed, looked happy, and her beauty had come back as when he first knew her.

Afterward the men went out to the veranda to smoke, and Lang became involved in argument with Findlay, the American officer, as to the effect, on white constitutions, of prolonged living in the tropics. It was cut short, however, by Findlay's departure. His ship sailed that night, and his leave was over. Morrison also, by medical orders, had to go to bed at nine o'clock, and Lang assisted him to his bedroom, and, returning, telephoned to the hotel for a taxi to be sent immediately.

Eva presently came out of her father's room, and walked outdoors with him as he waited. It was hot and cloudy; and spicy, musky scents seemed to hover in the air. Away in the city a band was playing faintly.

"Your father has placed a great confidence in me," he said. "I'm going to try to deserve it."

"He took my word for you. But he's a good judge of men besides. I'm not afraid. I think all's going to be well now. If he says there are emeralds, there will be emeralds. He's never wrong."

"And you'll be rich and I'll be rich and we'll all be rich together. What difference will it make, I wonder?"

"Much, to my father. He'll have proper funds for his work, for the first time."

"And much to me. Never did I need it more."

"And nothing at all to me," she returned. "There's your car."

"Good-by, till to-morrow."

The car roared up. He took her hand; he might have kissed it. In that Spanish country it would have been courtesy. The car flashed a blinding glare over them as it wheeled.

"Come early and lunch with us," she cried.

He waved his hand back at her as he got into the car, noticing that the side curtains were closed, and the machine exploded into motion again and panted down the dark street.

It was insufferably hot in that closed interior. Lang spoke to the driver, dimly silhouetted against the wind shield, but got only a shake of the head. He resolved to endure it for the short ride to the hotel—too jubilant, besides, to care much about small inconveniences.

The rickety little flivver rattled and pounded, mostly through dark or ill-lighted ways. It seemed to take a long time to reach the hotel. He spoke again to the chauffeur, who seemed to understand no English; and then the taxi slowed down and stopped. The door was opened, and a man pushed darkly inside.

"What the——" ejaculated Lang, amazed at this intrusion.

The driver left his seat and came quickly to the other door. In dismay Lang recollected the two thousand dollars in his belt. He carried no weapon, and as he still hesitated, a strap dropped neatly over his head and shoulders and drew tight, pinioning his arms firmly to his side.

"Got him, Louie? Hold him a minute," said a voice he recognized.

Too late, Lang kicked out and struggled desperately. There was no room for defense. In the darkness of that hot little compartment, sweat streaming down all three of them, they forced him back, down on the cushions, and Louie sat down firmly on his chest. Half smothered, Lang let out a tremendous yell for help.

"Cheese that!" Carroll commanded. "There ain't a cop within a mile, anyway. You damn' fool, we've had our eyes on you ever since you struck Panama. I know the old professor's handed you all the dope. What do you say, now? Come in with us, share alike, or——"

"Or what? Damn you, Carroll! What do you take me for?" Lang spluttered, indignantly, too angry to be frightened. "You're out of it. Why can't you drop the thing?"

In answer he felt a cloth dropped across his face, then after a gurgling sound he smelled a most familiar odor—the scent of chloroform. He flung his head back, turned it from side to side, threw off the drugged towel. It is not easy to chloroform a man against his will; and he struggled so violently that Carroll let go, cast an impatient word to his assistant, and busied himself with something taken from his pocket.

The cloth had fallen off and Lang breathed deeply, gathering his forces. It was only

ten seconds. Carroll turned back, picked up Lang's defenseless arm, and he felt a penetrating prick.

"A hypodermic!" he thought, with dismay.

He shrieked again at the top of his voice. He felt the numb influence of the drug passing through his veins, deadening his will to live. In spite of his resolution he grew limp; the sense of struggle blurred, grew dreamy. Consciousness passed out of him.

CHAPTER XI.

THE UNWILLING TOURIST.

LANG awoke with the pain of an aching head and a sick stomach. He was in a bed that swayed beneath him; at first he fancied himself back on the *Cavite*. He heard trampling and loud talking, and a lacerating sound of discordant music.

He opened his eyes; there was a ceiling two feet above his head. He tried to heave himself up, failed and sank back dizzy, but the glimpse he got brought him immediately struggling up again, full of stupefaction and bewilderment.

He was lying fully dressed in a dingy bunk, one of a double tier of bunks that seemed to surround a rather large room. The low dirty-white ceiling was crossed by iron beams. In the imperfect light he saw heads emerging from the berths, human figures moving, there was much talk and tobacco smoke, and at the other end some one played shrilly on a mouth organ.

Within six feet a ragged, brown-faced man was violently sick. The air was foul. To Lang's dizzy mind it seemed that he had descended into Hades. He got somehow out of the bunk, his head swimming, incapable of comprehending where he was or how he had got there.

A negro in a white jacket was sweeping up banana peels from the floor, and Lang clutched his sleeve.

"What's this place? Where am I?"

"Where you think you might be?" retorted the sweeper. "Ain't you got over your drunk yit? On board de *Lake Tahoe,* dat's where you is. Bound fer Seattle," he continued, gratified by the sound of his own voice. "Reckon you don' remember comin' on board. Had to carry you in, you an' yo' friends, an' I put you in your berth myself. It was shore one peach you had. Dat bootleg rum ain't no stuff to go to sea on."

Lang stared at him, bewildered, his head too sore to think or remember. The rough crowd in the cabin were beginning to look at him and laugh. He caught sight of an iron stairway, struggled toward it, made his way up.

A gust of divinely fresh air met him, and a blaze of sunshine. A limitless blue sea sparkled. He was on a steamer's forward deck, the steerage deck. A score or two of ragged humanity, white and brown and yellow, swarmed about him. He pushed past to the rail and stood leaning, on shaky legs, his head in his hands, trying to collect himself.

Just aft and above him loomed the bridge, with uniformed officers on watch. Also above him rose the first-class deck, where passengers promenaded. A light breeze broke the ocean into long surges; the ship rose and fell, and a long trail of smoke blew back toward the sun. Far astern, in the brilliant light, he saw a faint shadow that must be a distant shore.

The bracing air settled his nausea. His head cleared. He remembered now—the dinner at the boarding house, the attack in the cab—and with a gasp he plunged his hand under his shirt.

The money belt was gone. His watch was gone too, and his pocketbook, and everything that had been in his pockets, and now he noticed that his clothes were torn in shreds and soiled as if he had been dragged through mud.

Fool that he had been to carry that money about Panama! He had been drugged, robbed, and put aboard this steamer, bound for—where had the negro said? They must have paid his fare, too. They wanted to get rid of him badly, but he was still so stupefied that for a little he could not think why this should be. It came back to him all at once—Eva, Morrison, the emeralds, the glacier. With the two thousand dollars of the money belt Carroll had capital now. He would have a long start, with Lang at sea for a week, perhaps more.

The fright and anger of this thought put energy into him. He would not be beaten so. He had not come willingly aboard this ship; they would have to put him ashore, somehow, he cared not how nor where. Fortunately they were not many hours out.

He swayed away from the rail and found another steward in white.

"I've got to see the captain!" he ex-

claimed. "Or the purser. Take me up to them. I didn't take passage on this ship. There's a—a mistake."

"You can't see none of dem officers," the negro returned insolently. "Dey're busy. You go down below, man, an' sleep it off."

He shrank back from the furious glare that Lang gave him, and turned away muttering. The surgeon looked up at the sacred upper decks, where no steerage passengers might go. He walked aft, glanced round to see that he was not watched, and climbed over the barrier cutting off the steerage deck. Some one shouted angrily after him, but he made a rush for the stairway leading above.

He heard some one running after him, but he almost made the top when a deck hand seized his leg from behind. He kicked violently back, releasing himself, heard an oath and tumble, and sprawled out on the upper deck, to be grasped immediately by another deck hand.

He tore away, ripping his already torn sleeve entirely off. A couple of ladies standing near cried out in alarm. The deck hand gripped him again, shoving him toward the stair, tussling and squirming desperately, and a group of passengers was running up, when the stateroom door at the top of the stair opened suddenly and a gold-laced officer emerged in an official rage.

"What the devil's all this?"

Lang hoped for a second that it was the captain. At the next glance he saw that it was even better. He recognized the officer with almost a shriek of thanksgiving.

"Findlay!" he exclaimed wildly. "Thank the Lord! Don't you know me?"

"No, I don't!" the officer snapped. "What do you want?"

"Don't you remember—last night—dinner—at Mrs. What's-her-name's place? Morrison—I argued with you how—how the tropics aren't healthy?"

"God bless me!" Findlay ejaculated. "The doctor! Healthy?" He exploded into a roar of laughter. "Sure looks as if they ain't healthy for you!"

"I don't know how I got on board," Lang hurried on. "Give me five minutes, Findlay. I must see the captain. I've got to be put ashore."

"Come inside," said Findlay, opening his cabin door. "I've got to go on duty in ten minutes, but I'd rather be late than miss the juicy sort of story you seem to have."

He shut the door on the gathering group of passengers, and listened to Lang's tale with appreciation, and not without sympathy.

"Shanghaied, by gad!" he commented. "Hard luck, for a fact. Paid your fare and took your last copper. I suppose you've got more money somewhere?"

"Oh, yes, in my Mobile bank. But that isn't the point. I've got to get ashore. It's a business matter; it may cause a huge loss——"

"Oh, that's clean out of the question," said Findlay, looking at him with indulgent compassion. "The captain would have a fit if you suggested such a thing to him. Why, we're six hours out. I don't doubt it's important, but then it's important for our passengers to get quickly to Seattle. Send a boat ashore? Impossible. No, you'll just make up your mind to go on to Seattle with us."

"I can't do that!" Lang muttered, appalled. What would the Morrisons think of his disappearance?

"At least I must send a wireless to Panama," he said quickly.

"Sorry. Our wireless is out of fix. We can receive, but we can't send till we get some new parts at Seattle."

"Oh, Lord!" Lang groaned, overcome.

"Don't worry. Your friends in Panama'll know you're all right. It'll only be a few days. I'll introduce you to the purser and the doctor, and we'll get you out of the steerage and make you comfortable. I guess your credit is good for that. You'll like the old *Lake Tahoe*."

Every moment was taking him farther from Panama, and Lang had to submit. Findlay introduced him to the ship's doctor, who happened to have heard of Lang's Boston record, and was proud to afford hospitality to a distinguished confrère. Between him and the purser they got together a miscellaneous outfit of fresh clothing for him, and moved him up into the cabin, on credit, and even got him placed at the captain's table at dinner.

They did what they could for him, and there were pleasant people on board, and the weather was fine, but Lang took no pleasure in any of it. He counted the miles that the ship reeled off day by day, all too slowly. Carroll and Louie must be well on their way to Chile now, he felt certain. Morrison had been sure they could never hit

on the location of the emerald deposit, but Lang had thought of something that made him much less certain of that.

It was summer now in Chile, and the glacier must be melting fast. The whole "pocket" of emerald-bearing rock was likely to be melted out to plain sight, even perhaps to be washed down into the gravel below the ice wall. It could not have been very deep in the glacier, since part of it had washed out already.

Carroll might find the whole treasure ready for the picking up. Perhaps Morrison had thought of this. What would they think of his disappearance? Would Eva still trust him? Would she doubt him? He was afraid to think; and he walked the deck nightly for miles, so that fatigue might bring sleep, and pass another night's run.

He would have been even still more perturbed if he could have known that Eva Morrison, growing uneasy, had finally telephoned the Hotel Tivoli late the following afternoon. She was informed that Doctor Lang had sent a messenger for his baggage, canceled his room, and had, they thought, left for South America by a steamer very early that morning.

It struck her like a thunderbolt. Morrison, when she told him, swore a single, tremendous oath.

"I did think that man was to be trusted," he said. "Now, sick or well, we take the Tuesday boat for Valparaiso."

Arriving at last in longed-for Seattle, Lang had a telegram filed for Panama within fifteen minutes of landing. Naturally, he received no reply; but while waiting he had Findlay introduce him at a bank which arranged to transfer his Mobile account by wire.

When he had purchased some new clothes and paid the difference between steerage and first-class fare on the *Lake Tahoe* he had about thirteen hundred dollars left. It was his whole earthly capital, and he was risking it on a rather long shot.

Hope of a reply to his telegram faded with the hours. There was a steamer leaving the next day but one from San Francisco for Panama, and he booked his passage. This boat carried an efficient wireless, and after a couple of days out he could not refrain from sending a second message to Morrison, which remained unanswered like the first. Days of tedious, feverish waiting followed; but it was a relief to be going in the right direction at any rate, and at last he was landed again at the Canal entrance.

From the wharf he telephoned at once to Mrs. Leeman's house and that lady herself answered him. Doctor Morrison and his daughter had gone. They had sailed a week ago, or about that—somewhere to South America, she thought. Valparaiso, perhaps, or Callao. Doctor Morrison was better, but had been much upset about something.

Lang had no difficulty in guessing what had upset him. He walked back to the landing stage, and gazed out across the sunny water, full of indecision.

"Do you know when there will be a steamer for Valparaiso?" he asked a khaki-clad Zone policeman.

"Well, there's one right now," returned the officer, in a strong Texas accent. "She's out yander. But you'll have to look right smart to get her, for she sails in about an hour."

But Lang had no baggage but a single suit case, and he was aboard her and interviewing the purser within twenty minutes. Fortunately there were plenty of empty staterooms, and in less than two hours after entering Panama he was sailing out of it again. He had spent crowded moments there, but it seemed a place that he was destined to see little of.

Then followed a repetition of the wearisome and suspense-laden delay of the other two voyages. It was longer this time. The passengers grew excited over crossing the equator; but Lang condemned this geographical boundary. He did not care to go ashore at Callao nor at Ariqui nor anywhere else. He tried to give his mind to the acquisition of Spanish, having borrowed a phrase book from the barber, but the words would not stick in his mind; and he could not bring himself to talk with the Spanish portion of the ship's company.

From the equator the climate tapered off to cooler, to spring. Sometimes, far away to the east, he caught a glimpse of a white, sharp point in the sky—one of the snow peaks of the Andes piercing the clouds; and it tormented him with the vision of that Chilean ice barrier, the glacier gate, which he might never see opened. Carroll would surely be first at that icy bar; but Lang promised himself to be not far behind; and at the thought of possible collison, of bloodshed, even, he had nothing but a thrill of fierce expectation that was almost pleasure.

This time he would know how to defend himself, and attack in his turn.

Mist and rain veiled the wide harbor of Valparaiso as the steamer swung into it. Only by glimpses he saw the crescent of the lower town along the shore, and the shelving terraces on which the city climbs to the hills. Rain drove over the wet docks; tugs churned in the mist, blowing acrid coal smoke over the dripping, misty hulls of the moored ships.

The barelegged *roto* stevedores swarmed along the wharves as he was put ashore. There was a terrific uproar of wheels on the muddy cobbles, and a tumult of harsh Chilean Spanish when he emerged from the customs with his suit case, and fell among the cab drivers. He could not understand a single word of their fierce ejaculations, but he surrendered to what looked the best of them, and was driven away to a hotel whose name he did not know.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LONG SHOT.

LANG had had an idea that his troubles would be mostly ended when he reached Valparaiso. The first thing was to locate Morrison, who must surely be there; he could take no steps before that. The explorer was well known in the city, he knew, and between the hotels, the American consulate and the Anglo-Saxon population it should be easy to get on his traces.

It was still early in the day. He had drawn bad luck with his hotel, which turned out to be an establishment likely to provide a minimum of comfort at a maximum expense. However, it would do for a few days, and he did not want to waste time in finding better quarters.

He had a list of the chief hotels, and he had thought of telephoning to them all; but his first struggles with a Spanish central dissuaded him from this plan. He went out and hired a horse-drawn cab by the hour, and started through the rainy streets on his round of the hotels.

He went first to the American houses, the Hotel New York and the Great Western; then to the Prince of Wales and the Savoy, the English hotels; and finally to the Berliner and the Santiago and the Imperiale and the Kosmos. He drove from place to place as the day passed, and his hopes darkened. Morrison was not known to be in the city. Several of the hotel managers knew him, but did not remember having seen him for at least six months.

He had great hopes of the American consulate, however; and he found indeed that the consul knew the explorer well, but had no idea that he might be in Valparaiso. Sooner or later, however, Morrison would be sure to call at the consulate; and the consul gave Lang a list of American residents and foreign boarding houses where something might be learned.

Lang spent the rest of that day in searching these out, and drew blank every time. He finished on the heights east of the city, where he had ascended by one of the *escalidores*, having been forced to abandon his cab. The sun had gone down: dusk was falling, and the wet weather had cleared. Below him lay Valparaiso, a crescent of white lights on the bay, with the red stars of riding ships farther out, and beyond them again, vaguely perceived, the immensity of the Pacific.

He had come into temperate latitudes again, and a chill wind pierced his thin tropical clothing. He had a sudden lonely sense of being homeless and lost and in danger. He had broken into his last thousand dollars. A little more and he would be "on the beach," penniless in a foreign land.

It was a sort of peril he had never had to face before, and the most paralyzing to a man who has not been trained to meet the rough face of the world. Lang felt his courage collapsing, and it was a medical training that suggested the practical remedy of plenty of food and drink. He returned to the lower town, located the best restaurant and ate a good dinner, regardless of expense. Considerably cheered by this, he went to bed early, with a pint of hot lemonade laced with rum as a preventive of chill, and this treatment temporarily stunned his discouragement and assured him a night of the sleep he needed.

Next morning he felt once more capable of grasping the situation by its thorniest end. He called again at the consulate, and then circled the business section by the water front, making inquiries at the American warehouses and importing agencies, and passed the whole day in these researches. He exhausted the field; he could think of nowhere else to look. He began to doubt whether Morrison had ever come to Valparaiso. And time was vital.

He felt intensely worried, harassed, working in the dark. At a loss what to do, he wandered the whole length of the long curving water front. There were all sorts of vessels, and a tremendous rush and noise. A big freighter from Australia was unloading; the squat, sullen Indian roustabouts sweated and toiled. The mail boat he had come on was still in the harbor, and he looked at her, wondering when he would take that northward road again.

The end of the harbor shaded off into shacks, fishing boats, rotten little wharves, and he turned back again. He was walking slowly when his eye was caught by a gasoline cruiser moored beside a pier. He thought he had seen it before, but it had been deserted then, and now seemed to be making ready to go somewhere.

Lang knew a little of motor boats, and once had nearly bought one. This craft must have been an elaborate and expensive cruiser at one time, but was growing old and unkempt and paintless, as if she had fallen on evil ways. She was named the *Chita,* must have been some forty feet long, slim and shapely in lines, with a comfortable cabin and a glassed pilot house, and it occurred to Lang that she would be a most comfortable vessel for the expedition south, provided her engines were in good order.

A man was working over them then, stooping over some adjustment. A second man was stowing away boxes and small crates which a couple of stevedores were unloading from a truck. He too was stooping, but he straightened up and Lang met his eyes full.

It was rather intuition than recognition. The man had a full inch of stubby black beard all over his chin and jaws; he wore a green jersey, rough trousers and boots, and he looked every inch a Chilean sailor. He met Lang's eye stolidly; but some subconscious shock startled a cry from Lang's lips.

"What—Carroll?" he almost shouted.

The man at the engine looked up quickly —instantly bowed his head again; but not before Lang had had a glimpse of a thin, sullen young face that he knew for certain. Louie's face was deeply browned and his rather light hair dyed black; but he was a type hard to disguise. Lang looked back at the deck hand, positive now.

"I've caught up with you, Carroll," he said. "What are you doing here? Where's Morrison?"

He was astonished at his own coolness, for this was the crisis, the collision that he had anticipated.

The man continued to stare unblinkingly.

"No hablo ingles," he growled at last.

His assurance was so extreme that Lang would have doubted, but for surely having recognized the young gunman.

"You can't bluff it out, Carroll," he insisted. "Louie the Lope too. I've got to have that money back now that you took off me in Panama. What are you going to do about it? Are you ready to talk?"

The man spread out his hands with a furious, characteristic Chilean gesture.

"Maldiction!" he snarled, broke into a gust of unintelligible Spanish, spat violently over the side, and turned again to the freight he was handling.

Lang gazed, really almost staggered for a moment; then turned and slowly walked away. He was no longer in the dark; he could see his way now, and he wanted to think. He heard a step behind him, and a triumphant voice spoke quickly in his ear.

"I've got 'em right with me. The old professor's eating out of my hand. Nothing doing, so far's you are concerned, doc. They've got your number. They know how you tried to double cross 'em, and they've got no further use for you. You can go back to the States."

It was all shot out almost before Lang could turn. Carroll turned back to the cruiser with a malicious grin under his black beard, and in that instant Lang believed his words implicitly.

They had the sound of truth; it was a revelation. For the first time he grasped that the Morrisons must really think that he had tried to forestall them, to beat them to the south. What else could they think?

His excited mind instantly reconstructed what must have happened. Morrison and Eva had hurried to Valparaiso. Carroll, already on the spot, had met them, induced them to hire this power boat, was preparing, along with Louie, to go south with them. Their disguise was reliable. Carroll, knowing them well, had barely penetrated it.

The emeralds would be mined out of the ice. And then—— What he knew for certain was that neither Morrison nor Eva would ever see Valparaiso again.

That was if the ingenious plan worked. But Lang felt that he had the checkmate now in his power. He vowed never to lose sight of that boat. Sooner or later, before

sailing, Morrison must come down to inspect its readiness. A chance to speak to the explorer was all he wanted.

He walked away without glancing back, circled a block, came back and established himself at a sidewalk café where he had a fair view of the *Chita,* distant a hundred yards. Here he sat, sipping inferior Chilean beer, intently spying.

A continual stream of boxes and crates and gasoline tins came down to the boat. Carroll and his confederate were working hard; they appeared and disappeared in and out the cabins, but no other visitor came near the cruiser. Comparative quiet settled on the water front at nightfall, and in the dusk Carroll and Louie departed, heading through the business district.

Lang kept to his post, however, till nearly ten o'clock. He was very hungry by this time and nauseated with beer, and he went back to his hotel, pondering whether he could not lay a charge of assault and robbery against his pair of enemies and have them extradited back to Panama. He was afraid of taking any steps lest he frighten them off, for the important matter now was to keep them where he could see them.

He was back at his post of observation at eight the next morning, and it was not until an hour later that Louie appeared, slouching lazily down the quay, smoking the invariable cigarette. Carroll arrived a little later; they took in no more cargo, but were busy about the craft till noon, when they once more disappeared.

It was late in the afternoon before they returned, and they did not stay long. They were gone again before six, but Lang perseveringly remained at his café seat till late in the evening. Morrison had not appeared. It might be that the boat would not sail for days. Indeed, it seemed likely that the explorer would take as long a time for rest and recovery as possible.

But, resolved to take no chances, he was back at the wharf at eight the next morning. Even as he approached afar off there seemed something empty about the wharf. Startled, he quickened his pace, almost breaking into a run. The slip was empty indeed. The cruiser was gone.

She might have been moved to another berth. He looked wildly up and down. Desperately he snatched at an Indian dockman, pointing to the empty place and struggling for Spanish.

"Donde esta la—la gasolena-bota?"

The *roto* stared blankly, then waved an arm wide, and rasped out something about *"el mar."*

Providentially just then a young fellow passed whom Lang knew, one of the clerks from an American agency on the water front, where he had already inquired concerning Morrison.

"The boat's sailed," he interpreted, after a few words with the stevedore. "Went out just about daylight, the fellow says. Oh, yes, I know the *Chita* well. She used to be a yacht, but was sold; she's been hired lately, and I heard that some American had her. Were you trying to catch her?" he asked, looking curiously at Lang's perturbed face. "Not likely she'll be gone far. I don't know, though," he added, after another exchange with the dockman. "He says she took aboard a hundred tins of petrol. Maybe the port officers will know where she sailed for."

"Ask him if he knows who were in her—how many people?" said Lang.

The stevedore did not know. He had not seen her sailing. Lang turned away blindly, forgetting to tip the man or to thank the interpreter, his mind a boiling blackness of rage and disappointment.

Carroll had tricked him again. It was his own fault. He should have enlisted the police, the consul, some authority; or he should have had a watch kept on the boat day and night. Once more his own insane carelessness had ruined all.

There was only one chance now, and one fact stood out strongly from his defeat. He would have to throw his last stakes on the board where already the dearest lives to him on earth were risked. Far more than treasure was at stake now, and to win he would have to reach the glacier gate before the *Chita.*

CHAPTER XIII.

SOUTHWARD.

AT half past eleven that morning Lang was aboard a train for Concepcion.

He had made a hurried study of maps and time-tables, visited the consulate and induced the consular secretary to telephone to the railway offices for him. His only chance lay in railway speed. The line followed the coast southward to Puerto Montt, nearly eight hundred miles, which he hoped to reach in a couple of days, allowing for South

American railway methods. From Puerto Montt he could surely hire some sort of sailing craft for the indefinite remainder of the distance.

Vainly he wished now that he had had another day with Morrison at Panama. The valley of the glacier was between Punta Reale, which he located on the map, and the tiny settlement of La Carolina, over a hundred miles farther south. This was all the sailing guide he had; but from Morrison's account, and Carroll's, the valley of the glacier gate was sufficiently conspicuous so that no one skirting the coast could pass it by.

Now that he was moving again, depending solely on himself, no longer groping in the dark, courage and energy came back. He was gambling his bottom dollar now. This expedition would take all the money he had left; but he was ready to risk it all, and his life as well, rather than be beaten. Speed was all he longed for now.

The speed was fairly satisfactory to Concepcion, where he had to change trains, and wait half the night. Moving out through the gray dawn, he saw that he was in a new sort of country. Away to the left rose the mountains, steep, heavily timbered slopes, with now and again, far away, a glimpse of an ice peak.

There were strips of stumpy clearings along the track, burned slashes, backwoods farms, log cabins, berry bushes and rail fences, so that he might have fancied himself in Vermont, but for the squat Chilenos and brown Indians in ponchos that crowded the car, and the chatter of Spanish and Arauchanian mixing with the rattle of the slow-moving train.

For there was not much speed now. They stopped interminably at primitive stations, where there seemed no reason to stop at all. He snatched a vile snack at a wayside eating house at noon; another at dark, and night found them still jolting and clattering feebly down the line to Valdivia.

It was cold in Valdivia, where again he had to wait for hours. He had time to buy a heavy suit, boots, a woollen poncho, and, by an afterthought, a small automatic pistol and a box of cartridges. It was the first time Lang had ever carried weapons, and the hard lump at his hip gave him an odd feeling of uneasiness and of adventure.

After Valdivia the railway frankly became a one-track frontier line, the train a mixed one of freight and passenger coaches, slower than ever. The mountains had come up closer and higher, veiled generally by drifting mist, and it rained in torrents all one afternoon while they trailed along the rusty pair of rails at a speed that seemed slow for an omnibus.

Lang, fuming with impatience, could not talk with his fellow passengers, who glanced at him with suspicion. He was already far behind his planned schedule; he was hungry, thirsty, tired, nervous and irritable. He tried to snatch a doze on the cane seats; he got out and walked about at the endless stops to load lumber or cattle; and it was almost with astonishment that he found himself actually and finally deposited at Puerto Montt, the end of the railway, more than three days after he had left Valparaiso.

It was evening and raining. He made his way over plank sidewalks into the grubby little town, where he was surprised and relieved to find German spoken as currently as Spanish. He could make more headway in that language, and he established himself at one of the two hotels which had a German manager, though he had unfortunately lapsed into Chilean methods of hotel keeping.

It was too late for any researches that night, but his host reassured him. At Valparaiso no one had ever heard of Punta Reale or La Carolina, but here they knew all about it. The fishing fleet went to La Carolina, and the German landlord was sure he would find plenty of boats, plenty of men to take him.

Lang was haunted that night by visions of the *Chita* tearing southward under full power of gasoline; but cold calculation assured him that he had a good start. It would take the power boat nearly a week to get as far as this. A fast schooner with favoring winds ought to land him at the glacier valley within three days, perhaps less. Barring accidents, he had better than an even chance.

He was early at the straggling water front next morning, where he found indeed plenty of small craft of various rig tied up at the wooden wharf, while their owners lounged and smoked with carefree indifference. Most of them spoke more or less German; in fact, Lang learned that Puerto Montt was originally a settlement of German immigrants; but these fishermen of the second generation had grown South Americanized. A shake

of the head, a "*No pues, señor,*" was what he got in most cases. Some demanded an exorbitant hire for their boats; others required a week to prepare for the voyage. Lang, irritable with impatience, was growing discouraged, when he came upon a young fisherman who, by his round fair face and blond hair, might have been known to the experienced eye as a north European at a hundred yards.

Lang came to terms with him almost immediately. Gustav Dorner had been born at Puerto Montt, but he spoke German well, and owned a schooner in partnership with his brother Henry. He would go to La Carolina, or anywhere, for two hundred and fifty dollars in gold, Lang to provide all supplies for the voyage, and could start the next morning. His schooner, the *Condor*, might not be a flyer, but she looked seaworthy and well kept, and, moreover, was not foul with fish like most of the others, having been lately used for freighting Chiloe Island potatoes up to Talhuna.

La Carolina was the reputed destination. The real objective Lang kept to himself. When he sighted the glacier valley he could cut the voyage short, and he surprised his crew by ordering them to lay in supplies for three men for three weeks.

He allowed them to do the bargaining at the local stores for dried meats, meal, flour, potatoes, all the American canned goods to be had. He picked out himself a couple of spades and picks, an ax and hatchet, a packet of blasting cartridges and fuse, a crowbar and drill, and also a .44 caliber Winchester with two hundred cartridges. There was a flurry of shopping, transporting goods, stowing them away, adjusting the schooner's gear, that lasted all that afternoon. Lang had been mortally afraid that *mañana* would prevail at the last; but he had revived the latent Northern energy in his Chilean Germans, and at four o'clock the next morning Gustav called at the hotel for him, according to agreement.

The disk of the sun was not yet over the reddened Cordillera when they were off, slipping down the channel behind Chiloe Island, with a light, fair breeze—the last lap of the race, which Lang began to feel confident now of winning.

All went smoothly and that first day was a delight. The sun shone with springlike warmth; the breeze freshened, fair on the quarter, and the *Condor* made great speed, keeping down the inside channel, past one huge, rocky, wooded island after another.

Lang got out his repeater and practiced with that unfamiliar weapon at floating sticks and shore targets. Gustav, at the tiller beside him, entertained him with stories of the Chilean frontier, and of how his father had come to America to avoid conscription—vainly, since both the boys were called to serve in the Chilean army. They ate a cold lunch on board and kept on till the light failed, and when they landed for a night camp Gustav estimated that they had covered one hundred and fifty kilometers.

Lang was jubilant. Another such day might almost end it. But the next morning came up darkly over tossing, slate-colored water, with a thrashing rain. It was what Lang came to know later as typical south Chilean weather.

All that day he sat stiffened and drenched in his heavy poncho, feeling the water drip down his neck from his hat, and wondering if he would get pneumonia or rheumatism from this. But, to his surprise, he felt strong with health and vitality, and even in high spirits, for they were still making speed. The wind was from the west now, and stronger. The boat plunged and heeled, flinging spray far over her streaming decks. Gustav and Henry, at tiller and sheet, handled her with the skill of jockeys, apparently unconscious of the weather, and Lang's heart warmed toward these patient, skillful, simple sailors. The rain slackened in the afternoon, but it did not clear all day, and that night they slept all together, huddled under the schooner's deck, with a tarpaulin over them.

Lang slept better than on shore, however, and was surprised to find himself neither ill nor rheumatic the next morning. It was not raining, but gray clouds drove low and heavy over the sky, gusts of mist swept the sea, and a smart west wind blew, promising to strengthen. Coming gustily through the gaps between the tangles of outer islands, it drove the *Condor* along at a great rate, an increasing rate, and toward noon the two Germans took a reef in the mainsail, with some blind assistance from the passenger.

The mountains rose very high here, white-tipped, most of them, and that afternoon Lang espied a great white streak, dim through mist, extending down the slope and splitting the dark cedar forests almost to the coast line. It was a glacier—not the gla-

cier he was seeking, but the sight gave him a prospective thrill; and a couple of hours later they sighted Punta Reale.

At the view of that huge, rocky headland reaching far out like a barrier Lang felt that he was almost at the goal. It was a hard obstacle to pass with that wind. The Germans, after some consultation, wanted to land on one of the islands and wait for a shifting or a slackening of the breeze. There was not sea room to beat far enough to windward to clear the promontory.

Lang's impatience rebelled. It might mean spending twelve hours immobile. He spoke vehemently; he had his hand on the pistol, prepared to use force; and the men obeyed the voice of authority. But within the next hour Lang repented of his insistence.

They hauled as far into the wind as possible, making heavy weather of it as they beat westward and ever so little ahead. Just off the headland the breeze seemed to stiffen, coming in violent gusts. The schooner made a great deal of leeway. She seemed certainly going ashore. They were so close that Lang heard the crash and suck back of the seas on that wall of black rock; he could see the crannies spouting water as the waves retreated, and the frothing uprush again. They were approaching it; then for minutes they seemed barely to hold their own; then they were creeping away, thrashing and plunging, a hundred yards farther, and then with a free sweep they began to run down the other side of the headland with the wind once more quartering.

Lang's breath came freely again. His crew were smiling all over their streaming faces. There was a long island to seaward now, giving much shelter, and for a mile or two they ran in smooth water and with a broken breeze.

A gap in the archipelago brought a gusty sweep, then there was shelter again, and then another blast from the open sea. A long and lofty island followed for more than a mile, and then a great opening.

The schooner rushed out of the shelter into the gap, and Lang never knew how disaster came, so quick it was. Perhaps the steersman had a moment of carelessness, after the sheltered run, and was not quick enough to meet the great gust that whooped down from the open Pacific.

The boat heeled, went almost over. Henry sprang forward, and the next moment the mast snapped close to the deck, and sail and rigging went forward and overboard in a wild, flapping tangle.

It carried the young German with it. Lang caught a single glimpse of him as he went under. Like lightning Gustav flung a line that fell short, and they saw no more of him.

Gustav was thrusting a great knife into his hand, screaming to him to cut. The schooner was drifting fast toward the shore, a short quarter of a mile away. Together they slashed at the tackle that was dragging the *Condor's* bows half under water, and the craft righted as the sail tore loose and surged sinking alongside.

"This is the end!" Lang thought, following Gustav's gaze toward the shore. It was a long, sloping, gravelly beach, where the surf rushed up and ran back, two hundred yards away now, so fast the wind was driving them in.

But the shore was not the danger. It was a broken line of black points, spouting white froth, that was hardly a hundred yards ahead—an almost submerged sprinkle of barrier rocks that they could avoid only by luck.

Long moments passed as the men clung to the uncontrollable hull, before it became evident that she was going to strike fairly on the reef. Lang threw off his heavy poncho, preparing to swim for it. Gustav crept forward to the prow with a long, stout pole, evidently with the insane idea of fending off.

The last moments of the approach seemed endlessly slow. Fascinated, Lang watched that jagged black crag, almost within arm's length. He saw the water draw back, showing its wet, weed-grown sides, surge up foaming to the top and again suck back, and then the *Condor* smashed with a terrific surge and shock.

Gustav was dashed helplessly forward, clean over and upon the crag, and Lang saw a sudden flicker of crimson through the foam. The schooner half recoiled, sticking on the rock, lifted to another wave and smashed down again.

Lang hardly knew whether he jumped or was pitched overboard. He went clear of the rock, battered by the waves, swimming with all his strength, drawn back, floating, fighting, growing almost automatic, till at last he felt solidity under his feet and rose gasping and choking.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CASTAWAY.

KNOCKED down, recovering himself, scrambling and stumbling, Lang made footing, got into waist-deep water, and finally struggled out and out beyond reach of the surf that seemed rushing in pursuit. The breath was battered out of him, he felt limp and weak and as if bruised all over.

Wiping his eyes, he looked up and down for another survivor. Nothing but the foamy water moved along that shingly shore. He had scarcely any hope. Gustav's brains must have been knocked out instantly on the reef, and Henry was long since drowned. Out on the rock the *Condor* still hung spiked. She heaved up and down, and spray flew clean over her from the striking seas.

At that moment Lang hardly regretted his companions, hardly was thankful of his escape, hardly thought of anything except to be glad to be out of that tearing surf. Brain and wits were numbed. He was cold, wet and intensely uncomfortable. The enormity of the disaster did not impress him at all, but he realized that he was going to perish of exposure unless he could be warmed and dried.

He had thrown himself down, and he lay for some time still before he developed force enough to get on his feet. He had no bones broken, no severe bruises, even, but the strain and shock had left him in a sort of numb collapse.

It was with difficulty that he fumbled for his match box. It was by luck still in his pocket, and was of aluminum, supposed to be water tight. The dozen or so matches did not appear damp, and he looked vaguely about for materials for a fire.

There was plenty of driftwood all along the beach, but it was soaked with rain and sea water. Dense forest covered the slopes rising back from the shore; there must be firewood there, and he made his way across sand and shingle, over a belt of straggling grass, sprinkled with evergreen shrubs, and came to the edge of the woodland.

He expected to find dry branches, twigs, fallen trunks, but everything was wetness. Rain and mist had made a sponge of the forest. He forced his way through the tangle of stunted, bushy conifers that dripped water from their boughs; the ground was spongy underfoot, thick with moss and overgrown with ferns. The fallen trees seemed all mossy, rotten, yielding, and what dead twigs he could find were too damp to be brittle.

As he forced his way farther in, the trees were somewhat larger, but there was the same thick carpeting of luxuriant moss and ferns, the same sodden dankness. White and yellow and red fungi grew on the rotting wood. There were no birds, no sign of animal life, and that whole abominable swamp seemed like a forest in some sunless cavern.

But it was warm here, for the dense jungle shut out all the wind. Shouldering his way about, he came at last upon a tree freshly broken off four feet aboveground, leaving a splintery stump, which oozed with bluish, gummy drops. It was "fat wood," in fact, and as he realized this he tore off splinters with his fingers and the blade of his pocket knife, heaped them around the fractured end of the trunk, and struck a match.

The resinous stuff flared up furiously. The flames ran over the gummy surface of the damp trunk, and within two minutes he had a roaring and intensely hot fire, such as he would never have thought this saturated forest could produce. He stripped off his outer garments to dry them, and stood in his underclothing, revolving slowly before the blaze, and steaming in its heat.

Vitality flowed back into him with the warmth. His aching limbs were soothed. He tore off armfuls of evergreen branches, shook the damp from them, and tossed them on the fire. When his clothes were nearly dry he put them on again, and sat down, stupid and drowsy. He noticed that the daylight was waning, the fire redder and brighter. The crash and wash of the sea mingled with the sound of the wind in the treetops, and he dozed again and again, finally sinking into a heavy sleep with his back against a tree.

He started up suddenly in a sort of horror, broad awake, feeling as if he had not slept at all. Darkness was all around him, except in the circle of red glow from the low fire, and all the terror of his predicament came down upon him as if it had been gathering force while he slept.

He had come to the end of everything. He was cast away on what he knew to be a desolate and uninhabited coast, a hundred miles perhaps from any settlement, without food or any means of obtaining any, except the little automatic still in his pocket, which

he hardly knew how to use. He had lost the great race, lost the emeralds, lost his life, and lost Morrison's life, and Eva's too, if it happened that she had really gone on the expedition with her father.

He dragged the fire together and made it burn up. But he was too anguished now to sit still. There was a soaking fog in the air. The forest smelled of mold and death. He pushed out, blindly restless, toward the open shore again.

Out in the open he found the world full of a pale glow. The air was cloudy with fog, and a strong moon was shining through it. The crash of the surf was fainter. The wind had fallen.

Going down to the water's edge, it seemed a long way. Out through the fog he could see the wreck of the schooner, and he wondered what optical effect of haze made it seem only a stone's throw away. It was still spiked on its rock, but now seemed to stand in an almost vertical position, with the stern in the water. Then he grasped the fact that the tide was out.

The receding waters had left her scarcely fifty yards from shore. The waves ran with less violence now, for the barrier rocks, standing in a tall file above the surface, broke their force. And it immediately struck Lang that there was food in that schooner.

He was empty, starving. Instantly he started to wade out, bracing himself against the rollers. The shore sloped so gradually that he actually made most of the distance without going much over the waist; then it shelved suddenly, and he stumbled to his shoulders.

Treading warily for fear of a sudden plunge, he came within a fathom of the rock where the boat hung, and then the bottom went out of touch. He dipped under, but with a wallow and a few strokes he clutched the slippery edge of the crag, and got his hands on the schooner's rail.

Easily now he pulled himself up. The schooner's whole bottom seemed smashed out back of the bows, and a great spike of rock protruded through the hole. Everything movable in her must have tumbled down into the stern, and much of it, he was afraid, must have been washed out.

He slid down into the stern himself. Three feet of it was under water, but, as he groped down with his hands, he could feel a miscellaneous collection of loose objects—the handle of an ax, the head of a spade, and a rolling collection of tins, all mixed and tangled up with blankets, a tarpaulin, his own poncho, pieces of canvas and bits of cordage. He felt several loose potatoes which he fished out and put carefully in his pockets, and then extracted other objects one by one, dripping in the pallid light.

As he retrieved them he laid them in a wet blanket. He secured a lump of corn bread, water soaked and uneatable, a piece of dried beef, and one by one, most precious of all, tin after tin of American canned provisions. And among these he struck upon the priceless salvage of the emergency box of matches, its top still fast waxed.

How to get all these things ashore was a problem. Finally he tied them up sack-like in the blanket, with six feet of loose cord, and, holding the end of this, he ventured to jump.

It came near drowning him, but he held fast to the rope and came through, dragging the freight after him. Well above high-water mark on the shore he poured out the cargo and immediately went back for more.

This time he secured the rifle, but could find no cartridges. Its magazine was full, however, and he took it, with a hatchet, a spade, more loose potatoes, and several more food tins. He could find no cooking utensils of any sort, except the coffeepot, which seemed useless, as he had no coffee.

This load was cumbersome and hard to get ashore. He came near having to drop it, and when he landed he felt that his strength would permit no more of these excursions. He was wolfishly hungry, and with an armful of tins, whose labels he could not see, he plunged into the woods again toward his camp fire, which glowed redly through the misty jungle.

With the hatchet he was able to split fragments from the fallen tree, and he made a roaring blaze again. By its light he discovered that he had brought two tins of tomatoes, one of corn and two of vegetable soup—no very filling articles, any of them. He had no better can opener than the hatchet, but he hacked open the tomatoes and gulped down the contents, meanwhile setting the soup tins to heat, and laying several potatoes to roast at the edge of the fire.

While they cooked, he dried his clothes once more. The potatoes proved hard, tasteless, saltless, but they filled his inside, and, with the hot soup, a marvelous change was

wrought in him. Courage came back surprisingly. He had supplies now, enough for days, perhaps for weeks. Enough to carry him to La Carolina—enough to take him to the emerald glacier. It was possible that he might be in time, after all.

Hope and impatience came back to him as he huddled in the comforting warmth. The valley of the glacier might be a day's tramp away, or it might be three or four—hardly more than that. He could scarcely miss it if he followed down the coast. He would have to pack a heavy load of supplies, but he felt hardened to anything now. Meanwhile, rest was the first need. He forced himself to lie down, to close his eyes. He did not think he could sleep, but while plans still revolved through his mind he fell asleep.

When he awoke he was wet again. It was gray morning, and raining. The branches dripped dismally. Only a thread of smoke rose from the almost extinct fire. He split chips with the hatchet, got it blazing again, and went back to the beach for more food, much less buoyant than a few hours ago.

His little pile of salvage lay in a driving rain, and now he was able to see surely what he had. It was certainly more than he could ever carry on his back, and, worse yet, the tinued stuff seemed mostly vegetables. He picked out a tin of soup, however, and one of dried beef, and, returning to his fire, he opened them and ate.

Returning to the beach, he looked carefully over his stores again. It was useless, he thought, to carry the spade. The rifle and hatchet would be cumbersome enough. He sorted out such of the tinned goods as would give most nutriment for least weight, and found a good deal of soup, sardines, beef and salmon after all. One tin box that he had supposed to contain meat was full of candles, which he had brought with some vague idea of underground work. It occurred to him that they might be invaluable for lighting fires.

There was also a lump of salt beef weighing some four pounds, more than a dozen potatoes, the tin of matches, and he piled out twenty cans of food, which should be enough for ten days, or more at short rations. At any rate it was all he dared try to carry, and he tied all these articles together in the blanket much as he had dragged them from the schooner, and made a loop to go over his shoulder.

There was not the slightest use in delaying his start. He packed tins of corn and beans in all his pockets, put the hatchet in his belt, took the rifle in his hand, and started to tramp southward along the beach in the rain.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SHINING RIVER.

BY degrees the rain slackened down to a fine Scotch mist. Heavy fog veiled the mountains, and the sea was a vast void at his right hand. There was hard sand underfoot, making good walking; then it coarsened to loose gravel, and then alternated from one to the other. He groped inland through the fog in search of a better roadway, blundered into a bog of innumerable little rivulets, and got back to the beach again.

Every few minutes, it seemed, he had to wade or jump a creek that rushed down from the hills. The sky was invisible; he could see nothing beyond the hazy circle of a few yards. It was a gruesome and ghostly sort of pilgrimage, over an invisible landscape, which would have been wildly terrifying if he could have seen it, amid the shifting mist clouds, where the only life seemed to be the rushing, crashing surf beside him.

The weight at his back grew painful; the cord was cutting a groove in his shoulder. He readjusted it repeatedly, sat down to rest, grew chilled, started again, and plodded on till it seemed to him that it must surely be midday.

He opened one of the tins of baked beans in his pocket and consumed them cold, without wasting time on the probably impossible job of fire making. Again he tramped ahead, wet through, sweating with exertion, conscious at times of a queer elation and optimism. Considering all things carefully, it did not seem likely to him that Eva Morrison would have gone in the *Chita* with her father—a girl alone with three men. She must have remained in Valparaiso, and this growing conviction cheered him wonderfully. However the adventure should turn out, he felt sure that he would get back to Valparaiso somehow. He still had over five hundred dollars on him. It seemed a great resource, and he felt that luck had done its worst possible and that nothing ever could daunt him again.

All day he kept up that persevering trudge. Now and again the mist cleared a

little, and he caught glimpses of the forested mountain slopes and the desolate islands out across the channel. He crossed a great headland like Punta Reale, and rounded what seemed an immense bay. The going was nearly always hard and sometimes terrible, with mud or fog or tumbled rocks, and he had no idea of where the sun stood, or how the day was passing. His watch had been drowned and refused to go.

It was still daylight when he caught sight of the white gleam of a clump of birch trees on the slope above him, and he snatched at this piece of luck. He split and peeled off great rolls of bark, cut chips, and broke open a dead trunk to get at dry wood inside. With these aids, he was able to get a good fire under way, in spite of a heavy drizzle that started just then as if it meant to last.

But he was now growing used to being wet, and all he wanted was warmth and food. He broiled slices of the salt beef along with the roasting potatoes, and made a tin of vegetable soup hot. It was bad, but it was delicious. Lang swallowed it all greedily, and, to add to his comfort, the rain almost stopped when he dropped, hungering for sleep, on the piled heap of wet spruce branches.

He slept like a log, careless of wet clothing, but was awakened before daybreak by heavy rain. The fire was drowned out. There was no use trying to relight it. He huddled wretchedly under his blanket for some time, while a wet, gray light came slowly up; and finally ate a cold roasted potato and cold corned beef from a tin, gathered up his stores, and set out doggedly.

That day was very like the preceding. The ground was bad, the shore line growing rougher. It rained for three hours, and then settled into a woolly, clinging fog. About the middle of the day he contrived to build a fire, made hot soup, and slept an hour, and made the better speed for it afterward.

His strength was holding out better than he ever would have expected. He felt capable of going on and on, fallen into a sort of mechanical movement. His mind grew lethargic; he almost forgot at times where he was, what he was heading for; the memory of the emeralds, of Morrison, of Eva was dull in his brain. Hour after hour he plodded on in this numb stupidity, indifferent as any animal to the wind and wet, when he suddenly trod upon something that startled him like a blow.

It was the black, scattered cinders of a fire.

In the sudden shock he thought first of Carroll. But the second glance told him that the fire was old. The ashes were scattered, wet, beaten into the earth. They did not look quite like wood ashes, either; they were full of black charred pieces of stone. It looked like coal. It *was* coal, and Lang remembered now that Morrison and Floyd had found an outcrop of coal on the coast and had used it for their camp fires.

He had hit the spot; it could not be otherwise. He stared about through the blanketing fog. He made a wide circuit, found nothing more, hurried forward, and came to the edge of a deep and steep ravine. As he stood there he became aware of a strange, cold smell in the air, not like the odor of the mountains or the sea.

He could not see what was at the bottom of the ravine, and he walked up and down the bank a little way, then turned back. Returning to the fire spot, he looked about for the coal outcrop that had fed it. He wanted it for his own fire, for he was not going to leave that spot till he had found for certain what lay around him.

He looked for a long time before he found it, a hundred yards up the hillside, amid scattered growths of stunted cedars. There were shallow, shelving veins of the black, slaty-looking stuff, and clear marks where fragments had been broken away with a tool.

It would take a hot fire to start that inferior coal, and he had infinite trouble in finding kindling—birch bark and dry wood. What he could find he piled right against the coal seam, for he could see no object in making his fireplace elsewhere.

He sacrificed one of his candles to light the damp wood, spilling the flaming wax on the kindling, and eventually the coal began to snap and flare gassily. It was evidently bituminous, and of the lowest possible quality, but it burned at last with a strong heat that was greatly superior to that of the wet wood.

Lang prepared his usual supper, longing for the fog to clear. There was an orange glow through the smother as the sun went down, promising clearing weather; but as it grew dark and the moon shone the air was like cotton wool. The fire burned red, eating into the coal seam, exploding startlingly as lumps of stone burst, and Lang

wondered in vain if this coal meant proximity to the glacier gate. Morrison had, he thought, made many camps all along the shore, and this might be miles from the final one.

He lay awake for a long time, but finally slept lightly and uneasily. He dreamed of the *Chita,* which might be lying offshore within a mile of him even now.

He awoke suddenly with light shining in his face. It was brilliant moonlight. He sat up. The sky was all clear, but for a faint film of fairy haze.

He was on a long rocky hillside, sprinkled with clumps of small evergreens, sloping to the sea, and rising the other way to the black density of forests. But this was only by a glimpse. All that held his eye was a river of white, a vast, clear sheet of radiance that split the forested mountainside.

He jumped up, dazzled, and ran toward its nearest point. He came to the edge of the ravine. There was a valley below him, a gravelly beach, the wash of the sea, a sound of running streams. A few hundred yards shoreward the valley was cut sharp across by what seemed a snowy wall, a glittering gate, going back and rising, rising perpetually toward the sky, luminous and white against the low moon, as if a flood of light itself had been poured out from the heavens and frozen into solidity.

CHAPTER XVI.

AGAINST THE GATE.

IT was the place—he could not possibly doubt it. Was he the first to reach it? Struck with anxiety, he hurried down to the sea, where the land fell off sharply in a steep bluff. No craft lay in the great bay that was the extension of the valley. Out in the wide channel he could see nothing on the water, neither boat nor light, nor camp fire on the shore.

He had won the race, after all; and now he could hardly be taken unawares, for he could surely hear the *Chita's* engines for a long way. He returned to his camp, however, and cleaned and dried his firearms, taking out and wiping the cartridges, trying the action, finally putting the pistol in his pocket and laying the rifle away under sheets of dry bark.

To save time he ate his breakfast, knowing that it must be near dawn by the moon. While he ate he gazed at the magnificent spectacle of the glacier, which, as he finished began to grow dim at its upper edge, and presently to redden faintly.

Too impatient to wait for full daylight, he hastened to the edge of the valley, and scrambled down the twenty-foot precipitous sides. The ravine was nearly half a mile wide, a dismal gulch of wet gravel, all of it probably drift from the glacier, and it was several hundred yards farther up to where the ice wall blocked the valley from side to side, and even slightly bulged over the edges.

He walked up to the barrier. The ice wall towered above him, perhaps forty or fifty feet high in some places, indescribably ancient looking, greenish, full of streaks and beds of frozen gravel. It was melting fast. Streams of water ran out everywhere, and down the center splashed a good-sized cascade springing from a sort of cavern that the stream had hollowed from the ice, and tumbling over rocks that might be either drift or the underlying earth itself.

Here it must be that Morrison had found the stones, and here he must have climbed and fallen and broken his ribs. Lang searched through the wet gravel, poking it with a stick, but found nothing that looked even remotely like any sort of crystal. The rocks were wet and icy and slippery, but he was considerably younger and more active than the explorer, and he scrambled up to the source of the stream without great difficulty.

According to Morrison's theory, the rock or gravel containing the emerald "pocket" lay somewhere back in the ice, whence a few odd stones had been washed out, probably by this very streamlet. Lang had imagined himself chopping away the ice, following the stream back, till it led him infallibly to the jewels; but he had by no means realized the immense magnitude of the undertaking. It might not be this stream at all; it might be any other of the scores of them; he might have to tunnel back for yards, hundreds of yards. He need hardly have feared being forestalled by any one; for there might be a whole summer's work in the digging out of the treasure.

Considerably dashed, and scarcely knowing how to begin, he climbed out of the valley, and once more reconnoitered the sea. He returned to camp and got the hatchet, wishing in vain for the lost ax and pick, made his way back to the little ice cave of

the cascade, and began to hew into the glacier.

The ice was rotten and soft. It was not frozen water, of course, but compressed, frozen snow, fallen on the upper heights, and slowly, slowly sliding down toward the sea, a mile, perhaps, in a century. There was plenty of frozen gravel embedded in it, and Lang scrutinized it all closely, but without discovering any green stones. Spattered with water, covered with ice chips, he worked a narrow tunnel back a long way, perhaps for ten feet, breaking through beds of sand and stones of all sizes, several fairly large rocks, some pieces of ancient wood; and then the stream he was tracking broke into four or five rivulets, each coming from a different direction.

He had never thought of such a thing. He had no idea from which of these streamlets Morrison's emeralds might have come. He hewed a little farther mechanically, and then gave up, at a loss.

He crept back to the outer air, much discouraged. The enormity of the task loomed larger than ever. The problem of that half mile of ice staggered him.

He walked along the valley, scrutinizing the glacier end. Twice he hewed tentatively into fissures whence strong, muddy streams were gushing. The sun had clouded over; the clear morning was growing misty, threatening the inevitable rain. It was getting toward noon, he thought and he returned to his camp for refreshment and to think the problem over.

His coal fire was still burning, and after he had eaten he busied himself at making a shelter, a sort of low shed of poles and bark and cedar branches, which would shoot off the worst of the rains. Complete dryness was not to be hoped for, in this climate, though in Boston he would have thought such vicissitudes certain death.

He was suddenly amazed at his own health and hardiness. He had been shipwrecked, had tramped with a heavy load for Heaven knew how many miles, had been wet day and night, had lived on the most undesirable diet, and in spite of it all he felt rough, tough and full of energy, without so much as a cold. His nervous breakdown had vanished; so had all his mental torture at what Boston thought of his collapse; and all his terror of the future. He did not care a continental for Boston, nor for the whole medical profession! He remembered that the Northern physicians had prescribed for him sea air and a moist and depressing climate. They must have been right, and he had assuredly come to the right place for moisture.

That afternoon he made an exhaustive search of all the expanse of gravel under the glacier, on the chance that the rest of the emeralds might have been already washed out. It took him nearly all the afternoon, and he found a small scrap of rock full of greenish, glasslike veins, which might have been "emerald matrix," or might not.

That was the sole fruit of his prospecting. He ended at the other side of the valley, and climbed to the top and came back across the surface of the glacier. It was crumbly and softening. Little streams ran everywhere, some falling down the glacier's front, others dribbling into cracks and fissures. There were a great many of these crevices of all sizes, some of them a yard wide, and it occurred to Lang that he might learn something of the interior of the glacier by letting down a candle at the end of a cord, or he might be even able to scramble down himself.

Evening came early, foggy and drizzling as usual. He went to look at the sea from the coast, but could not distinguish anything beyond a hundred yards. At any rate, there was no *Chita* in the bay.

A snowslide came down the glacier that night with a tremendous roar and rumble. Lang started up in a panic, imagining that he had heard engines. It was heavily foggy, and he was not quite sure what had really happened until morning, when he found a vast heap of snow at the foot of the glacier, covering up the tunnel he had hewn out the day before.

It was still darkly foggy, but not raining, and there was no wind as he went up the slope to the glacier, carrying a long, thin cord, a pocketful of candles, and the hatchet. The snowslide had mostly discharged itself over the glacier's edge, but a good deal had clung to the surface of the ice. It was light, fresh snow, and it had been flung up in great ridges and drifts where the slide had struck any obstruction. The small ice cracks were covered over, but the larger crevices had swallowed up the snow and stood open.

Lang looked down into several of them, deep and dark and precipitous, going farther

down than he could see. None of the depths showed any rock or gravel, however, and he turned down toward the tongue of the glacier.

He was fifty yards, perhaps, from its edge, plowing through the snow, when he felt the surface give way under him. He made a wild plunge aside—too late! A vast mass of snow seemed to dislodge itself, vanish, and everything dropped from under his feet.

He snatched at something that went past, a projecting crag of ice amid the whirl of snow, caught it, clung for half a second, and his hand slipped off. He went down—down—losing breath, and landing in a great mass of loose snow in which he went clear under.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HEART OF THE GLACIER.

PROBABLY the loose snow saved him from broken bones, but, in spite of its softness, the breath was knocked almost out of him. Gasping and smothering, he clawed his way wildly out of his burial. His eyes opened on a dim, cold twilight, on whitish-green walls that rose up and up till they inclosed a foggy-dim gap that was the outer air.

He crawled entirely out of the snow, immensely relieved to find himself unbroken, and got his breath back. He was at the bottom of a crevice, or crevasse, fifteen or twenty feet deep, and three or four feet wide, that extended into darkness both ways. The problem of getting out was before him. He would have to cut steps in the perpendicular ice walls. It did not look at all impossible, nor even very difficult, for he could make his footholds in both walls, straddling the big fissure as he ascended.

His hatchet had fallen from his belt, but he found it by groping in the snow. He cut a couple of steps, and raised himself into them. It was going to be more difficult than he had thought. The crevice was too wide to keep a foot on each side with any ease. He came down, and looked toward the dim farther end of the fissure. He had wanted to see the interior of the glacier, and it would be a pity to climb out without utilizing this opportunity.

He made his way along the bottom of the crack, which came to a sharp edge under his feet. It was not quite dark; a queer, pale twilight seemed to filter in from everywhere. Water was dripping from the top, trickling down the walls and along the bottom; and all at once his feet went from under him and he glissaded down a wet, slippery incline, unable to check himself. He brought up against something solid at last, on his back in pitch darkness; and somehow, he hardly knew how, he scrambled back up that slope almost as fast as he had slid down it. At the top he lay flat, out of breath, horror stricken at the thought of what he might have escaped.

He made his way back to the heap of snow where he had fallen in. In the other direction the crevice appeared to slope upward. It promised an easier way to the top than scaling the sheer wall, and he ventured along it, feeling very cautiously ahead at every step.

It did rise, wet and slippery and almost as steep as a stair, where lumps of stone in the ice afforded him all his foothold. He was hopeful of getting close enough to the top to hack a way through when the crevice ended against a hard, impenetrable slab of frozen gravel.

Impossible to go any farther this way, but, as he groped about in the dimness, he saw daylight through a small crack at his right hand. It was only a few inches wide, but he heard the dripping of water, and knew that it must be in connection with the upper air.

He widened it a little with the hatchet. There was certainly greater space beyond. In high hope, he hewed the ice out of an opening wide enough for his head to pass, and afterward for his body.

He saw a six-foot space, dimly lighted from above, narrowing away in both directions. The bottom, apparently of fresh snow and ice, was shortly below him. He crept through his orifice without any doubt, hung by his hands, and let go.

His feet crashed through the apparent flooring that collapsed all around him. He slid and slithered helplessly in a slush of wet snow that slid with him, down, it seemed, out of the light, till he found himself wedged fast. His legs and half his body were down in or through a tight opening, from which he could not extricate himself. He was too scared to think. Madly he hacked at the ice with the hatchet to which he had still clung. And almost at the first blow a large flake of the squeezing ice fell off, dropped, and he dropped with it.

He went down so unexpectedly that he did not even clutch at anything, and landed on his feet with a hard jar, slipped, fell and scrambled to his knees.

Complete darkness was all around him, except that, a dozen feet above his head, he saw the faintly dim outline of the opening that had let him through. He felt around him. His feet were wedged in a sharp angle. The walls appeared to diverge as they arose. Then for the first time he remembered the candles and matches he carried.

With trembling fingers he felt for them. Three only of the candles were left; the others had fallen from his pocket. After losing three precious matches, he got one of the lights ablaze.

The illumination was wonderfully comforting. The homely light quieted his terror. Almost calmly he surveyed the place where he had trapped himself.

At the first glance he saw that it would be impossible to climb without assistance back to that opening above, which was like a trapdoor in the ceiling of a room. He was in an enormous V-shaped ice crack, narrow at the bottom, widening to the top. Behind him the fissure narrowed abruptly to a mere crevice; in the other direction it seemed to extend some way into the darkness, growing smaller.

Lang quailed with a horrible sense of helplessness, of impending doom. He cursed his own panic, that had led him into this trap. With a little caution he might have got himself free up there, made his way back to his original entrance, climbed out—— Useless now to think of it! The only possible escape now seemed to be to cut and heap up quantities of ice in a pile so high that he could reach the roof of his cavern, and he began to hew into the wall almost hysterically.

He scraped the flakes and chips of ice back under the hole in the top. Working violently, he made a huge cavity in the wall, a huge pile on the triangular bottom. His hatchet went through into another opening. He was amazed, in a dim way, at the number of fissures that seemed to honeycomb what he had supposed a solid block of ice. They must be the result of centuries of warming and cooling, winter and summer, as the glacier flowed slowly down the mountain.

He did not look through into the new fissure he disclosed. He continued to cut, piling the ice chips, till he stopped, discouraged all at once, realizing the futility of this. The loose ice flakes gave no foothold; they slid and sank under him. Without completely filling the chamber he could never get himself to the ceiling.

In a nervous panic he seized the candle and made for the other end of the cavern, where there might be an outlet. It grew lower; he stooped, crawled on his knees; and then it ended suddenly with a black hole in the floor that struck him with terror. It seemed to go down to unutterable abysses.

He scrambled back again, and looked into the crevice he had cut into. There was a tall, narrow fissure there, just big enough to allow his body to pass sidewise. He enlarged the opening, squeezed through, and began to edge along the passage.

It really seemed to lead upward. He had a gleam of hope again. The walls were full of streaks and beds of frozen gravel, and he had enough revival of life to glance curiously into them; but they held no sign of emerald crystals. The passage grew wider, then narrower, and then began to descend. He was mortally afraid of the slope. The candle could not show what was at the bottom. He halted for long minutes, wondering, dreading. But there was no use in going back.

He went down with the utmost slowness and precaution. The slope, however, was only for a couple of yards, and then the passage rose horizontal, and then forked into two. One of them closed presently into a mere rift, too narrow for a cat; and he came back to the other. Along it he edged his way for some ten feet, and then stumbled and dropped through another hole in the bottom.

It was only six feet, and he could have pulled himself up again, but he felt weak and exhausted. He semed to be in a sort of round cavity, and he lay huddled where he had fallen. There was no trickle of moisture there; the air was dry and dead, and heavy and silent like the grave itself.

He must have dozed involuntarily, for he awoke in a panic. Sleep was deadly; it would mean the frost-sleep, from which a man does not awaken. He got up, swung his arms, stamped his feet. His mind felt dazed. He forgot the opening through which he had dropped, and crept on hands and knees into a sort of burrow that led out of one end of his cavern.

How long he thus burrowed through the heart of the glacier he never could quite guess. Time was blurred to him. He tried to fix his mind on the next movement, excluding everything else, telling himself incessantly that he was sure, sooner or later, to find a way out. He must have gone over the same ground many times; in fact, he fancied afterward that perhaps he was much of the time merely passing up and down the same series of ice fissures, circling blindly. The first candle gave out. Anxious to save them, he crawled in the dark for some time, till the terror of it was more than he could bear; and he lighted another. From time to time he stopped, stupid with exhaustion, and half dozed, and was awakened by the subconscious warning. The icy chill penetrated his very bones. More and more forcibly it began to impress his mind that freezing was a painless death.

But the deep roots of self-preservation lived in him and drove him on. He tried to warm his hands over the candle flame; he tried to speak, to restore his courage, but the dead sound of his voice was horrible. He did not know any longer through what labyrinths he had come, and he took any opening that he could find, splitting space with his hatchet when there was not room to get through, and more and more often sinking down in a collapse that was each time more and more prostrating.

He put the candle out to save it and leaned against the ice, hardly feeling the chill. It seemed—he *knew*—it was not worth while to go on. Queer memories and fancies flitted uncontrollably through his brain like waking dreams. Shipwreck and danger—Boston—Carroll—Eva Morrison—they were remote like dreams, evoking no reaction.

He became entirely unconscious, and came back to himself with the usual start and scare. The dead dark frightened him. He fumbled for his matches; struck one, lighted the candle. As he held up the clear, bright flame he saw, through a thin veil of ice, a human face looking into his own!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CAMP OF THE DEAD.

THE sight was like a part of his own nightmares, and mingled with them. He stared at the face, dark and distorted behind a pale sheet of ice, and it dawned upon him that it was real.

In a spasm of unbearable horror and bewilderment he wheeled and stumbled away down the passage. Within a few feet he halted, collecting himself. The thing could not possibly be real. He went back, drawn by a horrible fascination.

He held up the candle and looked again. He could see the head quite distinctly through the semitransparent ice, with the dim shadow of a body under it. It was no vision. It must be, he slowly realized, the body of some unfortunate Indian, who had perished on the glacier long ago, and became sealed into the ice.

Delicately with his hatchet he chipped a little at the ice about the head. A long flake split away. The shoulder came in sight, covered with a skin garment. The shaggy hairs clung in the frozen material. And then he thought he saw the dim loom of another form, beyond the first.

It was some irresistible fascination of horror that led him to excavate around these grim remains. He chipped away the ice from around the first body, intensely careful not to wound the flesh, and saw that there was indeed a second corpse. They were sitting, huddled close together, and a little more chopping brought to light a foot wrapped in untanned moccasins that did not belong to either of these two.

There was a whole party, and it was not hard to reconstruct the story of the tragedy. The Indians had tried to cross the glacier, probably in a winter storm. Morrison had said there was a pass at the top of the glacier. They had been caught in a blizzard, lost, snowed under, and frozen as they huddled together. The glacier had engulfed their bodies, and, in its infinitely slow progression, had brought them at last down to sea level, uncorrupted as when they had perished—how many centuries ago?

It came upon him that he might well sit down with this prehistoric company and join its sleep. It would come to that in the end, and he would be melted out of the glacier along with them. The candle flickered down. It was burned out, in spite of all his efforts to economize it. As if it had been an omen, he hurriedly lighted another, and looked again at the motionless, huddled figures in the cavern he had hollowed out.

He was not sure how many were in the party; there might be four, or perhaps more than that. Except the one which lay prostrate, they were in sitting postures, leaning

together. The faces were somewhat shrunken, the eyes closed, the heads slightly bowed, the coarse black hair protruded from the fur hoods.

They looked as if they had died yesterday. Lang thought of Morrison's archæological enthusiasm, and imagined his excitement if he could have witnessed this find. The nearest Indian had a rude copper knife, green with incrustation, in his belt, with something like a bundle of arrows, and Lang tried gingerly to pull away the frozen furs to see these weapons.

The stiff hide would not give. He hacked it a little with the hatchet edge, cut a long gash, and pulled the frozen edges apart. He must have cut into some sack. Out of the rent came a stream of pebbles and bits of rock, that glittered with green and yellow and diamond points in the candlelight.

He picked one of them out of the litter of ice chips, curiously, not realizing what it might be. It was a rough bit of greenish crystal, six-sided, the size of a beechnut, half embedded in a brownish bit of rock. It was mostly dull surfaced, but as he turned it over a brilliant green sparkle shot out, and it was only then that he realized what he had found.

He had forgotten all about the emeralds in these last terrible hours. The memory came back to him with a shock. He gasped with confusion and amazement. He had come to the end of his quest. He had broken the glacier gate. He had found the green stones.

Forgetful of everything else for the moment, he stooped and gathered them out of the ice. There must have been a quart of the pebbles, of different sizes, of different colors, too. There were blue and green ones, crystals white like diamonds, and lumps of stone showing merely abortive flecks and veins of green—emerald matrix, he thought. It struck him that the Indians had had little knowledge, and had gathered indiscriminately everything that was crystalline.

He had indeed cut into a skin sack at the Indian's belt, and, investigating it, he found still another handful of stones remaining. Some of these must be indubitable emeralds—splendid green crystals as large as the end of his thumb, almost clear of rock. Their possible flawing, and whether they could be cut to advantage, he was unable to guess; but they must be immensely valuable. With death all about him, and his own death impending over him, he sat by the pile of jewels and gloated, oblivious.

This was certainly the source of the emeralds that Morrison had found. There was no mine, no "pocket" in the glacier. These aborigines must have been messengers, burden carriers. They were taking the stones from the place where they had been found—perhaps a hundred miles away—to some other unknown point, perhaps as tribute to their chief, perhaps destined for the Incas of far-away Peru. But how they had been washed out of the glacier he could not imagine, for there was no water, no dribble of moisture in this cavity.

Then the inevitable thought of the futility of it all came down black and crushing. He had found the treasure, and must stay trapped with it. The glacier gate would not open to let him out. He had wealth here; it represented power. It was enough to set all the wheels of Boston turning, to drive a steamer across the Atlantic. Strange that it could not lift the thirty feet of ice over his head!

Yet the mysterious suggestion of present wealth and power did provide strength to his soul. It seemed impossible that he could be going to perish beside that heap of precious stones. Luck had turned before when it was at the worst; and he could not refrain from examining the other bodies to see if they too carried emeralds.

The next nearest, when the skin wrappings were cut away, had a stone-headed club at its belt, and a bag indeed, but containing nothing but flint arrowheads. The prostrate figure came next, and he chipped away the ice to get at its waist. It carried no baggage at all, but a sort of spear shaft showed frozen under its body.

The fourth Indian was still embedded in ice, except for the arm and shoulder nearest him. Lang began to chip and hew to clear the body, and was working around to the other side, when the hatchet crashed through a thin ice wall into an open space beyond. He broke the aperture wider, and put his head through cautiously, with the arm holding the candle.

There was another of the usual fissures, a couple of feet wide. In splitting, the parting edges had torn the Indian's body partly asunder; in fact, one leg was sticking in the ice on the other side. But Lang, hardened to horrors, hardly noticed this gruesome cir-

cumstance. He heard the ripple of water. There was a little stream flowing down the rounded bottom of the fissure.

More than that, he saw at once that the rending ice had torn the Indian's skin swathings; green pebbles glittered in the tattered fur, and green stones lay scattered at the bottom of the running water.

Here was surely the direct source of Morrison's find. The water came in, no doubt, from the melting at the top of the glacier. It must go out where the emeralds had gone. He had only to follow it to the outlet.

At this positive direction and hope Lang had a shock and revolution in his soul that first dizzied him, and then changed to an almost agonizing ecstasy of joy. He had accepted death more fully than he had realized. With trembling fingers he fished up the green stones from the water, chipping them out where they were frozen into the ice bottom. He picked them out from the torn skin bag, collecting another half pint, of all sorts. He did not pick them over, but among them were two huge crystals nearly as large as small eggs, though both were rocky and flawed at the ends.

He crept back to his first position and hastily gathered up the stones he had left there. It was a problem how to carry them. He was afraid to trust his pockets; they might spill out if he tumbled. Finally he tied his trouser legs tightly around his ankles and poured the stones inside, half in each leg. They rasped and bulged uncomfortably, but he had them safe from spilling. By an afterthought he took the green-rusted copper knife, thinking of Morrison, squeezed back through the hole he had cut, and began to follow the streamlet down the ice crevice.

He was able to walk perhaps a dozen feet, and then the fissure grew too small for passage, though the rivulet slipped through uninterruptedly. Here he found another small green crystal, and now he had to hew away the ice to make way for himself.

He attacked it with energetic strength. It could not be many yards, perhaps not many feet, to the end of the glacier, he thought. At every stroke he half expected to feel the blade break through. He pushed the chips back behind him, hewing and hacking, cutting a tunnel just wide and high enough to creep through, while the little stream ran merrily between his feet.

He cut for a yard—two yards. He put out the candle lest he might have greater need later, and worked in darkness, guided by the feel of the water. The stream dropped through a fissure in the floor. Only a yard, but it terrified him lest it had gone far beyond following; and he had to hew a way down after it and pursue it again on its new level.

He sweated and panted in spite of the chill. Then his feverish energy collapsed suddenly. He got himself back out of the water and lay back, hard put to it to keep awake. Again he forced himself into the tunnel, hewed another ten feet, paused to rest, worked again and again collapsed. He half dozed into a deadly nightmare, awoke shuddering and plunged frenziedly at the work again. It seemed to him that he had driven his tunnel far enough to pierce the whole glacier.

Queer terrors beset him. He fancied that the Indians were stirring back there in the darkness—they were coming down the passageway behind him. He had to relight the candle to steady his nerves. He began to fear that he was on the wrong course after all; and the horror of this possibility almost took the heart out of him.

He stopped to rest again; again attacked the ice, and was encouraged by finding another small rivulet flowing in to increase the first. A yard farther, and his hatchet smashed through into space. He split the screen of ice apart and crawled through.

It was not the open air. It was an ice cavern; the floor was covered with chips of ice, and the farther end blocked with translucent white. For a second he thought he had come back into one of his own tunnels; but there was daylight in the place, and it was snow that blocked the opening.

He recognized it then. It was the cavern he had dug out the day before, in his attempt to follow the stream backward. He plunged at the snow. There must have been a couple of yards of it, but he wallowed through, and fell outside in a collapse of exhaustion, of nerve tension, of relief.

He awoke from a minute of dizzy oblivion. The world was veiled in the thickest fog he had ever seen. Nothing was visible. He could hear the sea and smell its freshness, but all around him was like a pressure of cold, wet steam.

By some intuition of direction he knew that his camp was out to the right of the valley. The thought of the fire, of food,

roused a desire in him that was like a madness. He crawled through the snowslide that had filled the valley, came to its edge, and out upon the wet, stony earth.

His knees sank under him. He could not walk, but was reduced to creeping. He would have been an extraordinary sight for his Boston patients—wet to the skin, dirty, with a week's growth of beard, his clothes torn and mud colored, covered with ice chips, as he crawled on all fours like a wild beast, still clutching the hatchet unconsciously, and muttering to himself.

Several times he sank in a heap, unable even to crawl. The earth seemed to heave and move under him, and strange shapes went past in the fog. He smelled, he thought, the faint sulphurous smell of his coal smoke—or was it hallucination? He crawled in that direction. An illusory voice spoke to him. He came in sight of his camp; dimly he saw his bark shelter, and beside it he saw a seated figure, a woman's figure, wrapped in a dark poncho, with a striped scarf. It was Eva Morrison's figure, and he knew that this too was an illusion which would presently dissolve.

CHAPTER XIX.

RESURRECTION.

HE felt the ground warm under him, the divine warmth of the fire, and he let himself fall at full length and shut his eyes. A phantom voice faintly penetrated his ears.

"Are you hurt? Oh, you poor, poor boy! Where have you been?"

To answer was beyond him. It was all a strange dream. He felt himself gently pulled forward. The warmth grew yet more heavenly. His face was wiped; it must be a nurse, he thought, with a dim idea of a hospital. He was covered up with something. It seemed to him that some one had kissed him. It was a celestial dream.

He must really have lapsed into profound unconsciousness. He seemed to be dragged out of depths like death by somebody lifting his head, and repeatedly telling him to take something until the words penetrated to his mind. He opened his lips without opening his eyes, felt something warm and wet, swallowed obediently. It was soup, hot and strong. A few mouthfuls went down, and ran through his whole system like a stimulant. He looked up.

He saw a face that he knew. It was upside down as he looked at it. His head was on a woman's lap, and she was holding the tin of soup to his lips. It was no hallucination. A sense of warm, full contentment came over him, and quite automatically he put the soup aside, put up his arm weakly, and drew that face down to his own.

The contact was warm, electric. His brain cleared suddenly into full wakefulness.

"Eva—Eva!" he exclaimed. "It's you? It's impossible."

She gently disengaged her head, and he saw that she was flushed and her eyes were winking with tears, and her face beamed.

"Don't talk now," she said. "Drink the rest of this."

He knew she was right. He swallowed the rest of the contents of the tin that she held to his lips, looking at her meanwhile, marveling. These things seemed miraculous to him. His strength came back as he drank, and he realized the crisis that must be upon him—since Eva was here.

"What's the situation?" he asked. "Where's your father? Is he better? And Carroll—and the *Chita?* How do you come to be here ashore. There must be danger. Tell me. I'm all right now."

"Father's much better. He's not strong yet, but he can talk almost as well as ever. The *Chita* is out there in the bay. How did you know her name? Father is aboard her, and Carrero and Diego—two Chileans who don't speak anything but Spanish."

"Carrero—Diego? So they speak nothing but Spanish? Of course! Doesn't Morrison suspect who they are?"

"Of course he knows they're enemies—now. We got them in Valparaiso. Father was desperately anxious to get here as fast as he could. He thought—he believed—that you——"

"I know!" Lang exclaimed as she hesitated. "He thought I was trying to beat him to it. I don't blame him. It looked awfully fishy. I'll explain. Go on."

"But I didn't think it," Eva hastened to say. "I knew there was something wrong. I was worried—dreadfully afraid. Carrero met my father soon after we got to Valparaiso, and offered him the boat. It seemed just the thing. We had it fitted out, and started, and we joined it at Talhuna. We were three days out before father suspected anything wrong.

"He didn't tell me much, but he gave me a little pistol to wear always. I could feel

danger in the air. Father decided to go on to La Carolina, and take aboard two or three men whom he knew well, but Carrero refused to go. He seemed to know the way to this place, and he ran the boat into the bay early this morning, and demanded that father lead them to the emeralds. He offered to share them equally.

"Of course father refused. They argued and threatened for hours. Finally they put me ashore, and said that I would stay there till the emeralds were found."

"The devils!" Lang exclaimed. "I'll maroon Carroll for this."

"Oh, I wasn't afraid, for myself," said Eva. "I knew they wouldn't dare keep me here long. I climbed up the bank in the fog, and walked about, and then I smelled smoke, and came upon your fire. Do you know, I just knew at once that it was your camp. I sat down and waited. I'd been here hours. Then I saw you coming. I shall never forget how you looked—as if you'd come from the dead."

"From the dead? So I had!" cried Lang. He sat up and burst the knotted strings around his ankles. A stream of wet, rolling, twinkling crystals rolled out, pebbles and bits of rock and chips of ice along with them. Eva gave a little, startled cry.

"I've been through hell and the glacier. I think I bored the glacier from end to end. I came from the dead, all right, and I brought back what I went for. Here they are—the emeralds!"

"The emeralds—those little stones? And so few?"

"So few? They may be worth a million dollars—sure to be, if they're all perfect. But they aren't. And there's a lot of rubbish mixed with them. I couldn't sort them there in the dark."

A shudder went through him at the memory of that ghastly ice cavern. It seemed unreal now as a distant nightmare. He began to pick out pieces of rock and discard them. Eva turned the stones over in her fingers with more respect.

"Look at this one—and this!" he said, "and think of what the jewelers charge you for a little emerald the size of a pea. And this! It would be worth a fortune in itself, but I'm afraid it's imperfect. The smaller ones are better."

By the daylight he could gauge the stones, and he was able to throw out a great many obviously worthless bits, rough greenish matrix, or plain fragments of stone. Between them they sorted the heap. Eva laid her little striped scarf on the ground, and they placed the pick of the stones upon it in a little, growing pile; and meanwhile Lang gave her a hurried, abbreviated account of his adventures—his kidnaping, his voyages, his shipwreck and subsequent struggles.

"Oh, what hardships! How you have suffered!" Eva exclaimed, almost tearfully. "And all for *this*," pointing to the jewel heap; "it wasn't worth it."

"No, it wasn't," said Lang. "But it wasn't all for that. It was—— Well, if those emeralds should bring a million dollars they'd never be worth the feeling I had when I opened my eyes just now and saw your face looking down at me—and it was upside down, too."

He looked into her eyes, half smiling, half appealingly. He could not mistake the look of tenderness in the brown eyes that met his unreluctantly. A surge of pride, of exultation rose through him. He put out his hand; but before he touched her the girl's face changed sharply. She uttered a faint, startled cry; and Lang, jerking about, caught a glimpse of a huge, blurred figure emerging soundlessly from the fog, already hardly ten feet away.

He saw the black beard, the fur cap sparkling with drops of moisture; and without a word he snatched at the automatic pistol in his hip pocket.

"Drop that! Drop it, Lang, I say!" cried Carroll sharply, already with his weapon drawn. But Lang desperately pulled the trigger. The wet mechanism stuck.

"Hands up, Lang—both of you—or I'll drop you cold!" Carroll ordered, drawing a bead on the doctor's chest; and Lang savagely hurled the useless pistol down and put up his hands. Carroll looked triumphantly at them both.

"Do you know, I half expected to find you here," he remarked. "Yes, I sort of guessed you'd got ahead of us, though I'm damned if I see how you did it. But you always were quick."

His eyes fell suddenly on the little heap of stones. He bent forward, then straightened up with a hissed ejaculation, tense, glaring.

"You did it after all, did you? Get back —keep back!"

He bent again and gathered up the scarf,

drew the emeralds together and knotted up the corners, keeping a keen eye on his prisoners. He slipped the extemporized sack into his pocket, with a red-and-white scarf end hanging out.

"You stay where you are for half an hour," he commanded. "I'll be watching you. One move, and it'll be the last you'll make."

He edged away, his face over his shoulder. His figure was growing faint in the fog, when Lang leaped toward the bark layers that covered his rifle. He snatched it out, aimed, fired, once—twice at the vanishing form. It seemed to lurch, stumble; and a pale flash came back from it, with a bullet that knocked up the fire cinders. Lang fired again, and then the figure had entirely disappeared.

"He mustn't get back to the boat!" he exclaimed. "We must head him off."

Once aboard, he realized like a flash, Carroll would put on the power and leave them marooned. He started impulsively away, halted dizzily, not knowing in which direction lay the sea.

Eva took his hand and guided him. A breeze had risen, and the fog was sweeping in, huge pillars and billows of it. Through its blinding density they ran together down the slope, and must have been near the water when Lang heard a sound of hurrying footsteps ahead.

He had expected that. He drew Eva aside into the shelter of a dense cedar shrub. A figure grew in the fog, growing to a slim, boyish form, running so as to pass directly where Lang stood. He stepped suddently out.

"Is that you, Carroll?" exclaimed the runner. "What was that shooting? Hell!"

Lang's rifle was already swinging, but the gunman was so swift that he already had his revolver clear of his pocket when the steel rifle barrel crashed down on his skull. He dropped limply, flinging his arms wide. Lang picked up the pistol and stood listening. No sound came from landward.

"We've headed him off," he said. "Go on board, Eva, and tell your father what's happened. Tell him to let no one aboard. I suppose he's armed. I've got to get our treasure back."

She hesitated dumbly. He gathered her into his arms with a passionate impulse, holding her close, kissing her wet face, her lips. She clung to him, her eyes shut, responding to his kisses, until he let her go, looking dazed and dreamy.

"Go aboard quickly, dearest," he said.

"You're going to risk your life—you mustn't!" she murmured.

"Trust me. Don't worry. Just go aboard," he answered, and wheeled, casting another look at the senseless, or dead Louie.

He ran back up the slope, his rifle cocked, looking about him keenly. In his excitement he had no sense of danger. The thought that the emeralds should be lost at this stage was maddening to him, after all the horrors he had gone through to get them. But he knew that Carroll could not have gone far; he could make no final escape on that desolate coast; he would assuredly be rounded up.

He came to the place where Carroll had disappeared. Searching the ground closely, he found spots of blood. Carroll had really been hit, then; but it could not have been severely, for he had gone on, and the blood-drops ended after the first few yards.

A scout might have trailed him, but it was vain for Lang to try. He prowled forward in the direction Carroll had been taking, rifle ready to shoot, realizing now that he was very liable to be shot down suddenly himself. He thought once that a shadow rose and flitted before him. He shouted, and then fired after it; but on going forward he found neither traces nor tracks.

He prowled ahead again, sweeping a wide circle, groping past shrubs and tree clumps that looked like men in the fog. He had gone a couple of hundred yards when a flash and report spat from a thicket ten feet ahead, with a ringing sound in the air by his ears. His nervous start fired the rifle from the hip. Instantly he dropped flat, and fired again at the point where he had seen the flash.

Nothing replied. The fog rolled over and over in clearing waves. After lying strained to high tension for fifteen minutes, Lang crawled cautiously forward. He found footprints in the soft ground this time, but Carroll had slipped away.

Again he resumed the slow scouting forward, more keenly strung up than ever. The air seemed to be growing dim, though the fog was certainly clearing. It came upon him that it must be evening. He had forgotten the hours; he had lost all track of time, and did not know whether it was still the same day that he had fallen into the

glacier. It might have been the next day, or the next; in fact, he felt as if whole ages had elapsed since that tumble into the crevice.

He stared up the obscure slope, where the fog cleared, and closed, and cleared vaguely in the dusk. It was useless to pursue Carroll in the dark, and might be suicidal. The fugitive could not get away, especially since he was wounded. He was without food. He could be captured the next morning. Lang stood out in the open and shouted.

"Carroll! Carroll! Come out. Surrender. Give back the stones and we'll call it off."

His voice echoed weirdly up the hillside, but there was no answer. He shouted again, at the utmost pitch of his voice.

All at once he remembered that the magazine of his rifle could not contain more than one or two more cartridges, and he had no more in his pockets. This was the conclusive touch. He turned and walked back toward the sea, not without a sense of nervous expectancy, and a quick readiness to look back.

But nothing molested. He passed his old camp, where the fire still smoldered, went down to the foot of the glacier and climbed over the piled snow into the valley. From the beach he saw dimly a series of yellowish lights at no great distance. He hailed, and an answer came instantly in Morrison's deep voice.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRAIL.

THE *Chita* was moored a little way down the beach of the bay, with her dinghy attached to shore and rail so as to make a gangway to the land. Lang hoisted himself aboard. A big figure loomed up on the deck, and a big bony hand was thrust out to him.

"Did you get him?" Morrison demanded anxiously.

"No, I didn't," Lang responded. "I shot at him twice. Afraid I missed him. It was getting too dark and——"

"It doesn't matter. He can't escape us. We'll have him to-morrow. Eva says you've found the emeralds. You've got a story of adventure to tell." He hesitated. "Doctor Lang, the service you've done us has been incredible. You'll get your reward, I hope."

"I'm not worrying about my reward," said Lang. He sank on a deck seat, feeling utterly played out. He heard Morrison going on, endlessly, it seemed, expressing his gratitude, his admiration, and he wished irritably that he would stop. Eva also suddenly appeared out of the lighted cabin.

"Have you such things as hot water aboard, and soap, and so on?" he roused himself to interrupt. "Also a razor—and any clothes that you can lend me. I've slept and tramped and swam and mined in these till——"

"Of course. Of course," Morrison warmly assured him. "I'll fix you up. Come with me. When you've finished Eva'll have something for us to eat, and you can tell us your adventures. You must be starved, man!" he ejaculated, staring, as they went down into the cabin light. "You look as if you'd been through all the mills of the gods."

Lang felt like it. They left him alone in a little cubby-hole called a bathroom with his toilet facilities. He managed to wash and to shave after a fashion, cutting himself several times, and to change to a suit of Morrison's, coat and trousers, several sizes too large for him. His eyes and head ached, his hands trembled, and he thought he needed food.

He thought he was ravenously hungry, but when he came out to the spread table in the cabin he could not eat. There was tinned salmon—the sight of it nauseated him. Never again in his life would he eat anything out of a can. But he knew that he ought to take food. He swallowed coffee eagerly, and tried to eat a little corn bread—getting it down with difficulty. They urged things on him with anxious solicitude; they were greatly distressed that he could not eat.

It was heavily on his mind that he ought to explain to Morrison his disappearance from Panama; and he began to tell the story, feeling not quite certain of his words. It seemed to turn out a very funny story; Morrison presently roared with laughter at the account of his straits aboard the *Lake Tahoe*. Lang could not see the humor of it. He almost lost his temper, and switched to the story of his meeting with Carroll in Valparaiso. In another minute, he hardly knew by what transition, he found himself describing his shipwreck.

He was terribly tired. He wished that they would leave him alone. He leaned his head back against the wall for a moment,

was afraid that he would go to sleep, and tried to collect himself.

"That's not the most interesting thing," he recommenced. "It's what I found. Went right through it—the glacier, you know. Broke the glacier gate, as you called it. More than emeralds—far more important, to an arch-arch'logist. Camp of dead Indians, prehistoric men—copper knives—stone clubs—frozen solid. A carrier party—no mine there—historically more precious than rubies—I mean emeralds——"

He leaned his head back again involuntarily and the words seemed to melt on his lips. He wanted extremely to be let alone for a minute, to rest and collect himself. Some one was pulling at him. He muttered angrily without opening his eyes; and then they did let him alone at last.

Light was shining on him when he opened his eyes, and not the light of lamps. Dazed, he found himself lying on the cabin divan, his coat and boots off, his head on a cushion and blankets wrapped about him. As he stirred he heard a faint sound, and Eva's face appeared above him; and, drunk still with sleep, he put up his arm almost unconsciously, and drew it down to his own, as he had done once before.

"I've been asleep," he muttered. "It isn't morning?"

"It's just after ten o'clock," she laughed.

She seemed delighted, but Lang was struck with horror. Impossible that he could have slept so, ever since last sunset. He sat up, caught a glimpse of the mountainside and the glacier through the window, and the memory of the past day crashed back into him.

"Carroll—Louie? What's happened?" he exclaimed.

"Nothing's happened. We've been taking turns on guard all night. All's well. I've been keeping your breakfast hot for you."

She gave his head a little squeeze, and darted off to the tiny galley where a gasoline stove burned. Once the *Chita* had been equipped with electric light and heat, but these fittings had long since gone into disrepair.

Lang hurriedly put on Morrison's coat again, and his own boots, which they had cleaned and oiled for him out of their hardened stiffness. Hearing voices, Morrison came down from the deck.

"You've a great capacity for sleep, young man," he observed. "Thank Heaven for it. You were on the raw edge last night—pretty close to collapse. How do you feel?"

Lang felt rested, and said so. He felt marvelously recuperated, in fact. There was a stiffness in his legs, but his brain was clear, he was full of energy, and he was ravenously hungry.

"I've been up the hill, but no sign of Carrero—or Carroll," said Morrison. "He took a shot at us in the night, though—a long-range shot, fired away up the shore. I couldn't see the flash. But look what I've got here."

He opened a door into one of the tiny cabins of the *Chita*, and revealed Louie the Lope stretched in the berth, covered with a blanket. The young gangster moved his head slightly and moaned.

"Found him lying in a heap just on the shore this morning," said Morrison, regarding Louie with aversion. "He's pretty sick. He's had a bad cold coming on for several days; I thought it might run to pneumonia. And then your knocking him out, and his lying out in the damp all night, didn't do him any good. I had almost to carry him aboard."

Lang would not have minded killing Louie, but the idea of disease aroused all his medical instincts. He put his hand on the gunman's forehead, felt his pulse. Louie muttered something, and appeared only semiconscious.

"Not much fever," said Lang. "A little concussion, maybe, from the blow on the head. I think he'll be all right. I'll look after him later. I've wasted too much time already, sleeping."

His stomach almost shrieked for food, in fact, and his breakfast was waiting for him. There was no trouble about appetite; he had to restrain himself lest he eat too much. He devoured Chilean maize mush, corn bread, potatoes, pork, with ravenous relish, while Eva served him, and at the end he felt more than ever invigorated. It was the first really square meal he had eaten since Valparaiso.

"Now, we can't both leave the ship," he said to Morrison. "Carroll might circle back on us. Eva can't be left here alone. You'll stay on guard. I'll scout up the hill a little. If I need you I'll fire two shots rapidly. I suppose you've got a rifle to spare?"

He had two, and Lang's plan was so obviously right that he could not make any ob-

jection. Only he stipulated that if Lang found nothing in the course of half an hour he should come back and give Morrison his turn.

It was a fair day for once—no fog, no wind, and the sun almost shone by moments from the gray sky. Lang crossed the boat bridge to shore, clambered up the side of the ravine, and started up the long slope.

He felt full of elation, full of confidence. It was not likely that he would find any trace of the fugitive so near the beach, but he searched carefully into all the copses and thickets as he worked up the shore, till he came to his old camp.

He half expected to find that Carroll had spent the night there but he found no sign of it. The fire still smoldered, burning far down into the coal seam now, and all the earth about it was heated. He turned in the direction he had followed the night before, moving warily now, expectant every instant of a shot from ambush, but he had gone several hundred yards before he found any trace of his man.

Then, all at once, he saw him. He saw him from a distance, and with such a shock that he half raised the rifle. But Carroll's posture was reassurance enough.

He hastened up. Carroll was lying face down at the edge of a clump of cedar, his hat off, his limbs sprawling. He looked dead, but there was life in his pulse when Lang touched his wrist.

The emeralds! Lang felt his pockets, turned him over. They were empty. He ran his hands all over the man's body. There was no bulging package anywhere, no loose stones about his clothing.

He was dumfounded. He had never dreamed of such a check. There was a bullet wound in Carroll's head, no doubt from the last shot that Lang had fired into the thicket. He must have staggered several yards afterward. He had thrown the stones away, or dropped them. One trousers leg was stiff with blood, too. That was from Lang's first shot, and very likely Carroll had cached the jewels immediately after finding himself wounded.

Lang looked about on the ground, moved the body to see if anything was under it. The earth was overgrown with moss and ferns. That little silk package would be lost like a needle in straw. It might be anywhere within half a mile. Carroll alone could tell what he had done with it.

After casting wildly about for several yards, he came back and for the first time examined Carroll's wound. The bullet had entered the skull almost above the ear, rather high. It had not emerged, but Lang could feel that it was just below the skin near the opposite temple.

It was not necessarily fatal. He had seen such a case before in his Boston clinic. He had operated then, and with success. He sat down by the unconscious man and fell into a profound study, and for the time the emeralds passed out of his mind.

He remembered to fire the double signal shot, and relapsed into thought again. If he only had a trephine—the little drill that cuts a round piece out of bone! He heard Morrison halloing from a distance, responded, and presently the explorer came up, panting, holding a cocked Winchester at the ready. His eye fell instantly on the prostrate figure.

"Dead?" he asked quickly. "Have you got the stones?"

"The stones? I don't know where they are," responded Lang. "No, he isn't dead. He's lost, or hidden them somewhere—Lord knows where."

Morrison cursed. His eyes roved wildly.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "we've got to get them! Is he going to die? Can't you revive him—a strong stimulant or something—so that he can speak before he dies? Surely it's possible?"

The situation was so exactly the reverse of the former one aboard the *Cavite* that Lang, in spite of his abstraction, could not refrain from a short laugh. Morrison did not see the point.

"Even if it kills him!" he insisted, reinforcing the analogy.

"Very likely he hid the emeralds shortly after I hit him in the leg," said Lang. "Look here! I'll show you what's happened. My bullet went through his skull. He must have been knocked senseless by the shock, but he came to, and staggered some distance. Maybe he got rid of the stones then, and his gun too, for I don't see it. Then he became unconscious again—but not from the wound directly. A blood clot has formed on the surface of the brain where the bullet entered, and it's that which is paralyzing him. He might survive the bullet wound."

"What, right through the brain?" ejaculated the explorer.

"Oh, yes. It often happens. I suppose you've got some sort of medical or surgical kit aboard? You wouldn't have a trephine, of course. Got a surgical saw? Any anæsthetics and disinfectants?"

"Six ounces of ether and a bottle of iodine," responded Morrison. "I've got some forceps and scissors and sterilized cotton, and a very fine, sharp hack saw. What are you thinking of doing?"

"I'm going to operate," said Lang decisively. "I'm going to remove that blood clot. It'll restore consciousness almost surely, when he comes out of the anæsthetic, and there's a good chance that he'll recover. We can't take him aboard. It would kill him. I'll operate at my old camp. Help me carry him up there, and then go back to the boat and bring up—let me see!—your surgical kit, and a razor and soap and clean towels and basins and all the biggest kettles you have for heating water. Bring Eva—Miss Morrison along too, if she has the nerve. I'll need both your help."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE KNIFE.

THEY bore the patient as gently as possible to the camp, and placed him in the bark shelter, close by the warmth. Lang built up the fire, while Morrison hurried away for the needed utensils.

Eva came back with him, looking rather pale and excited, both of them laden with blankets, towels, kettles of water and all the extemporized instruments that Morrison could lay his hands on. Lang knew what she was thinking of, but his professional breakdown seemed to him now a far-away, unimportant thing. He was not concerned with it. He knew exactly what he had to do; he had no doubt of being able to do it.

While the kettles of water came to a boil he sat and put a finer edge on one of the keen penknives Morrison had brought. He put the instruments into the boiling water, timing them for the required twenty minutes' sterilization. He scrubbed his hands assiduously, sponged them with iodine, laid out the apparatus to his hand. He did not say a word and looked utterly abstracted, but his mind was thrilling with an elation that he had not known for a long time.

When sterilization was complete, he took out water in a basin to cool; then folded a towel into cone shap, placed it over Carroll's face, and dropped on the ether. He kept one hand on the patient's pulse; from time to time he raised an eyelid and warily examined the pupil. Carroll was weak with loss of blood; he needed careful treatment, but his unconsciousness made anæsthesia come more quickly.

Lang surrendered the ether bottle to Morrison, with instruction to drop a little more at the word; and turned Carroll's head gently to expose the spot where the bullet lay. With the razor he shaved away a bare space; he cut a small slit, and, as he expected, the little blackened lump of lead almost popped out. He cleansed the wound carefully, applied a wad of absorbent gauze, and fastened it down.

So far all was easy and simple. The critical part was to come. Without any hesitation, he turned the patient's head again, and shaved and cleaned a space of about three inches around the wound, which appeared a purplish spot on the white scalp. A little more ether was given.

"Hand me the knife," he ordered. "Be ready with the saw. Don't touch anything. Hand them with the forceps."

With a quick, deft stroke he made a semicircular incision around the bullet mark, and turned back the flap of skin. Reaching for the keen little saw, he attacked the skull in the shortest cut he could contrive.

At the rasp, and the first reddened particles of bone under the steel teeth, Eva turned pale, but braced her nerve. Lang did not notice; from that moment he was aware of nothing but his work. Impassive and abstracted as he looked, jubilation sang in him. His hands obeyed his will. He felt as if he had been restored to life, as if a familiar spirit, long absent, had returned to serve him.

He had to handle the makeshift tools with the utmost delicacy. Fortunately the wound was on the most convex part of the skull, where it was possible to cut a hole with a straight saw. The first incision once through the bone, he began another at right angles to it, and then a third, completing the square with the fourth. With the forceps he gently loosened the little block of bone.

It came out. Beneath it was, as he had expected, a large, dark blood clot. Partly with the forceps and partly with his fingers he removed this, and cleansed the surface with the utmost pains.

He was doubtful whether to reinsert the block of bone. In a hospital he would probably have resorted to a silver plate. Replacement might involve infection; it was best to take no chances. He drew the flap of skin back, and fastened it down with four stitches. He laid down the needle, washed his hands, and glanced at his audience with a triumphant and nervous smile.

"Is it successful? Will he live?" asked Morrison, almost in a whisper.

Lang glanced again at the patient's eyeballs, felt his pulse. It was weak. The man breathed harshly; his hands were cold.

"Have you any stimulant? Brandy?"

Morrison had had the forethought to bring a bottle. Lang forced a few spoonfuls between the locked teeth. The pulse fluttered, then relapsed. Lang shrugged his shoulders.

"Will he live—become conscious?" Morrison asked again.

"No, he won't," Lang replied cheerfully. "I don't think he'll come out of the ether. Maybe he had a little too much. He was in no condition for an operation, and in this cold, outdoor spot. Shock was too much for him."

"But the emeralds?" Morrison cried. "How'll we find them?"

"We'll never find them," said Lang, without concern. Emeralds were nothing to him just then. He had recovered what was more to him than any emeralds, and he glanced at Eva and met her fascinated, astonished gaze with an almost delighted smile. He knew that she knew.

But Morrison, groaning and raging, had fished out the shapeless bullet from the basin, and was examining it.

"Look here! How's this?" he exclaimed. "You shot him with your rifle—a .44 soft bullet, I know. This bullet never came from that gun. This is a revolver bullet, a small bullet, an automatic."

Startled out of his dizzy elation, Lang took the bullet and looked at it. Indeed it was, as he recognized, too small for his rifle.

"Who fired that bullet?" Morrison was demanding hoarsely. "Who killed him? You didn't. Suicide? Nonsense!"

Suddenly Lang remembered the shot that Morrison had heard in the night.

"Louie was ashore all night!" he exclaimed.

"By gad, he was!" cried Morrison. "It was his shot. That young rattlesnake met Carroll, got his gun, shot him, got the stones. It can't be anything else. Louie's cached them somewhere. Thank Heaven we've got him under our hands."

He snatched up the rifle and dashed toward the beach, intending to close the business at last. Lang glanced at his patient; he would be back in a minute, and, with a hasty word to Eva, he ran after Morrison, overtaking him on the bluff over the bay.

The *Chita* was below them, thirty yards away. Her cabin windows were wide open, and Lang caught a vague stir of movement within.

"It's Louie," Morrison whispered. "I thought he was too sick to move. I'll bet he was putting it all on. What's he doing? I could hit him from here."

"Don't shoot," said Lang. "Keep your eye on him, though, and don't let him get near the engines."

He slipped down the side of the valley and out to the beach. He had a vague idea that Louie was perhaps delirious with incipient pneumonia. He silently crossed the dinghy, swung over the *Chita's* rail, and peeped in the cabin door.

The young gunman had the trap of the fuel hold up, and the cap off one of the big gasoline tanks. He jerked his head up instantly.

"Stop there, doc!" he yelled shrilly. "Hands up—up high. Come another step nearer and I'll shoot into this gas tank and blow us all to hell."

Lang now perceived that Louie had a pistol—Carroll's black automatic, he was sure—not pointing toward him, but with the muzzle directed into the tank below. He put his hands up instantly. He did not remember whether he had a gun in his pocket or not. He realized that Louie had the undeniable drop this time. That gun flash would explode the *Chita* like a load of dynamite.

"Don't be a fool, Louie!" he tried to expostulate. "I've no gun. You don't want to blow yourself up too, do you?"

"Want to make a deal, then?" the boy cried back. "I've got the stones. I've put them where you'd never find them, not in a thousand years. What do you say? A fifty-fifty split. Kick in now, or up we go!"

At that instant Morrison, misunderstanding the situation, fired from the bluff. Like an echo of the shot, Louie's pistol exploded

into the fuel tank. For one instant Lang saw death. His heart absolutely stood still.

But there was no burst of fire. Louie sprang up, his shirt front suddenly streaming red, wheeled round and fell, and as a dying snake strikes, his pistol exploded—twice—three times—the bullets crashing into the floor, and the flashes setting fire to a matting rug.

Morrison's feet trampled on the deck. He plunged into the cabin, and bent over the gangster.

"What have you done with the emeralds?" he demanded fiercely.

Louie looked up at him with a twisted smile.

"Hell!" he muttered, and his eyes closed, twitching.

The cabin was filling with smoke from the burning matting. Lang sprang to close the gas tank. He glanced down and saw no gleam of reflecting liquid.

"Why, it's empty," he said, in surprise, and probed it with his arm.

"But not altogether," he added, withdrawing his arm. He brought up a roughly wrapped little sack of red-striped silk, that burst open as he threw it down, letting out a stream of twinkling green stones on the crimson-spotted floor.

CHAPTER XXII.

TRONADOR LIGHT.

WILD life is plainly what I was made for," said Lang. "See how I've thrived on it. A great adventurer'll be lost in me when I go back to surgery in Boston. I've had maltreatment enough to kill a mule, as I'd have thought once, and it's brought me to life. A mild, moist, depressing coast climate, as those doctors said! What a broken-down wretch I was in Mobile! What a whining, ill-tempered dog you must have thought me!"

"I never did!" Eva denied quickly. She had just relieved Lang at the helm of the *Chita,* sitting beside him in the little glassed pilot house forward. They had hoped to make Puerto Montt that evening and had kept on, though it was now two hours after sunset. Blackness was over the mountains to the east and the rough islands on the other side of the wide channel; and the sea heaved gently, smooth and black, bubbling up palely away from the bow.

"I thought you were wonderful," she went on. "Everything in the world had smashed under you—so you thought then. I was so sorry—oh, I can't tell you! I wanted to comfort you, even at first when we met on the boat. And afterward, when it was I who seemed to have lost everything, you were so good to me, and you never seemed to remember your own troubles. I couldn't tell you then how grateful I was. I never can tell you. But you'll know some time."

"You've already brought me about a hundred times what I deserve," Lang murmured, abashed; and he was not thinking of the emeralds.

They were in a locked drawer in Morrison's little stateroom, and even his share in these was to be no trivial reward. The stones had been carefully sorted, weighed, cleaned, appraised as far as possible. A few of them were almost certainly only green sapphires, of slight value. Many were flawed. The biggest, which Lang had fondly hoped to be worth a fortune, developed under a magnifier a series of central cracks, and it would have to be cut into four, or perhaps five parts. How the stones would cut was still in doubt; but Morrison, who knew something of rough precious stones, estimated conservatively that the lot should bring between fifty thousand dollars and seventy thousand dollars if they were disposed of with due skill and no haste.

It would be no great fortune, but it was all Lang wanted. It was as good as a million to him. It would give him a fresh start; and he had his own work back again. He was not afraid of another breakdown. Action and adventure and rough open-air life had braced and hardened him and worked out the discontrol in his hands, which had been probably nervous, after all. The emergency operation at the camp had restored his confidence. A few weeks' practice would bring back all his old technique. As he gazed ahead through the darkness, looking for the revolving light at the top of Chiloe Island, the future looked a dazzle of certain success.

Carroll and Louie had died within three hours of each other, and lay together in one grave in the gravel at the foot of the glacier. Lang was thankful now that it was not his bullet that had killed either of them; though their deaths were hardly to be regretted. But he did still sorely regret the fate of his German Chileans of the schooner; and he planned to make inquiries at Puerto

Montt, and indemnify their families, if they had any.

Morrison had been greatly fired when he finally heard Lang's complete account of his discoveries inside the glacier, and had insisted on seeing them himself. With reluctance Lang went with him through that tunnel that he had hewn out in a sort of nightmare.

It seemed a surprisingly short way now to the death camp, where they chipped all the bodies clear of ice, discovering still another in doing so. Morrison measured and sketched them, and even managed to carry in a camera and take flash-light photographs. They gathered up all the crystals that Lang had discarded, but found no more emeralds; though Morrison secured material that was almost more precious to him—copper knives and spears of unusual design, a primeval fire striker, bone carvings and decorations, and, most important of all, under the furs of one of the Indians, a number of skeins of peculiarly colored and knotted cords. They were like the indecipherable *quipus* of the Incas, those records in knotted strings that no one has ever been able to understand. But these cords were knotted on an evidently different system, and Morrison had high hopes that they might turn out a sort of Rosetta stone which would solve the secret of the Peruvian records. At any rate it confirmed his theory of the extent of Inca influence into the far south.

Morrison was sitting back in the cabin then, poring over the *quipus* under the swinging light. They would mean glory for him, should he succeed in making sense of them; he would write a book, which learned men would read and quarrel over violently. It seemed to Lang a poor sort of ambition.

The adventure was over, but he would never get the thrill and flavor of it out of his bones. Eva was beside him, her shoulder almost touching his own, as she steered, looking ahead for the ending mark of the voyage.

"Eva!" he whispered suddenly.

He did not know what he meant to say. She turned her face, then let go the wheel impulsively, threw both arms around his neck and drew his head to her. The boat yawed wildly. They heard Morrison's startled shout.

"What's the matter, there?"

Eva seized the wheel again and steadied her. Looking ahead, Lang saw something like the faintest, most remote summer lightning touch the horizon clouds, vanish, reappear, vanish.

"I think we've raised Tronador Light," he called back.

Morrison came forward and stared over their shoulders.

"Yes, that's old Tronador," he said with satisfaction. "Many a time I've seen it winking as I came up this channel—never with such a cargo as we've got on board to-night."

"It's time—you've deserved it long enough, father," Eva murmured.

"Of course I deserved it. But I'd never have got it but for luck, and Doctor Lang. Close to a hundred thousand. It was you who turned the trick for us, Lang, and you'll get your reward."

"I've got my reward already," said Lang, with some emphasis.

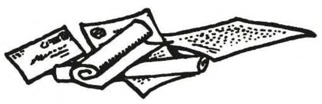
Morrison glanced at him sharply, and said nothing for a moment.

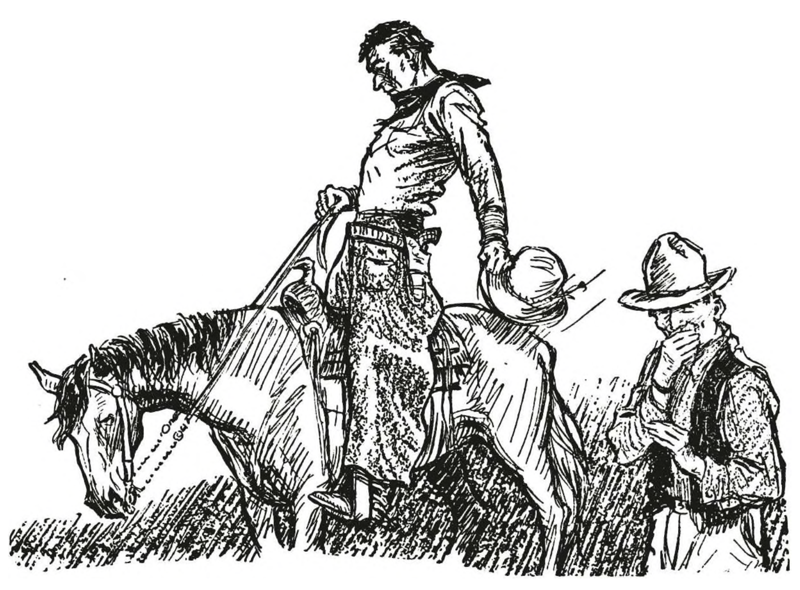
"Yes, I know. I've seen it coming," he returned somberly. "You get the reward, but I pay it, Lang. I pay it, and I can't afford it. I suppose I can't help myself.

"Oh, well, it's the fate of parents," he went on resignedly. "And I've still got something, after all—some stuff that'll make the scientific world take notice. Wait till I write my monograph on the *quipus!*"

It seemed a cold and barren sort of success, Lang thought, sitting in touch of Eva's shoulder. His own triumph seemed charged with fire; he was coming back with treasure and love and future brilliance; and he felt profoundly sorry for his future father-in-law. And, miles ahead, Tronador Light swept every minute wider circles of light on the black horizon.

The complete book-length novel in the next issue will be "Hot Sonora," by Robert Welles Ritchie.





"Arizona Ottie"

By C. S. Montanye

Author of "Richard the Iron Hearted," "The Strength of the Meek," Etc.

The unquenchable Ottie clouts the West for a row of open spaces.

IF you'll take a step back from the present of government scandals, medium-priced automobiles, mah jong and cosmetics to that period of history when Mother Eve was making an apple fiend out of her boy friend Adam, you'll notice along the way that in more cases than two the whim of a woman created a total wreck out of something which, if left alone, might have flourished like a ten-cent geranium. History is crowded with cases of the kind. A woman's smile has knocked an army for a loop, smacked a throne for a goal and a kingdom for a horse. And it was a woman's whim that made young Master Ottie Scandrel a fervent disciple of one Mr. Greeley, pilfering what little common sense he possessed and making this monument of stupidity even worse than usual.

Be patient and I'll tell you all about it.

In the course of his dashing around the village of Manhattan friend Ottie, ever with a lamp trimmed close for a slant of feminine beauty, had been introduced to a young lady who struggled along under the name of Roma Delane. This archvamp was as good looking as they came, a hostess in a Broadway dance palace and a film fanatic of the most rabid kind. From what the smitten Scandrel imparted I was given to understand that the fascinating Roma's idea of pleasure was to see all the releases in which Ralph Ravenel, the popular Western-movie hero appeared, six or seven times—or more. This diversion, it seemed, shared with dancing her daily existence.

For a couple of months Ottie's latest romance hit sweetly on all six. Then, just as I figured, he began to be a trifle fed up on the subject of the hard-riding, quick-shooting Mr. Ravenel. It broke Ottie all up to have to park sentiment outside so that Roma could hand him the continuity of the latest Ravenel masterpiece. He found it slightly annoying when Miss Delane began to express the opinion that his sex, as they shaped up in Gotham, were merely cookie pushers. The young lady told him over and over again that the only real red-blooded men left were the cow-punchers, the sheriffs and those virile youths who bounded about the Western plains. And then to put a hat

on the climax, the romantic Roma crashed out with a photograph of Ravenel, shipped direct from his studio and showing him with a six-gun in each grab and an expression on his handsome face as pleasant as if he had just taken two tablespoonfuls of medicine.

From the information that Scandrel carelessly dropped now and then I was able to foresee that it was only a question of time before the inevitable would happen. But I failed utterly to picture the way in which it would come about. It took Ottie, a pleasant afternoon and a table in a certain Jazzian Way tavern to shoehorn me directly into the know.

Then Scandrel, as well dressed as was expected, waited until a two-buck luncheon had been given a good home before using his demi-tasse cup as an ash receiver and turning his dismaying pan in my direction.

"Last night," he began, "when I was taking Roma up to her boarding house I gave her the question. It wasn't no use kidding along like this and never getting nowhere. So I broke it just to find out where I stood."

"What happened?"

He flicked the ash from his cigarette and sighed.

"I found out. Ha-ha! Joe, this is a joke vaudeville can't approach. Here I am able and willing to beat up any dozen guys Roma picks out just to show her what strength and a wallop is, and she tells me that I'm effete—whatever that means. She immediately pulls her favorite line and tells me that being a rolling stone around the Alley and getting sore eyes from the White Lights has robbed me of my heritage of brawn—if you can get any meaning out of *that.* She burns me to a cinder by stating that if I ever did in a week what this Ralph Ravenel party does in a day I'd be laying in a hospital cot with a medico trying to make me tick again. Then she leads for the jaw with some guff about how Western life would ruin me and when I'm groggy she times a left to finish me by saying no wedding bells can ring out joyously until I show her I'm a regular he-roughneck who can stand up with the best of them under Western skies and take it plenty. Snatch the idea?"

For some reason I felt odd relief.

"In other words, you're all washed up and finished?"

Ottie's look would have scorched asbestos.

"Where do you get that stuff—finished? Am I the kind that shows white feathers when the breaks are tough? You must think I'm a crackpot. As leather pushers, generals and housewives say, 'I've just begun to fight.' Nobody no matter how sweet can get rosy with me and make me curl up like a permanent wave. As for this Ravenel party, there'll come a day when our paths shall cross and that's practically all I'm living for. Roma thought she was calling my bluff while I was calling *hers,* and here's the reasons why. Not two hours ago I had a talk with an agent whose advertisement I saw in the paper Sunday and this jocko says he can rent a ranch for me out in Harris County, Spartan, Arizona. The price is big, but what I care? I gave him the nod and he's already sent a wire to close the deal. About this time to-morrow I'll hear positive."

So began the first lesson.

A week later Ottie, more luggage than a leather shop, myself and "Tin Ear" O'Brien, a former welterweight and charter member of the beak-breakers' union, climbed aboard a train in the Grand Central Terminal and tossed a farewell kiss to the city of high buildings, rents and hats.

Scandrel, as conceited and enthusiastic about himself as ever, bubbled over with high spirits that hadn't been poured out of quart bottles. While assembling a wardrobe for the thirty days of his exile on his hired ranch he had read up on Western literature and consequently was full of information as a polite floorwalker in an expensive department store. The minute the Bronx had been left behind he pocketed a photograph of Roma Delane, reached for his cigarette case and after winking at me looked over at O'Brien, who was gaping out of the coach window.

"Well, kid," he began, "it won't be long now before all three of us will be riding the range each morning before breakfast."

The ex-welterweight put on a goofy grin.

"Yeah? Nix on that stuff for me—I don't know nothing about stoves and I don't want to. I've heard them tell about places out where the blues begin and if you ask me I got an idea that's where we're headed for. If you wasn't paying me a regular salary I wouldn't go out with you if you cried real tears."

Ottie curled a lip.

"You wouldn't, hey? I suppose you figure there ain't no excitement out on this here K-Star Ranch which I've hired. Don't fool

yourself. The boy that closed the deal tells me they're going to have some swell fun at the end of the month. The last week we're there they're throwing a rodeo."

"That don't thrill me none," O'Brien sneered. "I've got a cousin who hooked one up and I sit for twenty minutes with the rubber earmuffs on listening to a noise he claims is Cuba."

Scandrel colored slightly.

"For a fact, you've got more brass than a dollar watch. Here I am blowing a long piece of change on you to give you the education of travel and all I get in return is your broad gabbing. By rights I ought to have you flung off at the next station with the evening mail bags. It ain't every day a model of ignorance like you can go to Arizona. Don't you feel any excitement at all? If not, why?"

"Back that stuff up!" O'Brien mumbled. "A pal of mine says this Spartan jump-off ain't even on the 'Follies' booking route. Besides, I like my streets paved and my horses tied up in a taxicab motor. I'd rather be an asphalt Arab on Columbus Circle than the sheik of this—now—Golden West place. Don't be talking no more to me about it. I'm suffering from homesick already and we ain't past Tarrytown yet. Leave me lay!"

From then until journey's end the former boxing king was as conversational as an oyster and as quiet as meditation hour in a deaf-and-dumb asylum. The only time he opened his face was when some smoking-car addict happened to mention the delights of that dear Manhattan. Then O'Brien's tears wet the seats!

If the former welterweight was all wrapped up in gloom, the carefree Ottie was just the opposite. Scandrel, going over the train like a detective, was as much at home as a cop in a warm kitchen. He made friends and enemies of the birds who held the portfolio of porters. He talked the ears off the conductors and other trainmen and the only reason that he wasn't on speaking terms with the engineer was because he was afraid to risk his gray flannels on the soft coal. Ottie was the first man to leap into the diner and the last one to leave it. At every stop he tarried long enough to scratch off a dozen souvenir post cards. They were all addressed to the same lady and they all said the same thing: "This is the life. Keep away from the divan devils." He played cards, the mandolin and his usual rôle of court jester. He kidded the Indians at Albuquerque, bought enough fancy blankets from them for a tough winter and pasted a couple of railroad authorities who objected to him using the observation platform for a place to store the packages.

Then, twenty-four hours' distant from Spartan, anticipation made him as nervous as a metropolitan washerwoman on a windy day. He staggered into our parlor car, looked at his watch three times and finally remembered to sit down.

"The manager of this here K-Star Ranch got orders off the agent who closed the deal for me to meet us at the station. I hope he's there because from what I understand the ranch is nine miles out and what a fine fall guy I'd be to spend taxi money when we can go out for nothing. How do you feel now, kid?" he asked O'Brien.

The big welterweight sighed.

"Rotten. No wonder there are so many people in New Yawk. The wise babies stay there and the suckers come out here. A thirty-day sentence, is it? Well, there's only one thing that's going to interest me from now on."

"What's that—the dinner bell?" Ottie inquired.

"No, the calendar!"

In some disgust Ottie turned away and addressed me.

"How do you feel, Joe? Personally, this excitement is frying me. Of course, I'm putting it over so as I can enjoy the rice, orange blossoms and old shoes but even so this country out here ain't a bust in the nose to *me*. A guy would have to have the soul of a sardine not to get a kick out of it. Help yourself to a look from the window. What do you see?—miles and miles of fertilized prairie lands and——"

"I'd rather look out of my back window," O'Brien interrupted moodily, "and see miles and miles of clotheslines and the week's wash. Don't be giving this place a lift. You'd think you were getting paid to press agent it."

Ottie drew a breath.

"Listen," he hissed, "you probably don't know it but you're talking yourself straight into a black eye. You knock worse than a flivver on a tough grade. Remember who paid your car fare out here and if you can't boost keep that thing you call a mouth closed up. Get me?"

"Do you hear me saying anything?" O'Brien asked.

Ten or fifteen minutes later we passed some distant horsemen who were chaperoning a group of heifers. The sight of them got Ottie so excited that he almost fell out of the window, straining for a backward glance.

"Did you pike them?" he hollered. "This is the existence. And picture me right here with the best of them. After my experience with the gloves I ought to make a tasty cattle puncher! Wait until Roma finds out how I take to the life!"

This was my cue to exhibit curiosity.

"How will she?" I asked.

Ottie smirked.

"Don't be asking personal questions. All in good time, all in good time."

Spartan, when the choo-choo tarried long enough to allow us to alight, proved, so far as the human eye could see, to be composed principally of a station as dusty as a panhandler avoiding a woodpile and one street on both sides of which were buildings that had probably been erected about the same time Noah had taken an interest in yachting.

These buildings contained a Chinese laundry, a post office, a firm that had the audacity to announce themselves as being in the real-estate business and a shop with swinging doors that bore a striking resemblance to being an authentic gin mill. Nobody was in sight and the sun, beating down on landscape so level that it made a billiard table look like a scenic railway, was strong enough to dispossess the starch from any one's collar.

Tin Ear O'Brien took one look around.

"Ha-ha! So this is love's reward? Look at them——"

He was interrupted by the knuckles Ottie slapped up against his chin. Scandrel tumbled him over a rusty baggage truck, left him to pick himself up, buttoned his coat and counted his suit cases.

"What now?" I queried gently.

He dashed some moisture from his brow and looked at his watch.

"It's funny no one's around. This is probably what they call the—now—sister hour when everybody takes the pad for a short kip. I wonder do they have cops out here. Let's step over to the laundry and then visit the grog shop. Somebody ought to know *something*."

We were about to execute the idea when we both caught sight of a moving object in the distance that traveled as fast as the six-day bicycle race. When the dust died down a trifle we perceived it was a buckboard drawn by a pair of ponies and chauffeured by a person who was rigged out in hairy trousers and the rest of a wild West costume.

The vehicle rolled in like a house afire, the driver reined in the broncs, sprang overboard and pulled down his leather cuffs before coming across.

"Mr. Scandal? I'm 'Shorty' Edwards of the K-Star Ranch. The telegram explaining about you come a little late or I'd have been here earlier. I'll put your baggage in the buckboard right away."

"One minute!" Ottie ordered. "Don't touch a hand to that leather. Er—Tin Ear will take charge of the luggage. He ain't had a thing to do except complain since we left the port of New York. Come on, kid. Enjoy yourself!"

Two hours or so later we rolled into the K-Star Ranch property, going past what the driver informed us were barns, bunk sheds and corrals that were hedged in on one side by chaparral and hog wallows. Next, after sliding past stockades where more calves than the Winter Garden has were stationed, we skirted some foliage known as bear brush and pulled up at the main ranch house, a building large enough to stage a riot or a musical comedy in.

A hound dog rushed out to give us a bark, Tin Ear O'Brien swallowed a sob and Ottie fell out of the cart, staring around with the greatest of interest.

"So this is my hired property, hey? Well, well! And this is the West where men are either men or cowboys. Just notify us what time we begin to eat, give us the chance to put on some regular scenery and we'll be down to mitt the gang."

"Got chaps, Mr. Scandal?" Shorty Edwards asked.

"With the temperature as hot as this? You must be out of your mind," Ottie giggled. "Beat it and give them plugs a drink of water apiece. And the name is Scandrel, not Scandal. Get me?"

Edwards bowed.

"Yes, sir. And if you don't see anything you want ask for it!"

"What a place!" O'Brien moaned, picking up the baggage and staggering in with it.

Ottie, robed for the neighborhood of Times Square, and Ottie, dressed for the sagebrush and the grazing grounds, were two entirely different propositions. Really, the burlesque stage lost the opportunity of a lifetime in not having some one present to sign a contract with him when he finished his toilette and joined the disconsolate O'Brien and myself in a ground-floor room whose walls were adorned with more horns than a jazz orchestra and whose floor was cluttered up with rugs made over from the pelts of mountain lions.

The clown of the universe featured a pair of leather trousers that were studded with silver disks, high-heeled slippers with silver spurs a foot long and a belt that almost covered his chest. Some sort of a sleeveless leather camisole, a felt tile whose brim was only exceeded in width by the height of the crown and a pair of holsters at each hip filled out with cannon completed the picture.

"All set for the beautiful outdoors!" he chuckled, turning so we could get the view from every angle. "Look me over carefully. If I haven't got it on that idiotic Ravenel I'm willing to admit I'm licked before I start!"

O'Brien laughed merrily for the first time since we left the sidewalks of New York.

"Ha-ha! This goes as another black mark against the pastime of love!"

"You're as funny as the boy who broke his thumb trying to get Honolulu on a one-tube set. For a fact, I don't know why I don't slap a Firpo on you. Get upstairs and count my grips and then ask around and see if that stuff come out from New York yet by express. Come on, Joe. Let's go out and look the beef over. The agent that rented me this castle said there are more steers here than you can get off a con man. Get in motion."

As we reached the front door a cow pony cantered up and the rider, with a nonchalant flick of her skirt, slipped out of the saddle, dropped the reins over the nag's head and let him follow her over to us.

My dear!

The first glance I had of our visitor showed me a young lady more sunburned, healthy and sweetly attractive than any of the blah sex I had ever observed reeling out of a Fifth Avenue beauty parlor. She did have freckles, she did have near-red hair, but she was also the owner of a pair of clear gray eyes, one of the shortest noses ever designed, lips as red as a camp fire and a smile that would have commanded attention from a stone image.

She was slim, trim and tastefully decorated in a set of clothes that might not have gone big in a Park Avenue drawing-room but which were a perfect fit in Harris County.

While we gave her service in the line of looks, the girl did a piece of staring on her own hook. She looked Ottie up, she looked Ottie down, she looked puzzled and then she looked as if she was having a time of it to keep from roaring. Finally she drew a quivering breath, turned to me and extended a graceful hand.

"I suppose this is Mr. Scandrel from New York?"

I shook the hand and then my head.

"Give it to the gentleman on my right."

Ottie came out of his trance.

"I'm Scandrel, lady, the tenant of this here ranch for the next four weeks. The party with me is O'Grady from the Bronx."

The girl looked twice again and smiled.

"I can only stay just a minute. You see, I'm your next-door neighbor. My dad's the foreman of the Flying Cloud."

"Indeed?" Scandrel's toothbrush brows went up a foot and a half. "Foreman, you say? I didn't know there was factories around here."

"My name," the girl went on, introducing herself, "is Gertrude Grant, but none of the boys call me anything but Gertie, and I wish you'd do the same. We heard that you were expected to-day and so I came right over. I want to ask you a favor."

"Try me," was Ottie's answer.

Miss Grant patted her pinto's neck.

"It's this way. All week the Bar-X people have been out here in Harris County. They've been doing some splendid work but they've been a little cramped for room on account of the fences. The K-Star property runs clear back six miles to the gulch. I promised the head man I'd ask your permission for the outfit to do a little shooting on your property to-morrow. Do you mind?"

Scandrel shook his head.

"Not at all. Only tell them to be careful not to break no windows nor nothing. Is there anything else you'd like?"

With hardly an effort the girl vaulted into the saddle, gathered up the reins and pushed a wisp of the almost-red hair in under her sombrero.

"Well," she answered rather wistfully, "I would like to come over some night and have you tell me all about New York. You see, I've never been farther away than Phoenix. But dad says I mustn't be so forward. I'll tell the Bar-X people what you said to-night and I know they'll be ever so much obliged. I thought it would be better if I came over myself and asked instead of sending one of the wranglers."

"Quite right," was Ottie's answer. "After the trip out here I don't feel like wrangling with nobody!"

Miss Grant touched her heel to the side of her mount, waved her hand and galloped away.

"The ideal American girl," I murmured.

Ottie smirked.

"To your way of thinking, maybe. I admit she ain't a problem to look at, but what can you expect of a country gal who don't know whether a Fifth Avenue bus is drawn by horses or coolies? I'll bet dough she's done all her dancing in a barn and that she thinks cold cream is something you keep in a bottle on ice. Gertie Grant, was it? She might be a relation of the general and she might know more about horses than Paul Revere but she'd better not be pestering me to tell her stories of gay New York. I don't wear my heart in my sleeve and that little baby back home has got me stretched. I'd be a sweet oil can to spend all this money, renting this place to win Roma and then topple for a native daughter."

"You haven't explained," I put in, "how you're going to prove the benefits of this trip to Miss Delane's satisfaction. You say she won't have you unless you adapt yourself to the conditions out here, but how, unless she comes out herself, is she going to know that you're a genuine rancher and as tough as a coal strike in winter?"

Ottie loosened his chest-protector belt.

"Seeing that you're so nosey," he explained, "I suppose I had better give you the gab. Listen. Just before we blew the home burg I ordered a moving-picture machine and five thousand feet of fillum sent out here by fast express. That's why I brung Tin Ear—not to be the life of the party but to turn the crank. As soon as I get over a case of tender feet, O'Brien's going to take pictures of me doing a daily dozen and acting like a regular cowboy. Then I mail the fillum back to Roma and she gets it developed. Her brother-in-law Eddie owns a movie dive on Seventh Avenue and he'll run the stuff off on the screen for her after hours. In that way Roma can find out for herself just how well I'm standing up under the difficult life out here. Get the plot?"

Equal that one!

Ottie made himself acquainted with the various hard-boiled employees of the K-Star Ranch the same night when a chink cook everybody called Sam had finished dishing the hash. The bunch stared at his clothes but said little until later, when a dusty phonograph was brought out and some of the dance records Irene Castle had tripped to in the brave days of yore were turned on. With the possible exception of Tin Ear O'Brien, who spent the evening sitting in a corner, the entertainment was successful.

At least none of the punchers so much as snickered at Ottie's wardrobe.

"I don't hear no shots," he said next morning at breakfast. "And that's just as well. Last night while playing stranger in a strange bed I had a little time to think things over. Er—possibly I was hasty in giving permission to that gal. How do I know somebody ain't going to get murdered? The Bar-X bunch, she said. That sounds to me like the saloon keepers' union."

"What do I do this morning?" Tin Ear O'Brien yawned. "Give me something hard to keep my mind off my misery."

"I'll give you five hard knuckles if you start with that line again," Scandrel snarled. "Look up Shorty Edwards and find out if that camera layout has come yet. If so, get out the direction book and try your best to understand what it's all about. I'll be needing you to crank for me pretty soon. You'd better duck out now."

"Can't I finish my breakfast?" O'Brien whined. "First you bring me here against my will, then you threaten me and now you starve me!"

The meal was over and Ottie was searching through the mail pouch for a billet doux from Mademoiselle Delane when Shorty Edwards appeared in the doorway.

"Some of the Bar-X crowd outside to see you, boss."

This was a fact.

Directly in front of the porch was a cavalcade that consisted of two automobiles, a troop of cow-punchers who couldn't have been more dusty if they had slept in a vacuum cleaner, a couple of the square sex

and a handsome young man who headed the procession, mounted on a mustang that was as black as the deuce of spades.

This baby had white teeth, brown hair, blue eyes, red cheeks and seemed vaguely familiar. He was coiling a lariat about the pommel of his saddle when we staggered out.

"We're all finished," he said, walking his goat over to Ottie, "so I thought we'd stop in on our way back and thank you for your kindness. If there's any way we can return the favor don't fail to let us know. We're making our headquarters over at Silver Creek and we'll be there until the end of the month so we can shoot the rodeo at Gale Crossing. You can look us up there."

By slow degrees I saw comprehension lighting my boy friend's cast-iron pan.

"Well, I'll be a cook on a canal boat!" he exclaimed. "You must be in the moving-picture business!"

The other looked surprised.

"Certainly. Didn't you know that? This is the Bar-X Film Feature outfit. Possibly you've heard of me. I'm Ralph Ravenel."

Woof!

Speechless, his mouth as wide open as a South American café, Scandrel stood staring while the handsome Ravenel saluted and the procession rolled on.

"Ravenel, himself! And I let him get away on me with that lovely nose of his undamaged! Honest, physicians ought to examine me!" With an effort he pulled himself together. "Still, I know where he can be found. That's something, anyway!"

Two days later Ottie decided he was acclimated enough to have some of his achievements recorded on celluloid.

"First of all," he explained to O'Brien and myself, "I'll do a little bronc busting just to get my stuff over fast with Roma."

"You'll probably break your neck," the former welterweight yelped, "and then who's going to give me my car fare back home?"

"Out in the stables," Ottie went on dreamily, "there's probably some tough kicker that's just r'arin' to go. Get your camera, Tin Ear. I'll speak to Shorty."

He did, leaving Edwards to look at him dumfounded.

"Boss, we've got a man-killer who's the worst bucker in Harris County. His name is Nightmare and the day before you arrived he killed one of the stable mozos. This horse is *wild!*"

"I suppose you feed him on wild oats, hey? Nightmare, is it?" Ottie licked his lips. "Throw a halter on him and break him out, pal. That's just what I'm looking for."

While Edwards disappeared Ottie gave orders where the camera was to be set up, slapped his pale assistant twice and finally, by threats and promises, got the big ex-leather pusher on the job.

"Don't forget," O'Brien whined. "Give O'Grady my car fare now in case something happens!"

Edwards returned in fifteen minutes, leading a bay colt that seemed peaceful enough at first sight. When Ottie went over the little Westerner ankled up to me and winked.

"If the boss gets sore, help me out," he entreated. "Nobody around these parts ever rode Nightmare and the undertaker is twenty miles away. This little pony is the tamest thing we have in the barn. We call him Nap because he's always taking a sleep. There's hardly any chance of the boss getting hurted unless he hits his chin on the saddle!"

Advancing cautiously, Ottie snapped his fingers in O'Brien's direction.

"Camera!" he croaked. "Don't miss an inch of this, kid! A man-killer named Nightmare. Sweet lady! I'll master the brute and call him Day Dream!"

Taking a reef in his belt he went still closer to the colt, stared him hard in the eyes and looked his hoofs over as if to see they were all present. Then he walked around the animal twice, shaking his head and breathing hard. Finally he braced himself, let out a bellow and throwing both arms around the bay's neck, struggled up in the saddle.

Still yelling, Ottie began hitting the horse with his hat while Edwards, suffering a choking fit, beat it for a pump to get a drink of water. Standing squarely on all four legs and not moving a fraction of an inch, Nap failed to be interested in the exhibition, but that didn't bother Ottie any. Hanging on the colt's neck, kicking his feet and yelling at the top of his voice, he moved madly back and forward in the saddle. How long this would have kept up nobody knew. It ended when the pony, evidently annoyed by the tattoo of heels on his side, opened its eyes and moved its head around to see what it was all about. The slight movement was enough to upset Scandrel.

He slid off the hurricane deck and did a nose dive into the dust!

"That ought to get over big!" he muttered, when Edwards led the pony off. "Hot daggers! I can see where I was born to this life! Riding them wicked is made to order for me. And that reminds me. 'Tex' Lawton, the big boy who sat next to me at dinner last night, tells me they give swell prizes at these rodeos. What's the matter with me going in and copping a few? Maybe, at that, I can get back some of the money I spent carting Senseless out here!"

After that, O'Brien and camera trailed Ottie all over the countryside. The big buffoon made a spectacle of himself riding Nap at a round-up where fifty heifers were being herded together for a branding session. He took lessons in using the lasso and did some fancy roping for the eye of the camera that was *very* fancy. He dug up twenty-one empty bottles, set them up in the back of an empty shed and after measuring off a hundred paces and making certain that his welterweight camera man was missing nothing, dragged out his six-shooters and began blazing away at the glassware. Shorty Edwards, camped just in back of him, used his own gun and pulled the trigger of it at the same instant Scandrel fired so that both reports were simultaneous. Ottie never dreamed he wasn't busting the bottles in fast order until he forgot to load once, let the hammer fall on an empty chamber but saw the last bottle immediately splinter into pieces.

The clown king whirled around on the sheepish Mr. Edwards.

"Well, who asked *you* to sit in at this party? If you want to shoot so bad you'll find a pair of dice up on my chiffonier. Put that pistol away and don't get balmy with me again."

"Excuse me, boss," Shorty mumbled, turning away.

The clown king went over to O'Brien.

"Did you get all that, kid?"

He nodded glumly.

"Yea. Listen, I'm all sunburned and it hurts to turn the crank. This here ain't no bargain for me. Have a heart and don't drive me!"

Ottie looked at me with a hopeless shake of his head.

"Can you beat a barney like that, Joe? He's all sunburned. Listen, Ignorance—what do you think you come out here for—a petting party? Get into your dance and don't be sobbing about something a little salve will cure. Right over to the corral now. The next scene will show Roma how fearlessly I mingle with that new bunch of calves they brung in last night!"

Don't you love that?

Miss Gertrude Grant favored us with her company several times during the next week. The breezy, easy girl of the Golden West tried her best to get Ottie to broadcast some of the tales of Manhattan she yearned to listen to but Scandrel, beyond dropping the information that most of the Longacre cafés asked a two-dollar-and-a-half cover charge, foiled her completely.

All the big mock orange had on his mind was the stuff he was going to crowd into O'Brien's camera the following day and the question concerning when and where he'd find a chance to cuff Ralph Ravenel dizzy. The Grant girl was bewildered but not baffled. Just before she departed she managed to trap his attention when she happened to hit on the topic of the rodeo at Gale Crossing.

"I suppose," she murmured, "you'll see to it that the K-Star outfit is well represented. Last year it won the cow-pony race and several of the roping contests. You surely ought to ride over some morning soon and see 'Lingo' Dawson, the manager there. But look out for him. He hasn't a very good reputation."

"Liquor?" Ottie inquired.

Miss Grant shook her near-red head.

"No, he's supposed to be crooked. They say that last year he doped a couple of horses and had some lariats cut."

"What nice people he must be," Ottie answered. "Yes, we're going over to the Crossing Monday. It's true I only rent this shelter, but that's no reason why I can't give the boys a chance."

Gertie Grant perched herself on the veranda railing and tested her spurs on the woodwork.

"The rodeo ought to be a big success this year. When dad went over to put the Flying Cloud entries in Dawson told him the Bar-X picture crowd would be represented in nearly every event. That means the superb Mr. Ravenel will be the center of attraction. Do you know him?"

"Now that you speak of it I remember hearing the name," Ottie mumbled. "So he's all set for more clowning? Honest, the

only way to get ahead of that jobbie is to walk in front of him. Thanks for the info, Cutey. As the party said who wound the phonograph—one good turn deserves another. Go ahead, ask me something about New York."

"Are there any theaters on Fifth Avenue?" was the last thing I heard as I slipped out to listen to the coyote chorus.

On Monday, Ottie, Shorty Edwards, O'Brien and camera paid a visit to Gale Crossing and Mr. Lingo Dawson. Immediately following the call Ottie was as mysterious as a detective story. With only a couple of hundred feet of film left unfinished before his message of love would be complete and ready to send to Miss Roma Delane, he held lengthy conferences with Edwards and learned to speak in a trick whisper.

A day or two later he proved beyond a doubt that Edwards was a past master in the art of diplomatic strategy by referring to Nightmare, the dark horse of the K-Star Ranch.

"Yes," he explained, "we've got another tough nag here besides the one I broke that day. His name is Nap and Shorty let me look through the window of the stall where they've got him boxed up. He's a big black beast with eyes that look like bonfires. Some baby!"

I saw immediately that Shorty Edwards had switched the names of the two animals but I took good care that my expression did not give the fact away.

"What about the horse?"

Ottie rubbed one of his ludicrous ears.

"Not a whole lot. Shorty's taking him over to Gale Crossing to-morrow night. We're slipping him into the bronc-busting revelry and I'm offering a hundred Irish sailors that nobody can stay aboard him. I've got a plan but don't be asking me about it now. You'll see when the time comes and——"

He was interrupted by O'Brien, who wandered up morosely.

"I don't get this," the former welterweight mumbled. "Gertie was to show up an hour ago and I ain't seen a sign of her. I promised to tell her all about Tenth Avenue and Hell's Kitchen."

Scandrel curled a lip.

"Indeed? What license has a dumb egg like you to give away stuff to any one? I'll tell her all the stories necessary and the lies too. Get upstairs now and oil that camera. To-morrow we're going to finish up the rest of the fillum. Shorty showed me a way to tie myself on a hobby horse so I can lean over and pick up a handkerchief at full speed without it showing in the picture. Roma will enjoy it!"

"By the way," I said when O'Brien had left us, "how is Miss Delane been taking all the fiction you've been writing her? Does she mention Ravenel in her letters any more?"

Ottie coughed.

"It's funny, Joe. I ain't got a letter off her for over a week now. For all I know she's sick. I'm going down to Spartan tomorrow in the buckboard to ship the fillum to her and I'll find out then how much it costs to send a telegram from here to Broadway. And that reminds me. For a fade-out in the picture, how about having all the boys on the ranch here step up one by one and shake hands with me? Or shall I just be alone in the last scene, waving a big American flag?"

It was evident that the rodeo at Gale Crossing supplied Harris County with more interest than a train wreck, a bank bust or a couple of prairie fires. On the morning it opened every ranch in the home grounds of the Covered Wagon had their outfits moving toward the Mecca of the pulse-quickening location.

Scandrel, O'Brien without camera, Shorty Edwards and twelve of the K-Star crowd, which included myself, headed for the scene of excitement a few minutes after the sun published itself in the eastern sky.

Beyond the last fence we joined the Flying Cloud representatives and gave Miss Gertie Grant a seat in the buckboard next to Ottie and in front of me. The young lady was as thrilled as a débutante with her first dinner party and had more smiles than a popular song. She talked constantly and without tiring all the way to the Crossing. Then she said good-by, joined her father and galloped off.

"Anyway," Ottie murmured, "there's one thing in that gal's favor."

"What's that?" I asked.

He smirked.

"The man she marries will never have to buy a phonograph!"

Gale Crossing had a crowd present for the Dawson carnival. There were cowboys and cowgirls, sheriffs, Indians, Mexicans, pros-

perous-looking cattlemen and hard-looking broncho peelers, outlaws and in-laws. Altogether it was a crowd seen nowhere outside of a Western movie and in it Ottie strutted about like a cock of the walk, staggering the assemblage with his wise scenery and cracks.

"The only life, Joe! Let's look up this Bar-X crew and see if they've got their grease paint on yet. Dawson tells me the bronc busting begins after lunch—right before they begin to get rough and bulldog the steers. Follow me!"

It wasn't difficult to discover the moving-picture delegation. They were on the outskirts of the town. Banners and a painted sign that needed only electric lights to take its place along the rialto, identified it.

My companion took three looks around him and began to laugh.

"There's the roguish Ralph now—shaving over there by that tent. I hope he's using a dull blade, I really do. Let's buzz him."

The picture star looked up at our approach and nodded amiably.

"Over to watch the merry-go-round, Mr. Scoundrel? That's nice. I haven't forgotten how you allowed us to use the property you leased to do our shooting. We're finishing up our new picture out here. If you wish you can appear as an extra in one of the scenes."

"I'll cheer in a little while," Ottie answered. "They tell me you're going to do some rough riding after lunch."

Ravenel nodded and carelessly blew away a pint of lather.

"Your information is correct. Some spendthrift is offering a hundred dollars to any one who can ride one of his horses. It's really a joke. Watch me win it!"

Directly after the midday meal Lingo Dawson, a big tramp who had bandit written all over him, took the center of the stage and opened up through a megaphone.

"Ladies and gentlemen, a stranger in these here parts has offered a hundred-dollar bill to any one who will ride a hoss from the K-Star Ranch. The K-Star folks sent over a bucker but unfortunately it threw a fit a while ago and we had to shoot it. But don't let that worry you. Shorty Edwards has provided another man-killer and the hundred dollars still stands!"

"Like hell!" Ottie raved. "I'm being double crossed. Ravenel probably seen that black nag wasn't his dish and slipped Dawson some green to have the colt put out of the way! Leave me get my guns, Joe! I'll clean out this nest of crooks like ammonia and hot water!"

He was actually reaching for his artillery when Shorty Edwards dashed up, grabbed him, drew him aside and whispered something confidential.

"For a fact?" I heard him exclaim. "This gives it a different complexion—as the chorus girl said when reaching for the rouge."

Lingo Dawson requested quiet and used the horn again.

"Mr. Ralph Ravenel," he announced, "will be the first man to try for the bill. Ravenel needs no introduction. He's the world-famous movie star and probably the only man in the pictures who knows a real hoss. All set everybody? Let's go!"

Somewhat to my surprise the horse that was led in blindfolded was no other than Nap, the peaceful little cow pony. But peaceful no longer. Trembling like a nervous housewife at the sight of her landlord, the two punchers on snubbing ponies edged him into the cleared space and kept their ropes taut. While I was still gaping in astonishment Ravenel, featuring a clean shave and shirt, bounded out, bowed, yanked off Nap's blind and shouted to the wranglers to give him a good straightaway for the first buck.

Then he leaped pony-express fashion into the saddle, found his stirrups and shouted for the pick-up men to let him kick.

"Now," Ottie yelped, "the fun begins!"

With the crowd falling back in haste and Ravenel fanning the air with his sombrero and yipping, the pony did the straightaway buck and sprang backward, twisting in the air like a fish about to be landed. A forward lurch, a side wrench, some air pawing followed—the crowd giving Ravenel the best of it.

"Stay with him cowboy! Scratch the hide off of him! Bust him! Ride him!"

The advice was good but the picture star was unable to take it. On the fifth consecutive buck the saddle parted company with Nap's heaving sides and Ravenel, doing a double somersault, shot through the air and landed almost exactly at Ottie's feet.

Willing hands picked him up as Scandrel sprang forward.

"Here's another bust for you!" he roared. "Try to double cross me, eh? Have one of the horses I've rented shot so I'll have to

pay for it, eh? You big lemon, you may be all the world to the ladies but you're merely a blank cartridge to me! Get down and stay down!"

With that he shot over a snappy right hook that put Ravenel in the dust again!

There was no chance for conversation with Ottie and no signs of him until the same evening. Then I discovered him in the living room of the main ranch building, a telegram in one hand and a banana in the other.

"Come in and laugh, Joe. This here message just come collect. It's off the manager of that Broadway trip den where Roma dances. Er—it seems that yesterday morning Roma eloped with one of the bookkeepers in the office there. If that ain't comical tell me what is?"

I stared.

"Comical?"

He finished the banana and grinned.

"You heard me. Roma wanted a regular man who could stand up under Western life and she goes and tumbles for a bookkeeper. Am I all broken up? Ask me. I know a little Western gal who's got some respect for a New Yorker and I'm going right over now and tell her stories about the big town that'll begin at the Battery and end at Harlem. Get me?"

I caught his eye.

"One minute. You might not know it but you haven't finished yet. What's all this mystery about Ravenel and that cow pony?"

Scandrel laughed like a well-pleased prairie dog.

"What do you mean—mystery? When Shorty found Dawson had sold us out to Prince Charming he slipped a handful of burrs under the colt's saddle and then fixed it so that the saddle itself would kiss the horse good-by the minute anybody got rough with it. Grasp the idea? Clever maybe, yes?"

Another Montanye story in the next issue.

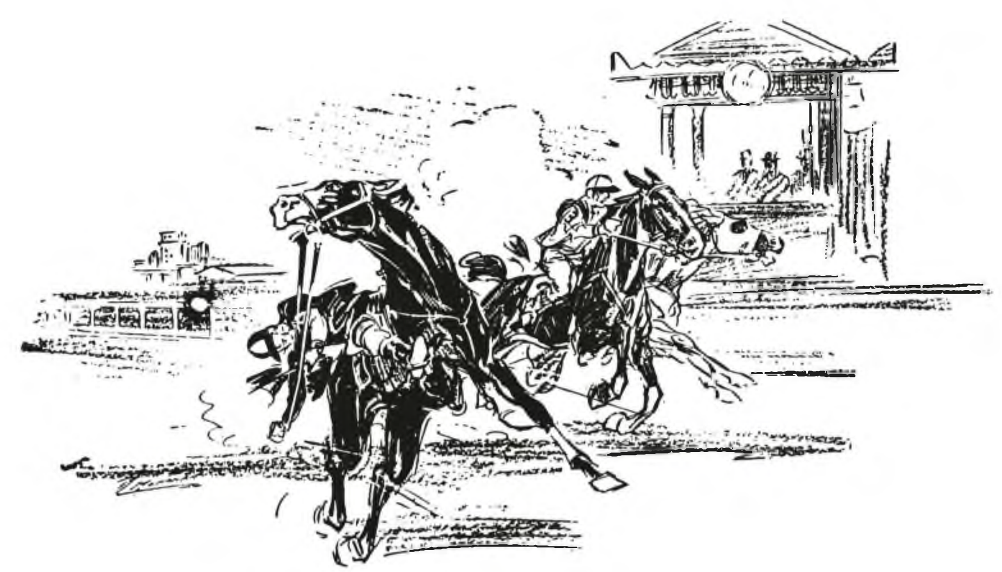
GOING TO COLLEGE

EVERY boy who doesn't go to college need not feel that he is starting the race for success under a handicap, but the boy who feels that he really should go to college shouldn't give up that ambition just because his parents aren't in a financial position to send him. Each year a larger proportion of American college students work their way through, either entirely or in part, and the fellow who does that is quite likely to get as much valuable education from his work as from instruction in the classroom.

Of course it isn't easy to make your way through college without help. It is a task that requires hard work and strength of character. Yet its rewards are so valuable that we have heard men whose way has been made easy wish that they had been compelled to go it alone. A few years ago at a famous Eastern university there was a Japanese student who had earned his expenses by photography, and when he was graduated he had a satisfactory bank account to his credit. American boys who are hesitating about trying the same experiment in their own country might compare their problems with those of the stranger from Japan—and go ahead.

It has been estimated that it costs about fifteen hundred dollars a year to get an education at the average American college. According to this budget, tuition costs $300, board $450, books and fees $50, railroad fares $200, clothes from $250 to $350, and spending money from $150 to $250. To the prospective student it should be encouraging that the cost of going to college hasn't increased as fast as possible earnings have increased. Of course it isn't easy to earn $1,500 a year in addition to keeping up with college work; but with the wages now being paid for various jobs that the student can do, it is very far from an impossibility.

The first thing to do is to decide if you really want to go to college. If you do, the next question to be answered is not "Can I?" but "How shall I?" Unless you have family responsibilities that demand all your efforts, you can go if you really want to go.



"Suds"

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "The Gifts of Temescal," "Chochawee-ti," Etc.

First stableboy, then exercise boy, then groom—— But Knibbs tells this story of the racing world. We can safely leave the rest of it to him—and to you.

FIRST stableboy, then exercise boy, then groom—because Dick Hammell, who owned the Farnsworth stables, thought he saw possibilities in the lad—and finally Jimmy Eaton, known among the racing fraternity as "Suds," stepped into immediate fame by donning Hammel's colors and winning the Arlington Futurity on Graywing. Now Graywing had heretofore performed as though he considered the track an exhibition ground for equine acrobatics, and the starter an individual who was not to be taken at all seriously. Every one admitted, even before the race, that Graywing had speed and bottom, only he could not be induced to demonstrate either quality until the field had left him so far behind that his only actual competitor was Time—and any one knows there is no money in clocking an also ran, no matter how fast he steps it off. However, there were a few shrewd speculators who figured that if Graywing ever forgot himself long enough to get away with the bunch he would hit the books harder than Fitz hit "Dark Peter"—and old Fitz most certainly flattened that dusky gentleman for the count.

Closing the season with six races to his credit, Jimmy signed up with Dick Hammell for the next season. Fame tries the stability of mature men. Jimmy was not much more than a boy. And Jimmy had a bank account and many sporty admirers. He also had a collection of newspaper clippings and cuts of Graywing and himself framed in horseshoes—some of the cuts garnished with fat cupids wearing what purported to be Hammell's colors. It is not surprising, then, that Jimmy purchased much fine raiment and spent the winter season at Palm Beach.

"It will do him good," declared Hammell. "He'll go broke, wire me for an advance, and come back to father and eat out of his hand."

"Oh, I know his first big fling won't spoil him," said Hammell's sister, Dorothy, who preferred winter in the Adirondacks and un-

cracked ice to Palm Beach and the persimmons who took their exercise in porch chairs and specialized in cracked ice and that which goes with it. "Jimmy is a tough kid, but there is something wholesome about him. There's only one thing I am afraid of."

"Corks?" queried Hammell, who used the vernacular to tease his sister out of her serious mood.

Still serious, Dorothy Hammell nodded. "Yes, just that. Champagne has ruined some of the best boys"—she meant jockeys, of course—"in this country. You remember——"

"I don't want to," declared Hammell. "Get your Mackinaw and we'll go out on the slide. Let's forget Palm Beach and Suds. I'll bet you five to one, any amount, that Swede who does those stunts on the skis will break his blond neck some day."

"'Some day' is rather vague, isn't it?" queried Dorothy Hammell. And while her brother donned his winter garments in the steam-heated seclusion of his room across the hall—Pine Lodge not alone advertised steam heat but actually furnished it—Dorothy slipped into a cream-white woolly Canadian capote edged with crimson, put on a cream-white skating cap with a crimson tassel, and appeared with her brother on the veranda of the lodge, where the blond Swede previously mentioned jealously regarded her surrounded by a group composed of Wall Street lumberjacks, Fifth Avenue ski jumpers, fancy skaters from the Bronx, and a few tobogganists from Riverside Drive. At least they all looked the part. And most of them looked at Dorothy Hammell, because she was worth the effort. White capotes and crimson-tasseled skating caps are always becoming to pretty girls with rosy cheeks and dark hair and eyes—especially if they are reputed to own scads of Continental, and Standard, and Universal Motors. Being the sister of a prominent and successful horseman doesn't do any harm, either.

The mercury in the Alpine-lodge thermometer was very coy that morning.

Down in Palm Beach, many folk—and some bathing beauties—strolled about in the sunshine. Surfless bathing suits were much in evidence.

Toward the end of a fairly successful season following the spectacular killing made by Graywing in the Futurity, Dick Hammell, with a larger stable, some two year olds that proved a disappointment, and a heavy burden of expense, tried to prove to himself that two from two leaves something, but it wouldn't work. He consulted with his sister Dorothy, with the result that they entered Graywing in the Lexington Sweepstakes—an unmannerly Northern colt against a field of the finest and fastest that the South had ever produced. Colonel Cornfield of Lexington, Kentucky, begged to be allowed to remark that he was inclined to believe that Graywing's name in the entry book was not to be taken seriously. "Merely a premature obituary, suh! If that No'the'n upstart wins the Sweepstakes, suh, I'll never touch another drop of liquor as long as I live!" Which would seem to indicate that Graywing was not a favorite in the Kentucky camp.

A week before the great race Hammell made a side bet with none other than this same Colonel Cornfield that Graywing would be in the money. The colonel, as representative of several big owners, exhibited a certified check for ten thousand dollars, which staggered Dick somewhat, but he had too much pride to back down. There is just as much Northern pride as there is Southern, only it isn't quite so close to the surface.

Promptly at two o'clock Jimmy Eaton drove up to the stables in his Straight-eight roadster, hopped out and hurried over to the tack room. It wasn't necessary for Jimmy to tell "Old Jerry" Comstock, Hammell's head groom, that he was not feeling well. Jimmy's clean-cut young face was mottled. His gray eyes were surface bright, but lacked their usual animation. But then even a young man in first-rate physical condition can't expect to pass the buck to Old Mother Nature every time and get away with it. Once in a while Mother Nature absolutely refuses to be imposed upon, especially after an almost-all-night session with Southern chivalry, funny corks that look like toadstools with silver heads, juleps, oysters, chicken à la Macdonald, and robust cigars at a dollar a throw. Put them all, except the chivalry, in a gallon jar and shake them up and then take a look at the result. No wonder you can't tell who's who in America, next morning. Jimmy, familiarly known as Suds—the sobriquet having followed him from Palm Beach—had looked too long upon the wine when it was not red, but as yellow as molten amber and

so suavely vigorous that one liberal application was good for a three-day trance.

Aromatic spirits, a cold shower, a rubdown, black coffee, all of these had failed to drive the occasional and distressing haze from Jimmy's mind. Will power, so eloquently eulogized as the greatest power on earth, failed utterly to make any kind of a showing against the amber-eyed enemy that still foamed and fermented in Jimmy's veins. Jimmy was just "right" enough to know that he was all wrong, and knowing that he was all wrong made him stubbornly determined to prove that he was all right. Perhaps you have been there. Lexington is an interesting city.

Dorothy Hammell, gowned in a frock which cost more than the trip from New York to her Paris dressmaker's—or perhaps, tailor's—was standing near Graywing's stall when Old Jerry Comstock led him out. Graywing never looked better in his life and never acted worse—except once—and that was later. Dorothy was there at the stables for the very good reason that Dick Hammell and his New York friends were buying wholesale and long odds against the Northern horse. As Dick had said to his sister, in The Planter's a few hours earlier: "Sis, it's make or break, this journey. If we break I can salvage just about enough to take us to California. We'd have to sell the stables, though, and you know what that would mean. I'll be busy out in front from the time we get to the track until the big race is over. Won't you step round and jolly Graywing along until Jimmy is up?"

"You're nervous, Dick. But of course I will," Dorothy had assured him.

And so Dorothy Hammell talked affectionate nonsense to Graywing while Jimmy, unwisely putting on a front to quiet his conscience, underwent a level and coldly direct scrutiny that would have made an X-ray machine blush for its lack of insight. Leaving Graywing and Old Jerry to declare a temporary armistice, Dorothy questioned Jimmy aside. What she said to him does not matter. But when she finally told him that the Sweepstakes meant either make or break to Dick, Jimmy's face went even paler. "I'll put Gray under the wire first or never ride another race!" he said.

Then the grand stand, the massed humanity, the green paddock, the flutter of race programs, the incessant hum of conversation, and the final and sudden silence as one after one the entries for the big race appeared. Graywing, sidling across the track, elicited some comment, and occasioned not a little uneasiness among those who knew horses, yet had placed their money on local favorites. A dark chestnut, better then fifteen hands, with lean, powerful flanks, and a stride that even in his cavorting meant speed, the Northern horse was noticeable even against so excellent a field.

For once in the history of the Sweepstakes the horses came down to the barrier together, swept toward the quarter, and then, as each began to catch his stride, slowly separated, with Maid Marion in the lead, Graywing crowding the bay filly close, and Challenger running third. Jimmy, fighting the haze that *would* persist in blurring his eyes in spite of his will, realized before they reach the half, that Maid Marion had run her race. As she lagged in her stride, Challenger slowly drew up alongside Graywing, who was running easy and behaving almost too well to be trusted. Vaguely Jimmy realized that he was pocketed. The sorrel gelding, Challenger, was also running easy, and Maid Marion just able to hold her place. Then, as the three, bunched dangerously close, drew toward the last quarter, Challenger's jockey swung the bat. The sorrel gelding lengthened out, drew round Maid Marion and took the pole. Jimmy spoke to Graywing. Graywing, heading into the stretch, ran head to flank with Challenger, then head to shoulder, then neck and neck.

Challenger's jockey was using the bat for all he was worth. The crowd in the grand stand rose, howled, actually roared as the two flashed down the stretch. Jimmy suddenly felt a sharp pain in the back of his neck, as though some one had struck him with a knife. Then everything went black. Mechanical habit held him in the saddle for a stride or two and then he lurched sidewise. The reins still gripped in his hands, he fell, jerking Graywing's head round. Graywing, at that terrific speed, turned completely over, the momentum carrying him almost under the wire. A bay gelding, Barnary, ran second, and Maid Marion just managed to nose out the filly Springtime for third place.

"What was wrong with Jimmy?" Dick Hammell asked quietly as he escorted Dorothy Hammell to their car.

Dorothy hesitated, glanced at her broth-

er's tense face, and then, in spite of her desire to shield Jimmy, replied with but one word:

"Suds."

A man can go from bad to worse—they are on the same overland route and not far apart—or he can go clear through to California either by motor, express, freight, or on foot. Jimmy found out how hard it is to forget, and how easy it is to become forgotten. The name "Suds" still stuck to him, and while he hated it at times, at times he preferred it. A light name with a heavy personal significance. It was something like doing penance.

So Suds, without any quotation marks, sold his Straight-eight roadster, his diamond scarfpin, and much of his fine raiment, and paid his debts. Oh, yes, he had 'em! They are not hard to catch and even break, when you are drawing a munificent salary and spending it. They can be taught to eat out of your hand, and sit up, and play dead, but they never become thoroughly tame. And worse still, they breed like guinea pigs.

Suds paid his debts. With what was left he bought a ticket for Chicago, or rather, to Chicago, and there he soaped his feet for his final slide into social oblivion. In other, and sadder, words, he spent his last few dollars and several unlovely hours in trying to forget that he was trying to forget. It didn't work. And as *he* didn't, he had to do something else. So Suds, with no clean linen, no morning shower bath, no friends, no home, and no ambition to become a burglar, took to the open road which runs from the smoke stacks of Chicago to the corn stacks of Kansas, and became that which is classically designated as a "bo."

In company—and he could have had lots of it—his size was against him; also his nerve, which was proportionately greater than his size. So he traveled alone—on foot, in box cars, once in the caboose of a local freight, at night, and so, by dusty degrees, by working occasionally as a waiter in some catch-as-catch-can lunch room, and by always keeping just one jump ahead of the hounds, he worked his way to the shores of that turbid and irresponsible stream which separates southern California from the rest of the world. The town happened to be called Needles, the climate called various sultry names.

And by this time Suds looked as though he seldom used any of the household variety and felt as though his very soul was encrusted with cinders. His gray eyes were bloodshot from sleeplessness, wind, sun cinders and the glare of sand. His lean face was tanned, grimy and usually unshaven. His clothing—which had been of good quality—was faded, torn and shiny. But, strangely enough, his heart was all right, although he didn't suspect it. First, as proof that his heart was all right, he still felt that he owed Dick Hammell a debt which he could never pay—for Suds argued that his disloyalty to Dick had actually ruined him financially. And second, because he—Suds—never dreamed of becoming a crook, in spite of the temptation he met in every town and city. And finally because he blamed no one but himself for his present condition. The Kentucky gentlemen who had wined and dined him on that memorable night before the great race might have been financially interested in Maid Marion, Challenger, and the bay gelding Barnaby, but even so, they had not handcuffed him and forced him to drink.

Having washed his hands and face in the station lavatory, Suds inspected himself in the smeared and specked mirror. He saw a face that startled him because it looked so like the face of a fellow he used to know, back in New York—and yet it was a strange face. Suds could hardly believe that it was his own. The features were familiar: but the expression was that of a stranger.

"Mebby," said Suds, "I'm just gettin' hep to myself."

Wiser men have failed to make the discovery.

Suds never learned the name of the "shack"—which is hobo Latin for "brakeman," who kicked him off the flat car loaded with bridge iron just before the freight entered the San Berdoo yards. Yet that brakeman did Suds an unintentional kindness. Suds had anticipated working his way to Los Angeles, but the heel of destiny—and it wasn't a rubber heel, either—changed the itinerary so that Suds presently found himself upon less frequented ways than the Foothill Boulevard, or the Valley Route. And this because San Berdoo was experiencing the throes—both kinds—of a railroad strike which tied up all traffic between that salubrious city and her climatic sister Los Angeles, for several days. Suds bought some

crackers, oranges, and a package of cigarettes, and set out on foot for the next town. He took the wrong road and did not discover his mistake until a man in a flivver, zipping along the road toward Redlands, restrained his panting mount long enough to ask Suds if he was walking to Redlands—which obviously he was—and if he wanted a lift.

"Just what kind of a lift?" asked Suds warily.

"Why, in Lizzie, of course. Did you think this was a Mormon?"

"Thanks," said Suds, climbing into the trembling chariot. "I drove a Straight-eight once, myself."

"Well, my bus is a crooked four—but we get there all the same. Seen any Mexicans around?"

"Nope."

"I'm looking for one. Reckon I'll have to drive clear through to Indio. Ever been in Indio?"

"Nope. Where is it?"

"Down the road a piece—Coachella Valley. You headed for Indio?"

"Is Indio on the road to Los Angeles?"

"Well, I should say not! Where you from, anyhow?"

"New York."

"Huh! No wonder! You ought to see Indio. She's the slickest little desert town in the valley. You better change your mind and stay right here in Lizzie. We're kind of short of hands down around Indio. If you're looking for work——"

"Step on her!" said Suds. "You're the first man that has offered me a job since I left New York. To hell with Los Angeles!"

"If you hadn't said you was from New York," said the rancher, "I'd swear you was from San Francisco."

The shades of night were falling fast—Suds had arrived in San Berdoo late in the afternoon—when the rancher stopped to give Lizzie a drink. He explained, in his own naïve and soilful way that Lizzie was hot-headed, always thirsty, was slightly touched in the wind, but always r'arin' to go. As a desert rancher seldom shuts off his motor, save at night, Lizzie trembled with excitement, champed her carburetor and pawed the road with her front wheels until once more on the way, when she straightened out and loped down the long, gray desert boulevard which leads to Indio and the great beyond.

Suds worked just one long week for the Coachella Valley rancher, driving a two-by-nothing tractor with a drag attached up and down a sandy expanse so monotonously level, so vast, so unvaryingly free from weed, bush or stone that it almost drove him crazy. Saturday night he figured that he had made approximately one hundred and eighty miles in one week, at three miles an hour. And he had been used to riding some of the fastest "turkey legs" in the country. He had inhaled all the carbon monoxide he could stand. He longed for the smell of the stables.

Although it was summer in the Coachella Valley, the almanac said it was winter almost everywhere else, and a Los Angeles newspaper, that Suds had squandered ten cents on—Sunday edition, weight one pound without a wrapper—stated that the Tia Juana racing season was open, as well as everything else in that industrious little canning factory—saloons, gambling joints, race track, landscape and the "carcel" which is Spanish for "jail"—although some of the more experienced habitués have vulgarly translated it "bug house." Suds had heard of Tia Juana, and when he learned that it was but a day's journey by stage, he headed south.

Down the valley, across the flats from El Centro, over the Campo Hills and into San Diego—and Suds had his first view of the Pacific Ocean. Suds wasn't what might be termed, "strong on scenery." He preferred a glimpse of the home stretch to any other stretch of landscape in the world. As for the Pacific—he admitted that there seemed to be plenty of it.

Crossing the plank bridge over the dry river bed which is supposed to separate the United States from Mexico, Suds gazed upon the squalid little village of Tia Juana and wondered if he hadn't been shanghaied and shipped to the wrong port. He argued that such a measly, lopsided, can-littered collection of mud huts and false fronts could not possibly support a nationally advertised race track. And he was correct. It didn't. The track was not alone supported but boosted by that one-a-minute aggregation of simple-minded enthusiasts which has made Tia Juana famous for a certain brand of fish which it first catches, then trims and frequently cans.

Suds found his way out to the track, was recognized by the stablemen as a kid who

knew something about horses—he didn't tell any one who he was at that time; and because the great fraternity of horsemen, from stablemen to owners, know that while to-day may mean rose wreaths and limousine, to-morrow may mean a box stall and borrowed blankets—Suds was loaned blankets and slept in a clean box stall which he was told would be occupied the following day by one of a string of ponies being shipped from the North.

Suds was awakened by the sound of voices and the restless tramping of horses. It was dark. He sat up, listening. After an argument participated in by several voices, the door of the stall was opened. A flash light swept the floor and settled on Suds. "Roll out, old-timer," said a familiar voice. Suds staggered to his feet, gathered up his blankets, and then in spite of his ardent desire to remain unknown, acknowledged the command by replying: "All right, Jerry."

Jerry Comstock's wizened face went blank. He seized Suds by the arm and held the light straight on him. "You!" he exclaimed and clicked his tongue. Then casually: "Where you been, Jimmy?"

"In hell," replied Suds without emotion. And stepping past the old groom, he started to walk away.

"Here!" called Jerry, "lend a hand. I got six horses here just off the trailers, and they're crazier than I am. Two of my boys quit me in San Diego; got drunk and I fired 'em. I guess you ain't forgot Graywing, here."

"Graywing!" whispered Jimmy, and he felt queer in the region of his solar plexus. Then Dick Hammell had got on his feet again! Old Jerry had said they had a string of six. Not like the old days when they used to ship fifteen or eighteen at a time. But six meant something, especially two or three thousand miles from home.

"Did you ship from New York?" queried Jimmy, turning and walking back to Old Jerry.

"I should hope not! We shipped down from Ventura, which is bad enough."

"Let's get 'em in," said Jimmy.

That night, or morning rather, for it was three a. m.—which stands for Almost Morning—Old Jerry Comstock, the wise, wizened, watchful Old Jerry, and Suds, with a lantern on a box between them, had a horse-to-horse talk. No recriminations were indulged in; no "I told you sos," no "You might have known betters," or anything like that. Suds stated, briefly, that he had beat his way to California, for no better reason than that he felt he must go somewhere; that east of New York the walking was not so good, so he headed west. Old Jerry nodded understandingly. Then he told Suds, without going into ancient history deep enough to hurt Suds' feelings any, that Dick Hammell and his sister had come to California that summer, shipped six of the horses through to Ventura and had purchased a tidy ranch a few miles out of town with the intention of making it their permanent home. "And it's done Dick a world of good," concluded Old Jerry, " 'cause, between you and me—and I don't tell you nothin' new when I say it—Dick was never cut out to handle more stuff than he's got right now. He's got nerve, and he's made money. He owned some right fair horses and he understood the game; but he never did have the knack of handling a big string. His sister knowed it, and I guess she's told him so."

"How is Miss Dorothy?" queried Suds.

"Same as ever—only prettier. California agrees with her. And she's shut of a lot of worry since they sold the big stables."

"Well"—Jimmy rose, hesitated, stretched—"I guess I'll give you a chance to sleep. Goin' to bunk here to-night?"

"Yes—and every night. The game down here is swift. Throw your blankets on that cot over there and don't talk so much. I want to catch a couple of winks before morning."

Did Dick Hammell welcome Jimmy with open arms and a fatted calf and a little tune on the zither? Not on your fondest dream of a strawberry crush. However, it is a fact that Dick shook hands with Jimmy next day, then bit the end off a cigar, sized him up from "kicks to lid"—or from spats to boulder, if you prefer the English saddle—and told him, without mentioning salary or a possible bonus or anything like that, to go hunt up a stable fork and a wheelbarrow and get busy. Jimmy went. He flew. He upset all precedent—and a couple of stable-boys—in his haste to procure the manicure set above mentioned. For two weeks he fed, watered, cleaned stalls, bedded 'em down, cooled 'em—and more than that, he took considerable "slack" from exercise boys and jocks who would have been glad to carry

water to his pet dog if he had had one and they had known who Jimmy was. Once Dick Hammell discovered Suds rubbing down Graywing after a morning work-out, "Tired of the big fork?" asked Dick.

"No, sir!" Suds straightened up. His lean face flushed. "If my stalls ain't kept up better than any six you want to pick out of the bunch, I'm willing to quit right now, Mr. Hammell."

"I hadn't noticed," said Hammell, smiling to himself. "I'll go take a look."

Jimmy kept at his task. Presently Hammell strolled up. "How long have you been on the job?"

"Two weeks to-morrow."

"All right. Beginning to-morrow morning you can take care of Gray, here, and Bonnie Brae. Report to Jerry."

"Yes, sir."

First stableboy, then exercise boy, then groom—sounds familiar, doesn't it? Sounds somewhat like a waste of time—for Dick Hammell could have put Jimmy up on Graywing, or Bonnie Brae, or Scaramouche, or in fact any of his string. Jimmy had had the experience. He knew how to get the best out of a horse, and when to do it. But Dick didn't put him up on any of the horses —not because he wanted to discipline Jimmy. It wasn't necessary. Jimmy was doing his own daily dozen, without the music. But rather, Hammell had been studying Graywing's peculiarities. Graywing had been clocked by several horsemen at one thirty-seven on a fast track, and at one thirty-six on a slower track, but with a different jockey up. Of course horses, especially the "turkey legs," have their good and bad days no matter what kind of a track they perform on. To prove a theory that was interesting him, or rather to test it, Dick Hammell had Old Jerry clock the chestnut gelding twice in one day, once with "Bat" Ewing, who had been riding him regularly, and next with a young California jockey who had never been on the horse.

Graywing turned the mile in one thirty-seven with Bat Ewing, and one thirty-five and two fifths, with the California lad. This was Belmont Park time, Saratoga time, fast going, even allowing for unofficial timing, Hammell concluded that Graywing was more likely to do his best with a strange jockey in the saddle—providing of course that the jockey knew his business, than with one he was accustomed to. This rather upset all precedent, but thoroughbreds often do. Naturally Hammell figured on making expenses at the Tia Juana meet, but what he really was after was the big money of the Owner's Handicap, when the entries would be few and the time fast.

The Owner's Handicap was scheduled for the twentieth of January—sunshine, dust, pop bottles, open shirt collars and eye shades —in Tia Juana. Incidentally, more automobiles from more different States than a present-day Noah could furnish passage for if he advertised a new flood.

For a week before the race Suds had been doing a three-mile jog every morning, on foot. Hammell's instructions, through Old Jerry Comstock. Suds didn't ask any questions. He simply did what he was told to do. He reduced. He sweated off five pounds in six days. For every pound he lost he gained ten times its equivalent in virility. He was as hard as nails, as limber and springy as a whalebone whip, and as tough as the leather in a Lavender saddle right from Old Lunnon. Manicuring box stalls hadn't injured him any, either. But, patient reader, if you think he had any sentiment about riding Graywing in the Owner's Handicap, forget the motion-picture jockeys and the mush. Suds was there to win. Graywing was a temperamental racing machine—but a racing machine, nevertheless. Hammell was simply Suds' boss. Old Jerry —well, he was something more to Suds than a groom; but that was on the side and strictly a social matter. Friendship ceases when the barrier lifts.

To Suds it was the same old crowd, the same old track, the same old noise, excitement—over yonder in the boxes and back of them—the same old bushy-eyebrowed bookies, hard-faced touts, slick tippers, and silk skirts. But it wasn't quite the same old Suds who weighed in at ninety-five and turned Graywing up to the barrier just like winding a watch.

Nigger Baby, Sandman, Oriflamme—"horsey" folk talked as if these entries in the Owner's Handicap were their first cousins. Horsemen didn't talk much. Ignorance is the best policy when you know horses.

Nigger Baby, Sandman, Oriflamme, Graywing and Sister Sue went away with a rush that looked almost like a sprint. They didn't actually begin to string out until the half. Then Sandman ran first, Sister Sue a

close second and Nigger Baby an easy third. Graywing held fourth place and Oriflamme blew up just after turning the half. Then something happened. It looked to the crowd in the grand stand as though the chestnut gelding couldn't see so well from fourth place and had decided to move up and get an unobstructed view of the home stretch. Some facetious individual suggested that the New York horse had heard Oriflamme blow up and that it had scared him to death. Another individual who had picked Graywing, one to five against the field, because he liked his looks, suggested that some one ride down the back stretch and tell the jockeys that the race was over. Hammell chewed a cigar and glanced at his stop watch. Dorothy Hammell sat with her hands folded in her lap and her eyes blurred with tears. A lump in one's throat when a gallant horse wins or loses a race, is permissible; but a lump in one's wallet is really more satisfactory. Sometimes—but rarely—one experiences both. Then he or she is entitled to sing: "The End of a Perfect Day." Copyrighted.

Graywing drummed down the stretch as free from competition as an iceberg is from fleas. He flashed under the wire, slowed to the quarter, and came round like a regular guy, with no shindigs and no more elbow motion than is customary when you have done a mile in one thirty-six flat—two seconds better than the track record. The crowd cheered and roared and hooted on its hind legs. Meanwhile Sandman had shown Nigger Baby that a dark horse doesn't always win even second money, for Sandman had turned the mile in one thirty-nine, while the Alabama crap shooter watched him do it—and he didn't have to look over his shoulder to see it done.

Graywing was led down a lane of handshakers and congratulators and spectators and similar animalculæ, and in his bright and canny eye was a horse expression which, if translated into human English might have read: "Shoot if you must—but spare the molasses. Day's work, folks; and how did you like it?"

Jimmy looked somewhat like that, also.

But you can't get away from sentiment, even if you should happen to be a hard-boiled jockey with several unforgetable dents in your soul. What really shook Jimmy out of his shell was the realization that Graywing had behaved himself.

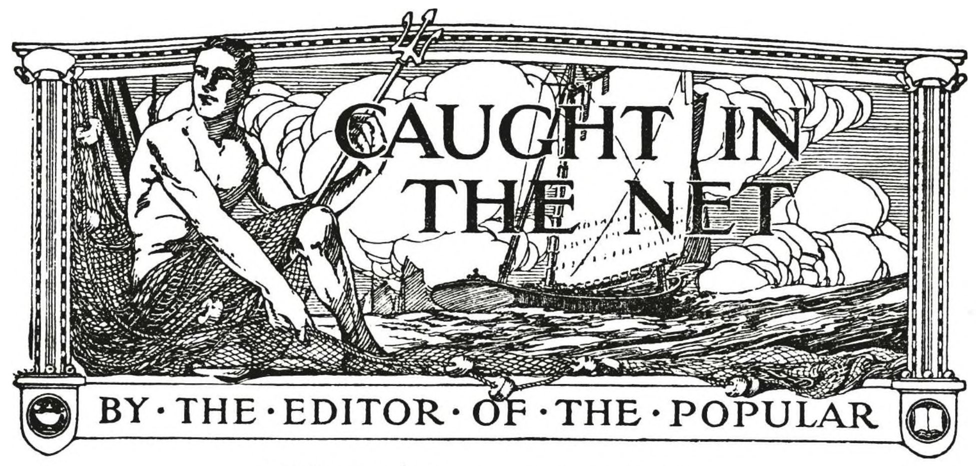
Three weeks later—sounds like a subtitle, but it's a fact—Hammell withdrew his entries and shipped back to the Ventura ranch. No one, not even Old Jerry Comstock, knew the reason for this unexpected move. However, Hammell sold all of his string except Graywing, and taking Old Jerry along with him, he made a trip to Kentucky. Two months later he returned with six of the handsomest thoroughbreds ever seen in the county—but not "turkey legs;" five-gaited saddle animals, a stallion and five mares.

Can you imagine Suds operating an alfalfa ranch and incidentally schooling thoroughbred colts to have good manners under the saddle? And can't you imagine Jimmy's wife scolding him for allowing their young son Jerry—a promising four year old —to ride Graywing from the stables clear to the ranch gate and back? Perhaps not, because this seems rather sudden. But then, five or six years in southern California pass easily and swiftly.

But don't imagine that Jimmy married Dorothy Hammell, for that was not on the books, and this is not a story made to order, but a story that grew out of Jimmy Eaton's experiences, first as stableboy, then—— But why repeat? Jimmy had weeded out his garden patch and planted new seed. He didn't moralize about it. But he did prune down some of the older and thornier experiences so that they never showed above the hedge which shielded his garden from the curious passer-by. And you can readily imagine that Dorothy Hammell helped him select his new garden, and arrange it. Metaphorically speaking, Dick Hammell supplied the horseshoe which Jimmy nailed above his cottage door.

And considering the fact that young Jerry Eaton calls Old Jerry Comstock "grandpa" one might surmise that that old retainer had contributed his share toward the domestic happiness and excusable pride of that one-hundred-and-ten-pound little trainer of Hammell & Comstock's gaited saddle horses, once known to the followers of the racing game as "Suds."

Mr. Knibbs will have another story in the next issue.



THE BAD COMPROMISE

LOOKING through our old school textbook on geometry the other day, we turned up the familiar proposition that "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points." And we noted that no logical proof of this definition was given. The book called it an axiom and informed us that if we didn't want to believe it we could give up the study of geometry, for the whole structure of that branch of mathematics was reared on blind acceptance of that bare tenet of mathematical faith. It does seem self-evident to any lay mind that the shortest route from one dot to another must run in a perfectly straight line. Yet not very long ago a man named Einstein set the world by the ears with proof that this ancient tradition of mathematics is false. A few gigantic brains were able to understand Einstein's argument against the axiom. But not many. Yet into the mind of the world has crept a certain degree of doubt. Nobody is quite sure any longer that the quickest road to anywhere follows an undeviating course.

Life is like geometry. It is worked out on the unprovable—or unjustifiable—assumption that certain fundamental things are true; or right; or wrong. We build our general and individual philosophies on axioms. Long habits of complacency have taught us to accept numerous more or less shaky foundations of living procedure wholly on faith. Yet in life, as in mathematics, Einsteins have arisen from time to time and troubled, often destroyed, our complacency. They have taught us the fallacy of compromise with those things which we could not understand or justify.

Once there was an article of faith among Western peoples that kings ruled by divine right. Before the Christian era—and even to this day in some corners of the earth—it was an axiom of life that evil must be rewarded by evil. To-day we cannot understand how the destinies of men and nations should have been dominated by such patent falsehoods. Yet they were as unquestioned in their time as was the rule of the straight line before Einstein came along. A great many people probably disliked them. But they couldn't see any practical way of getting around them, so they compromised, and made the best of a bad bargain.

Half a century ago intelligent and humane Americans accepted slavery as an axiom. Unable to justify it, they simply said it was inevitable, couldn't be avoided, and built a false economic philosophy accordingly. To-day we look on graft in politics as an inherent quality and compromise with it as best we may. We excuse adolescent immorality with a complacent shrug and the platitude that "Boys will be boys." And so, ad infinitum.

But axioms are no more divine than kings. And compromise with obvious—even though unavoidable—evil is as reprehensible as fealty to tyranny. Ugliness is none the less ugly because it exists. And we who condone the things we cannot justify simply because of their antiquity are only impeding the advance of civilization.

MORE THAN A WEAPON

OUR army and navy air services will chalk off a difficult fiscal year on June 30th, and will advance into another hard year, through which they will worry courageously on the usual shoe-string appropriation. Excepting during the frenzied period of war generosity it has always been so. The aviation branches have been the despised stepchildren of both the land and sea establishments. Young, feeble, in desperate need of nourishment to strengthen them during the difficult early years of development, they have ever been treated with the most niggardly parsimony by their elders.

Neither the ruling authorities of the army or the navy are going to initiate any radical change in this state of affairs. To get anything out of Congress at all they must cut and trim their budgets ruthlessly. And the air services, with which the line of sea and land are both out of sympathy, are the favorite cutting and trimming grounds. Nothing else can be expected as long as the apportioning of appropriations for aërial development is left in the hands of leaders who are inevitably concentrated on the development of the older and more familiar branches.

It is high time that the nation demanded intelligent consideration by the Congress of the question of aërial development. It is high time that the nation, and the nation's legislators, learned to distinguish between the air service and the land and sea arms devoted exclusively to a mission of defense in time of war. You may develop an army or a navy as intensively and extravagantly as you will; each or either remains nothing more than an army or a navy, a huge organization eating its head off in inactivity, awaiting the day of national emergency. But when you develop an air service, you develop one of the nation's most valuable business adjuncts. An air service can be used in time of peace. It can be used to further the growth of a great transportation industry. Eventually, of course, the development of commercial flying craft, of the science of aërial navigation, and of the nation's system of airways and ports will revert to private enterprise. But that time is not yet. It will not come—or at least will be delayed for decades in coming—unless the military and naval air establishments are given the funds with which to do the pioneering work. In considering the needs of our air services the people and the Congress should bear in mind that the mission of military aviation at this juncture is one of peaceable development. There is immediate work for the air services to do. They are something more than insurance against attack. They are one of the active tools of future economic prosperity. And their desserts should be dealt accordingly.

ABOUT TIPPING

AT a great university of the East, not very long ago, a sapient railroad Pullman porter held the lecture chair in the department of transportation for a day. He talked on the problems of de luxe passenger traffic. He spoke of the "tipping problem" also. And that is a subject that interests all of us, whether we are concerned with transportation or not. When the porter-lecturer was asked by a humble undergraduate what kind of a slide rule should be used in calculating tips, the answer was, "Let your conscience be your guide."

Now it seems to us that the lecturer was a little unwary there, because if most of us appealed to our consciences the race of porters might have to sell off its high-powered herd of automobiles, and give up its country residences, and live humbly—the way we common mortals do—on its wages.

For more years than anybody now living can remember, the tipping evil has been spreading gloom in the world. Various legends about the origin of the tip have passed current, but none of them set the date of the original tip far enough back. The probability is that the tip started several thousand years before the extinct Cromagnons painted the first glimmerings of history on the walls of caves in France.

The tipping instinct must have begun with the beginning of humanity because

it seems to be one of the primitive qualities that are born in every man. It is really a predatory habit and has nothing to do with generosity. A tip is a sort of bribe. It is destined to buy more service than you have a right to claim. We have ridden in Pullman cars and eaten in restaurants where it was impossible to command the most ordinary service because the serving staff had been bought off, for the moment, and secured to the persons of a handful of lavish givers—or bribers.

Now and again we hear irate voices raised, privately and publicly, blaming employers for the tipping evil. It is argued that if porters and waiters, and all the race of those who live by tips, were paid a decent wage, tipping would cease.

We don't think it would. For the man who wants to hog it all would be there still, bidding against his fellows for more than his share of attention.

SPORT'S GREAT YEAR

THREE international events of major importance will keep American sport lovers interested during the summer and early autumn.

In France strong American teams are going to meet the best that the rest of the world can show in the long list of contests on the program of the modern Olympic Games.

At home our tennis players will defend the Davis Cup, premier trophy of the courts, against the surviving nation of a field of twenty-three challengers representing every continent of the world; and our polo players will defend the International Challenge Cup against the dangerous assault of a team of hard-riding British invaders.

Just now interest is focused on the track-and-field section of the Olympic Games. The other contests of the Olympic program are lacking neither in importance nor interest; but the nation that scores highest in the athletic events is regarded as the Olympic champion, and it is upon winning these contests that our effort will be centered.

The team that will be selected after the final try-outs in the Harvard Stadium will be one of the most powerful groups of athletes ever brought together under a single emblem. It needs to be, for when our men march into the new Colombes Stadium near Paris they will be confronted by the sternest opposition that American athletes ever have been called upon to meet in the Olympics. It is easy to pick probable point winners for America. Murchison, Paddock and Woodring in the sprints; Ascher in the 400 meters; Watson in the 800 meters; Ray in the 1,500 meters; Anderson and Brookins in the hurdles; Gourdin and Butler in the broad jump; Osborne, Landon and Brown in the high jump—these are some of the men who, barring accident, can be depended upon to score heavily.

Our strength is in the sprint, hurdle, jumping, and middle-distance events; our weakness in the distance races and some of the weight events. With the exception of the 3,000-meter team race we did not win a single first place at Antwerp in a race of over 200 meters. And where we are weak, Finland, the runner-up in 1920, is strong.

Probably our tremendous strength in our specialties will enable us to pile up enough points to more than offset the sturdy Finns' ability at distance running, but before we emerge victorious there is going to be a real battle.

Which will be much more fun than a walk-over victory such as we won at Paris in 1900 and St. Louis in 1904.

POPULAR TOPICS

GREAT artists, our jolly old friend the Berlin *Achtuhr Abendblatt* informs the rest of the world, paint angels as blondes, because women who are blessed with golden hair always have agreeable and joyful temperaments.

Well, we haven't a bit of proof that all angels aren't blondes, but we have known some blondes who weren't angels.

There has been a recent addition to the already too-long list of "sciences" that —it is claimed—enable people to know all about other people at a glance. Glossomancy is its name, and character reading by the size and shape of the victim's tongue is its object.

Suppose that you are introduced to a man. Don't waste valuable time in talking with him, or in getting a line on his character in any of the old-fashioned inefficient ways. Just ask him to stick out his tongue. If at your perfectly reasonable request he lets fly something that scrambles up your own tongue with a few of your teeth, you will be justified in ticketing him as a person of hasty temper. If he accedes to your request, and the tongue he protrudes is short and broad, he is likely to be untruthful; if it is short and narrow he is likely to be sly and bad-tempered. But if his tongue is long and narrow, tie to him for a friend, for he has a frank and open disposition.

All this, of course, according to the glossomancists. Personally, we don't believe a single word of it.

City people are likely to regard farmers in one of two ways—as unfortunate exiles cut off from all the pleasures and worth-while things of life and condemned to ceaseless and hopeless toil; or as fortunate beings removed from the anxieties and strife of business, who can take life easy and live on the fat of the land.

Of course both views are wrong.

The first is wrong because good roads, automobiles, radio, magazines and motion pictures have brought many city pleasures to the farmhouse or the farming town; and because tractors and improved agricultural methods have done much to make farm life more bearable to both the farmer and his wife.

The second is wrong because farming is a business which, like all other businesses, requires the qualities of training, brains and patience as the price of success. That it isn't an easy business was shown last year, when one farmer out of every twelve lost his farm for debt; and when one farmer out of every four lost money.

As a very successful farmer once said to us: "Everything you get out of the ground you have to work for." Good farmers work with more than their hands; they work with their brains. That they appreciate the value of scientific training is well shown by the number of farmers' sons you will find in our agricultural colleges.

The United States has fifteen million automobiles—11.6 per cent of them motor trucks. This is five sixths of all the motor vehicles in the world. Both Great Britain and Canada have more than a half million. France has 460,000. Only three other nations have more than 100,000—Germany, Australia and Argentina.

The students' chess team of Pennsylvania State College has asked permission to engage in a contest with the chess team of Rockview Penitentiary. It is said that there are several brilliant players behind the walls of the Pennsylvania prison.

It is unfortunate that if this contest comes off it will not be promoted by some publicity genius like Tex Rickard. Just think what he could do with an attraction such as: Penn State vs. State Pen.

We have found the blood brother of the crook who stole a radio receiving set from an orphans' home last fall. He is the—well, pick your own name for him—who stole a gold star from the name of a dead soldier on the Woodbury Heights, New Jersey, war memorial tablet.

This summer, if plans of political managers for using radio-broadcasting stations for political speechmaking are carried out successfully, the superheated atmosphere will be full of politics.

And, as usual, politics will be full of superheated atmosphere.

Jimmy Williams Lands a Job

By Frank Parker Stockbridge

Author of "The Jinx of Crowley's Road," "The Buried Alive Club," Etc.

"The most dangerous scoundrel in three continents" meets his match twice in a day.

JIMMY WILLIAMS jabbed a spoon into his grapefruit with one hand while with the other he held a folded newspaper. The heading at the top of the column which he was scrutinizing carefully was:

HELP WANTED—MALE.

He reached the bottom of the page and the rind of the grapefruit simultaneously. While the waiter was removing the fruit and substituting a finger bowl for it, Jimmy tossed the newspaper across the table and picked up the next one, from a pile of them stacked up between the carafe and the sugar bowl.

Without glancing at the news pages, he opened this paper in turn to the "Help Wanted" advertisements. A close observer watching him would have concluded that he had done the same thing so often that the process had become almost automatic. He did not seem to be looking at the newspaper; his eyes were wandering around the room. They did not rest long enough upon any one of the other breakfasters to attract attention, but when he again gave heed to the food before him Jimmy Williams could have given a precise description of every other person in the restaurant as to his or her more obvious characteristics, and could have made a fairly close guess as to the nationality and occupation of each one of them.

With the majority of them this was easy enough. The little restaurant in West Forty-fifth Street, just off Sixth Avenue, had won Jimmy's patronage a fortnight previously when, at the end of his first week in America after seven years of absence, he had all but abandoned hope of getting a decent cup of coffee at eleven o'clock in the morning.

Rogatti's, catering chiefly to theatrical folk, had solved the problem for him; and of the score or more now seated at the different tables the majority slipped easily and definitely into a single classification. They were stamped with the ineradicable brand of the stage. One man, whom Jimmy had noticed on several mornings, he "placed" as a gambler. Two women who always breakfasted together he recognized for actresses. There was one girl, however, who

baffled him; and he did not like to feel baffled, even though there were nothing at stake.

She came in every morning after he did and was still at her breakfast when he left. She always sat at the same table, opposite his own; glancing sidewise he could see her in profile. On the few occasions when he had heard her speak to the waiter he had been impressed by the resonant timber of her voice. She might be a singer, though she had none of the earmarks of the professional. If she sang, her voice would be a contralto or, at highest, a mezzo-soprano; Jimmy deduced that not alone from the few words he had overheard but from her full, round throat and the generous width between the angles of the lower jaw. A girl he had known in Warsaw had had a throat like that, but she had been of the Slavic type, whereas this girl, so far as her features were concerned, was distinctly Nordic; one could find her prototypes in Saxony, Denmark, Normandy, Sweden or England but would hardly look for them farther east.

That she had a Celtic strain in her pedigree Jimmy was certain. She had a way of standing with her trimly booted feet together and parallel; that and the habit of holding her arms out at a slight angle instead of letting them hang straight down at her sides reminded him of a Basque fisher girl he had once seen dancing in the *pastorale* at Bilbao; both traits of posture were common enough among the colleens of Kerry.

That she was fair, with a glint of red in her blond hair; that she was slender without being flat; that her shoe was not larger than a four and her height four or five inches above five feet; these items and the neat simplicity of her attire, a simplicity which even a bachelor, if an observing one, could recognize as something not to be achieved cheaply, were all fairly obvious to any one who would take the trouble to look.

The first time he had heard her speak to the waiter she had spoken in French. That was nothing to wonder about, for half a dozen languages could be heard simultaneously in Rogatti's, if one kept one's ears open, and the waiters were all Levantines and therefore polyglot. Her French, however, of which he had caught several phrases, was the idiomatic French of the boulevards; she had never learned to speak that in a finishing school or a convent. Then, one morning when Nicolo, the waiter who customarily served her, had been absent and his substitute seemed to understand neither her perfect English nor her equally perfect French as she tried to explain precisely how she wanted her toast and eggs prepared, she had aroused the man to volubility by addressing him in the lingua franca of the Levant, that curious mixture of Italian, Turkish, Arabic and Greek which passes current as an international language in all of the lands bordering on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

Impassivity, at least outwardly, was one of the fundamentals of Jimmy Williams' code of conduct. For seven years he had schooled himself to conceal his thoughts and emotions. He had learned to do this in the hard school of necessity, where failure, in most instances, would have meant certain and probably instant death. Perhaps he had unconsciously relaxed his customary control of his expression since returning to America; here, of all places in the world, it would seem to be safe for a man to be his natural self. But in his surprise at hearing her speak in the patois which is only to be picked up by actually sojourning in the Near East, and then only by mingling intimately with its adventurers and traders, he must have given some sign.

Jimmy was completely unaware that he had given any sign of interest or surprise; yet out of the corner of his eye he had detected the slightest motion of her head in his direction, as if he had done or said something which had attracted her attention while she was conversing with the waiter. Well, there was nothing for her to see but a young man eating his breakfast and reading the newspapers. The picture Jimmy Williams presented to the world was, he told himself, sufficiently commonplace; there was no reason why any one should give him a second look.

Five feet nine as he stood, somewhat under thirty, neither stout nor scrawny and wearing his loose clothes so comfortably that only the highly trained observer would be likely to guess that they covered a body whose muscles were like steel springs in resiliency, toughness and readiness for instant action, Jimmy could pass unnoticed, when he wished to, in almost any crowd. He flattered himself that there was nothing out of the ordinary about his features or his dark hair, while his brown eyes, usually

half closed, seemed only to be seeing sleepily what might be directly in front of them, instead of literally taking in every detail of form and movement presenting itself within an arc of almost a half circle, measured both ways from his nose.

There had been no further sign on the girl's part, since that one morning, that she even knew that Jimmy was present. She had come in, as usual, this morning, just as he had finished his grapefruit; while he was unfolding his second newspaper he had again noted her way of holding her arms a little way out from her body, and of standing with her feet pressed together from heel to toe. Then he had propped his newspaper against the carafe, to leave both hands free for the manipulation of his ham and eggs, and resumed his reading of the "Help Wanted" advertisements.

There was nothing in the second paper that interested him, nor the third. What he was looking for, Jimmy had decided, was a job in which he could take life easily for a while. He had had enough strenuosity in the past seven years to last him a lifetime. There must be some sort of a place where a fellow could earn enough in six or seven hours to keep him going the rest of the twenty-four. Except in the matter of breakfasts his tastes were not exacting nor extravagant. There was nobody in the world dependent upon him for anything; he owed nobody a cent. But when he paid for his breakfast this morning his total liquid resources would consist of the change from the solitary twenty-dollar bill now reposing in an otherwise empty bill fold. If something didn't turn up in the course of the next twenty-four hours or so, Jimmy Williams saw no alternative ahead but to get back into the game he had quit only six weeks ago.

Then he picked up the fourth of his pile of morning newspapers and opened it to the "Help Wanted" page. Staring at him from the middle of the page was an advertisement set off from the others by white space. "ADVENTURE" it was headed, in capital letters:

Opportunity is offered for a young man of adventurous inclination to engage in work which calls for unusual initiative, resourcefulness, and courage. Intelligent man under thirty who understands one or more European languages and has been in either the Military Intelligence or State Department Secret Service preferred. Must be a native American. The pay will be proportionate to the risk involved. Address, in confidence, giving references and full details, Adventure, P. O. Box 66666, Madison Square Station.

"Why didn't they put my name in the advertisement, while they were at it?" was Jimmy's instant reflection, so completely did the statement of essential requirements fit him. His first impulse was to cut the advertisement out of the paper; but even before he had moved his hand toward his pocket to get his penknife the thought flashed upon him that this would be a dangerous thing to do.

"Never leave a trail unless you want to be followed," was one of the cardinal axioms to which he had adhered so long and so rigidly that it had become second nature to him. He had taken in the words of the advertisement almost at a single glance; now, without a perceptible pause, he let his eye travel down the column, folded the paper backward so as to expose the other half of the page, and propped it against the carafe as he had done with its predecessor. If this curious advertisement were a trap, as he half suspected it to be, any one watching him could not be sure that he had even seen it.

Well, if it were a trap, he did not propose to fall into it. He was through, he told himself again, with that sort of thing. He had cleaned up the last job of that sort, after two years of the hardest sort of work, and had resigned by cable as soon as he had placed his report in the hands of the London embassy. "Adventure"—the very word was repugnant to him. He paid his bill, tipped the waiter generously, and strolled out into the January sunshine.

Any one observing him as he sauntered toward Fifth Avenue would have taken him for a well-to-do New Yorker of the clubman type. His gait, his well-cut English lounge suit and baggy topcoat, the angle at which he wore his soft gray hat, even the shape of the black brier pipe at which he puffed nonchalantly, were all carefully calculated to give that precise impression, so completely conveyed at a single glance that nobody took the pains to look at him twice. It was altogether unlikely, he thought, that he would meet anybody on the streets of New York who would recognize him. Most of the Americans he had known overseas were still there; the few who were not had never seen him in his proper character as

Jimmy Williams. As for his European acquaintances; well, the ones he had made in the last two years knew him only as a bearded Armenian peddler and in his preceding incarnation he had been an Italian officer. There was as little likelihood of any of them identifying him in his present attire and milieu as there was that any of his former acquaintances in America would see more than a family resemblance between the mature and fully developed man he was now and the callow stripling who had been Jimmy Williams seven years before.

It was good to be able to be himself, without pretense. He felt as comfortably at ease as a man can feel who is down to his last twenty dollars—eighteen, now, since he had breakfasted—and has no income in sight. He had learned to take things as they came and trust to the future to take care of itself. He would do that now, he thought, as he swung to the top of a northbound bus and inhaled deep lungfuls of the crisp, sparkling air.

That advertisement, now; his thought turned back to that, and by a natural association to the girl at the table opposite him. "Adventure." It was adventure enough to be rolling up Fifth Avenue with nothing to worry about. He was all through with adventure. What had that advertisement said? "Must be a native American." He wondered how many native Americans there were who could qualify. "Initiative, resourcefulness and courage," the advertisement had called for; and they had asked for applications by mail, to a blind address. Did they expect anybody but a fool to put his name to that kind of a letter?

"Initiative and resourcefulness" were what they wanted, eh? It would be amusing to give the unnamed advertiser a demonstration. Besides, Jimmy confessed to himself, he was mighty curious as to what was going on. He got off the bus at the first corner and jumped the next one going south. At Twenty-fifth Street he climbed down and strolled diagonally across Madison Square to the branch post office under the Metropolitan Tower.

Within two minutes after he had entered the post-office lobby Jimmy had made two discoveries. One was that Box 66666 was a large one with a solid bronze front which made a glimpse of its contents impossible; the other was that some one else was watching it. The back of the man's head, who was moving among the crowd in an apparently aimless way but never getting out of eye range of Box 66666, stirred a sluggish memory cell. Making an errand at the stamp window whence he commanded a view of the whole lobby, Jimmy waited until the man's face was turned toward him. The sluggish memory cell sparked into activity and flashed a series of mental pictures upon the screen of Jimmy's consciousness.

Paul Simon the man had called himself when Jimmy had last seen him in Constantinople. He claimed to be a Frenchman, but while it had been none of Jimmy's business to challenge that claim, the pursuit of other information had led him to indisputable evidence that the man was no Frenchman, but a renegade Armenian, whose polished manners and ostensible financial connections were a cloak behind which he carried on his real business. And that business, Jimmy had reason to believe, ranged through the whole gamut of crime. It was not alone that Paul Simon was the most unscrupulous, if not the most notorious illicit trafficker in narcotics in the whole Levant; his was the directing brain behind a hundred other criminal activities.

Then and there Jimmy Williams forgot, completely and permanently, that he had ever dreamed of a life of comfort and ease. Wherever Paul Simon was, there was deviltry afoot.

Useless to think of following Paul Simon's crooked trail with only eighteen dollars in his pocket. The likeliest prospect in sight for a stake to work with seemed to be the mysterious advertiser of Box 66666. Simon's watchfulness was doubtless the result of suspicion that the advertisement had emanated from some source which might prove dangerous to himself. To get the man away from there was Jimmy's first problem: to insure the picking up of his trail again was the next.

Jimmy bought a stamped envelope and a sheet of paper. With a lead pencil he addressed the envelope to "James Williams, General Delivery," and dropped it into the slot, unsealed. Then, with the government's sputtery pen and gummy ink he wrote a letter, in French, in a feminine hand:

Paul Simon is in New York. I know what he is doing, but I do not dare to come to your office, because I think he has seen and recognized me, and it would not do to have him connect me with you. So please meet me at noon to-morrow in Washington Square, near the

Arch, or have one of your men whom I know meet me there, and I will tell you what Simon is doing.

He signed the letter with the single initial, "M," put it in his pocket and strolled again through the post-office lobby. Paul Simon was still on the watch. Jimmy had no fear of the man recognizing him, but took pains not to make himself too conspicuous. Twenty minutes later, still keeping an eye on Box 66666, he went to the general delivery window and asked for mail for James Williams.

"Are you James Williams?" asked the clerk.

One of Jimmy's cardinal precepts was to the effect that if you don't carry the evidence of it with you nobody can prove, in a pinch, that you are not what you claim to be. He hadn't even a laundry mark about his person to identify him, but he had the manner and the smile which had got him out of a score of desperate situations overseas, and he turned the full battery on the man at the window. In another minute he was in possession of an envelope properly postmarked and canceled. It took him but another minute to erase the lightly written pencil address and, with the same sputtery pen and gummy ink, to address the envelope to the head of the most widely known detective agency in America. When he had finished it read like this:

M. William Allan Burnside
P. O. Box 66666
Madison Square Station
New York, N. Y.

He slipped the letter into the envelope, sealed it and put it in his overcoat pocket. A few minutes later a young man with a leather mail pouch in his hand entered the post office and unlocked Box 66666. As he swept the letters from the box into his pouch Jimmy waited until he saw Paul Simon approaching the messenger; then he approached, with seemingly casualness, from the opposite direction.

When the messenger had closed the box and turned to go things happened precisely as Jimmy had planned them to happen. As he moved on, his passing left a letter lying just where a letter would lie if it had been dropped by accident by the man who had emptied Box 66666. In another second Paul Simon's foot had covered the letter and a second or two later he had picked it up. With a backward glance Jimmy saw the man read the inscription on the envelope and shove it into his pocket. Then he turned and left the post office in the opposite direction from that taken by the messenger.

Confident that Simon would not now deem it necessary to follow, and that he would be in the vicinity of the Washington Arch on the following day at noon, Jimmy picked up the trail of the messenger, who boarded a Fourth Avenue surface car, dropped off at Thirty-third Street, climbed the sharp grade to Thirty-fourth Street and continued on up Park Avenue to a large, marble-fronted mansion, which he entered by the basement door. There was nothing on the exterior of the house, Jimmy assured himself by a moment's scrutiny, to indicate that it was anything but a private dwelling. Obviously whoever had inserted the advertisement was not advertising his own business to the world; and that pleased Jimmy.

He walked on to the corner of Thirty-sixth Street, crossed Park Avenue and turned southward again. At Thirty-fourth Street he crossed to the Vanderbilt Hotel, where he obtained a blank slip of Bristol board from the information clerk. At a convenient desk he wrote upon the white surface the numerals "66666." Then he sauntered out of the hotel and strolled at leisurely pace up the east side of Park Avenue to the marble mansion.

The door was opened, in answer to his ring, by a liveried manservant. Jimmy placed the fellow as a Swiss, and addressed him in French.

"Give this card to your master, please," he said, handing the man the slip he had just prepared. The servant ushered him into a handsomely furnished reception room at the right of the entrance hall. Opposite it was a closed door, from behind which came the mingled clicking of several typewriters. Another door, also closed, connected the reception room with an apartment to the rear of it.

Sitting there, taking in every detail of the room, Jimmy's mind tried to find the answer to the mystery which the whole situation presented. Every sense was keenly alert. He could hear the faint mutter of voices from the adjoining room and the sound as of several persons moving about on an uncarpeted floor above his head. Then, from the hall, he heard faintly the

sound of a door opening and the next instant a woman's voice spoke his name!

"Jimmy Williams." The words, though spoken at a distance, were clear and distinct. Carefully as he had schooled himself never to betray surprise, it was with difficulty that he restrained himself from turning his head toward the hall door, from which direction the sound had come. He let a few seconds elapse before he moved; then, in a perfectly natural manner, he swung around in his chair to face the window. As he turned his head he was conscious that some one passed through the hall toward the entrance. Then he heard the front door open and close and the next moment the footman entered.

Out of the tail of his eye Jimmy saw, through the window, the left shoulder and arm of a woman descending the steps and turning northward, and her arm swung out at an angle instead of hanging straight down at her side.

The manservant threw open the door at the rear of the reception room and ushered Jimmy into the larger room back of it. The only occupant of the room besides himself was a man of forty or thereabouts, who was seated at a large, flat-topped desk, the top of which was bare except for a basket of unopened letters which, Jimmy saw, were addressed to Box 66666. In his hand the man held the card which Jimmy had sent in.

Before the man at the desk, who had risen as his visitor entered, could speak, Jimmy had made a rapid mental appraisal of him and his surroundings. The man was an official of some sort; there was the indefinable stamp of the administrator in his expression and his manner; the room, too, with its locked letter cabinets and plain but substantial furniture, might have been the office of a government bureau—any government. Whatever the adventure in prospect might be, it was not with irresponsible persons he would have to deal, Jimmy felt sure. Unless his reading of faces was faulty, the man behind the desk was on the level.

Jimmy took the man's extended hand; the firm hand grip was reassuring. There was something else about it, too; a certain pressure of certain fingers against his own, a pressure to which he responded in kind. His eyes met those of the other, who smiled as he spoke.

"You have a qualification not mentioned in my advertisement, in addition to the initiative and resourcefulness which you have displayed by coming here in person," he said. "As for these——" and he waved his hand contemptuously toward the pile of letters in the basket.

"Well, you didn't say anything about discretion, in your advertisement," smiled Jimmy.

"It was surely implied, however," responded the other. "I was sure, though, that at least one man, like yourself, would prove to be the man I wanted by doing just what you have done."

"Well, I'm here," replied Jimmy. "What's up?"

"Tell me about yourself," was the response.

"Nothing to tell, except that I have all of the qualifications set forth in your advertisement and there isn't a soul in New York who knows me." Then he recalled the voice he had heard in the hall. "With one possible exception," he added.

"So much the better," the other replied. "You have credentials, I presume?"

"Never use 'em," Jimmy answered. "If this is a government proposition, as I imagine it is, you can find out all you need to know about me by wiring to Washington and asking the state department for the information in File 324-A. That will give you my record, and your ability to get that information from them will be all the credentials I'll need from you."

"I'll put my cards on the table," the other man said, with a smile. "Officially, the United States government knows nothing about this office or what we are doing. Unofficially, however, we can sometimes obtain information from Washington, and Washington is freqently interested in the information we can impart. Now, for example, I was not certain until this minute that you were the man I thought you were."

He paused and opened a drawer in his desk, took out a blue-backed document and handed it to Jimmy.

"Here is an abstract of File 324-A, Mr. Williams," he said.

Jimmy glanced through the sheaf of papers rapidly. The typewritten pages held the record of his entire life, almost from infancy.

"You've got my number," he said as he handed the document back. "I didn't realize that even Uncle Sam knew as much as

that about me. That's a dangerous thing to have lying around; better burn it. But, if you'll pardon me, who the devil are you?"

"My name is Forsyth; Frederick Forsyth, if that means anything to you," replied the other, rising from his chair and stepping across the room to the fireplace. "I'll act on your suggestion and burn this."

He touched a match to the papers and turned again to Jimmy, who was out of his chair and halfway across the room.

"Not 'Slugger' Forsyth?" he exclaimed incredulously. "Turn your face to the light and let me look at you! Yes; you're the 'Slugger,' all right. I saw you once, back in '15, when they had the big banquet after the varsity game; remember? I was on the freshman eleven that year.

"But I don't make you yet. What are you doing here? The last I heard you were in Geneva. I meant half a dozen times to look you up, but never made it."

Jimmy paused for a reply, but Forsyth's only answer was a smile.

"I get you!" Jimmy exclaimed.

"I think you do," replied Forsyth. "Are you coming with me?"

"With you?" echoed Jimmy. "You couldn't pry me loose, if you're up to what I think you are."

"I thought you'd feel that way; that's why I sent for you," was Forsyth's response.

"Sent for *me?*" said Jimmy, puzzled. "Then that advertisement——"

"Was aimed at you and nobody else."

"What made you resort to all that hocus-pocus? Why didn't you send for me?" Jimmy demanded.

"Because I wasn't sure you were you," was the mystifying answer. "James Williams was only a name to me—a name and a reputation."

" 'Jimmy,' to my friends."

"That goes; Jimmy Williams, then, I knew only by reputation. Jimmy Williams, so far as I could learn from the state department and some of the people who knew him in Europe, had resigned from the secret service and announced that he was all fed up with adventure and proposed to live a life of ease; then he had promptly proceeded to bury himself.

"If that were Jimmy Williams' state of mind I didn't want him. But there was a young man in New York who was looking for a job. He might be Jimmy Williams; I couldn't be sure of that. If he were, and if he were responsive to the call of adventure, I thought my advertisement would bring him here. And it did."

"I had a hunch that there was a trap in the darned thing, somewhere," said Jimmy, dryly. "Only one thing worries me, though, now that I've walked into it and got myself nicely caught.

"What I'd like to know is how I gave myself away; what did I do, what earmarks did I show, to give anybody the hint of my identity? That's rather important, for I thought my incognito was perfect, and it won't do to have the general public flagging me wherever I go. It would tend to cramp my style."

"I don't think you need to worry about the general public," smiled Forsyth. "Mary sees a good many things that nobody else notices."

"Mary?" A light was beginning to dawn upon Jimmy. "Does she eat breakfast at Rogatti's?"

"You didn't recognize her, then?" Forsyth countered.

"Never saw her before, that I know of," admitted Jimmy. "Who *is* Mary?"

"Mary Monckton; ever hear of her?" responded Forsyth.

"Wait a minute," said Jimmy reflectively. "Wasn't there a Professor Monckton on the staff of Robert College in Constantinople?"

Forsyth nodded. "His daughter," he said.

"I never saw her, but I've heard of her," Jimmy resumed. "Studied for the stage in Paris, didn't she? Seems to me I heard of her doing something in the war."

"Drove an ambulance," Forsyth elucidated. "Tried to get back to her operatic work after it was over, but her voice had gone bad. She got on the trail of a group of Reds, in Paris, and did such extremely clever work in rounding up their plot that we had her do several other pieces of investigation over there, and when I opened up the work here I asked her to come along."

"What you say accounts for a number of things," said Jimmy. "I don't know yet, however, how she recognized me."

"Get her to tell you," Forsyth replied. "Now that you are coming with us, the sooner you meet her the better. She left here only a few minutes ago, to go to her hotel; getting ready for a social affair tonight. You'll be amazed to find how high up among the Four Hundred some of the trails we have followed have carried us.

"I'll call Mary up and see if she can spare you a few minutes. You'll like her. She's the cleverest woman I've ever known, and takes the most terrific risks, at times."

He picked up the telephone on his desk and called for a number. Jimmy listened to a one-sided conversation.

"Is Miss Monckton in? . . . Just gone, you say? . . . Did she leave any message? . . . She didn't say where she was going, did she? . . . Who sent for her? . . . Mr. Burnside sent his car for her? . . . Thank you. When she comes in ask her to call me, please."

Forsyth turned from the telephone to Jimmy, whose brain was working at full speed on a train of suspicions which the words he had just heard had set into motion.

"Miss Monckton went out as soon as she got in," said Forsyth. "She'll probably be back soon, and will call. In the meantime, let's get down to brass tacks. There's a big problem to be tackled, and you'll want to get busy at once."

"Just a minute," interposed Jimmy. "I've a hunch that I've got to get busy sooner than that, if possible. I heard you mention the name of Burnside. Do you do any business with the Burnside agency? Has Miss Monckton ever had anything to do with them? Do you know Burnside? Does she know him?"

"No to all of your questions," replied Forsyth. "I'm sure Mary doesn't know him, because she was asking me about him a day or two ago. He did some work for us a couple of years ago, before I came back from the other side, and I had had in mind the possibility of forming a connection with him here, but I've never met him."

"And you don't know of any one else named Burnside, whom Miss Monckton knows?"

"Never heard of any."

"You've heard of Paul Simon, haven't you?"

"Paul Simon?" echoed Forsyth, with an expression of amazement. "I should say I had! What do you know about him?"

"He's here," was Jimmy's succinct answer. "I saw him less than two hours ago."

In as few words as possible he related the incident at the post office.

"Here's my dope on what's happened," he went on. "Simon took that letter to Burnside as genuine, which I expected he would. But, of course, I never dreamed that there was any one, especially a woman with the initial 'M,' whom he would identify as its author. I only hoped to toll him to Washington Square to-morrow and so pick up his trail; that was one of the things I was going to talk to you about when you suggested we get down to brass tacks.

"Simon is a quick thinker and a fast worker. Doubtless he has seen Miss Monckton in New York and recognized her. That would be simple enough; he might have seen her either in Paris or Constantinople, or both places. Suspecting that she may have recognized him, he may have been doing a little investigating of his own, to find out where she lived and with whom she was in touch.

"Doubtless he has no suspicion of what is going on here, although the fact that he was trying to identify the person who inserted the advertisement in this morning's paper indicates that he is on his guard. It's a thousand to one that he believes that Miss Monckton is working with Burnside, and that she has seen and spotted him.

"The natural thing for Simon to do under the circumstances would be to try to get her out of the way before she had a chance to turn him up. He has intercepted her letter to Burnside, as he believes; the next thing is to intercept the girl herself."

Jimmy had risen as he was speaking.

"Then you think Mary is in danger?" Forsyth asked.

"Danger? I believe she has been trapped by the most dangerous scoundrel in three continents!" cried Jimmy. "The worst of it is, it's my fault. Here, let's check up on the Burnside business. Where's your phone book?"

It took but a minute to get the Burnside agency on the wire.

"Let me speak to the chief, please," said Jimmy.

"Who's calling?" asked the agency operator.

"Tell him it's 324-A, and make it snappy," commanded Jimmy. "No need of using my name, that I can see," he said in an aside to Forsyth. "We'd better be careful about that, even among ourselves."

Allan Burnside's voice came over the wire.

"I didn't get the name," it said.

"It's 324-A, Mr. Burnside," said Jimmy. "Saw you last in Trieste. I haven't time to

gossip now, but I'll see you soon. Meantime, tell me if you've been in touch with Mary Monckton to-day."

"Mary Monckton? Don't know her," was the reply.

Jimmy thanked him and hung up

"The dope's right," he said.

"Surely Simon wouldn't be foolhardy enough to try to abduct her in broad daylight," said Forsyth, incredulously.

"Daylight's the safest time for that man's work," replied Jimmy. "After dark every woman is on guard, more or less; but most of them have the fool idea that they are safe anywhere in the daytime. I've seen Paul Simon's work in half a dozen countries, and I know what I'm talking about. Give me some expense money, will you? I'm going to hit the trail."

Forsyth drew a wallet from his pocket, and handed Jimmy several bills.

"Take my car, if you like; it's parked just around the corner," he said.

"You might give me a lift as far as Miss Monckton's hotel," Jimmy replied. "I want to interview the doorman, as a starting point. For fast work, though, a car's no good at this time of day; traffic's too thick. I'll use the subway and taxis."

As they drove the half dozen blocks to the quiet little hotel on a side street where Miss Monckton lived, Jimmy outlined his plan.

"I've been thinking," he said, "and trying to make my mind operate the way I think Paul Simon's does. He thinks that letter is genuine; therefore he does not expect his passenger to make a fuss anywhere north of Washington Square. Above the Arch she'd be fairly safe, anyway; below Fourth Street —well, I haven't been sticking indoors of nights for the last three weeks. I want to tell you that what I've seen satisfies me that there isn't anything a man like Paul Simon couldn't get away with south of Washington Square.

"As soon as we get through here, I'll start my hunt at the Arch."

The doorman at the hotel remembered Miss Monckton's departure; he had noted it because she had so lately come in. The car was a black Cadillac limousine; the chauffeur wore a fur cap and a fur-trimmed coat. There had been nobody else in the car, the doorman was sure, but he had noticed another man jump to the seat by the driver as the car started up.

"Give me your telephone number," said Jimmy to Forsyth as, with the doorman's information in his possession, he dropped off at Pershing Square. "I'll call the minute I learn anything."

For the first time in three weeks, since he had landed from the steamer, Jimmy felt the old thrill of pursuit, the satisfaction of having a definite objective. He wondered, as the subway train sped southward, that he could ever have dreamed of being happy in any other vocation.

His sense of exultation was marred, however, by the thought that it was due to his own act that Miss Monckton was in trouble—if she were in trouble. He couldn't blame himself, precisely. It had been a completely unforeseeable contretemps; nevertheless, he felt a degree of concern which he had seldom experienced before. "Mary Monckton." He pictured the girl in his mind, as he had seen her every morning for the past fortnight, and shuddered as he thought of what Paul Simon was capable of doing, to remove her from his path.

At Astor Place he came to the surface and picked up a taxi. "Washington Square, and stop below the Arch," he said.

As he neared this first objective his pursuit took on more and more the aspect of a wild-goose chase. Yet there was a chance, a bare chance, that he had analyzed Paul Simon's mental processes accurately. If that were so, then there was a chance that he might intercept the car in which, he believed, Mary Monckton was being abducted.

Crowded as Fifth Avenue was with cars, the bulk of the traffic was north of Eighth Street. Jimmy had been waiting in the taxi but a few minutes, scrutinizing every vehicle that passed under or by the Arch in both directions, before he realized that a black Cadillac limousine would stand out among the traffic going through Washington Square with a fair degree of conspicuousness. He got out of his cab and approached the traffic policeman at the crossing.

Upon the officer Jimmy turned the battery of his personality, as he had done in the case of the post-office clerk, and with equal effect.

"I was to meet a lady here," he said, "and as I'm a bit late I'm afraid she may have got tired of waiting and gone on. She was to pick me up in her car—a black Cadillac limousine. You might have noticed it; the driver wears a fur cap and a fur-

trimmed coat, and there'd likely be another man on the box with him."

"A black Cadillac, you say?" asked the policeman. "I seen one go through the park about ten minutes ago. I took notice of it because the window curtains were drawn. Now I think of it, the driver had a fur cap on."

"Through the park, officer? Which way did they turn, or didn't you notice?" asked Jimmy.

He felt that his worst fears were confirmed, that he was too late. The officer's reply carried no reassurance.

"I wouldn't be sure, but I'd say they went straight on, southward down Thompson Street."

South of Washington Square! Anything, as he had told Forsyth, could happen there. In that labyrinth of narrow streets, cobbled alleys and ancient lanes, lined with dilapidated rabbit warrens of tenements, decayed mansions behind whose classic façades poverty mingled with vice and crime found a hiding place, there were a hundred dens in which men like Paul Simon could hide their victims until death, or a worse fate, overtook them.

Jimmy returned to his cab and told the driver to proceed down Thompson Street, slowing down at every crossing to give him an opportunity to inspect the side streets in both directions. He turned his head and strained his eyes in vain, seeking the black limousine. Then, just as the cab was nearly across one of the narrowest streets, he saw something which caused him to shout a "Stop!" command to his driver, and to leap from the cab.

It was the silhouette of a woman's figure, and the arms were held out at an angle from the shoulders!

Just for an instant he had seen her; by the time he was out of the cab there were a dozen persons obstructing his view down the little street. Signaling the taxi driver to follow, he hurried down the narrow thoroughfare afoot. The woman whose silhouetted outline he had seen was nowhere in sight.

Fifty yards from the corner the little street made a turn at a "dog-leg" angle, and from the point of the angle a still narrower alley ran off in a southerly direction. Around the corner of the alley, her back against the wall of the tumble-down building on the corner and her eyes directed toward the farther end of the street, past the turn, stood Mary Monckton.

"Hello, Jimmy Williams," she said as he came into view. "How did you get here?"

There was a note of surprise in her voice, but there was a gleam in her eye which Jimmy interpreted as expressive of something like pleasure.

"I was looking for you, Miss Monckton," he replied.

"Do you mean that you trailed me here? If you did, you're better, even, than I thought you were. Why, I could hardly follow my own trail," the girl responded.

"Call it luck," said Jimmy. "If you haven't anything to detain you, let's go. I've a taxi here."

"Wait a minute," the girl answered. "Stand back where they can't see you. I've got a house spotted, and I want to see if they go in there. They're coming around the corner now."

Jimmy glanced up and saw two men coming down the upper arm of the little street. They turned to enter a building which had once been a mansion; as they turned he saw their faces in profile. One was unmistakable.

"That's Paul Simon, all right," he said.

"Paul Simon?" the girl gasped. "Is *that* what we're up against?"

Her face went white. Jimmy took her arm and led her to his taxi.

"What did you think they were up to, if you didn't guess that?" he asked her as the cab started. "How did you get away from them, anyway? And where's their car?"

"Why, I realized, of course, that somebody was trying, rather clumsily, to trap me, and as I'd never had the sensation of being kidnaped I thought it might be interesting." The girl spoke in such a matter-of-fact manner that Jimmy looked at her in amazement.

"You *are* a cool one," he said. "Forsyth was right; he said you took terrific risks."

"It didn't seem like such a terrific risk," she replied. "If I'd known it was *that* crowd, though, I might not have tried it. There's a bungling lot of dope peddlers that I've been making a little trouble for and I thought it was them; there's nothing they can do that I'm afraid of. That's the only end of the work we've done anything with yet, and we've hardly made a beginning. But how did you find out about this?"

Rapidly Jimmy sketched the sequence of

events of the past three hours and his deductions that had led him to that part of town.

"Now tell me your story," he said, as he concluded.

The girl shuddered slightly. "To think that I was even remotely within range of Paul Simon gives me the creeps," she said. "I've heard some of the things they tell about him in Stamboul. I knew a girl there, an English girl. I never believed the story she told, but I believe it now. It seemed absurd, impossible to me then."

"She was kidnaped?" asked Jimmy.

"Just as they tried to kidnap me to-day," the girl responded. "She was only one of many, men and women, she said, who fell into the clutches of Simon's organization. Once in his power they were given drugs—narcotics—sometimes by force, until they became addicts in spite of themselves."

"I know; that is part of the story that was told me by an old fellow in Pera," said Jimmy. "Simon picked men and women of social position or high intelligence, made them into drug fiends and then compelled them, as the price of obtaining the drugs without which they could not live, to become his agents in crime.

"Good Lord!" he went on. "To think that my own act made you a target for that scoundrel's fiendishness!"

"I begin to see deeper than I have seen into some things which have been puzzling me," the girl resumed. "I had no suspicion that anything like that was possible in America, though, when I found that chauffeur, whose English is perfect, waiting for me when I got back to the hotel.

"He said that Mr. Burnside had sent him; that Mr. Burnside would have to be out of town to-morrow but would meet me at Washington Square in half an hour, and had sent his car for me.

"As I don't know any one named Burnside I knew that there was a catch in it somewhere, but thought I ran no risk in broad daylight. However, I excused myself long enough to run up to my room and get these."

From a deep pocket inside of her short fur coat she drew out a short pinch bar, a hexagonal piece of steel about a foot long, flattened at one end to form a screwdriver point and with a curved claw at the other. That and a pair of heavy wire-cutting pliers she held before Jimmy's eyes.

"Looks like a namesake of mine," he said, indicating the pinch bar.

"Yes; it makes a very serviceable jimmy," she agreed. "You see, I was in motor service during the war. I can take a camion to pieces and put it together again. I've sort of got the habit of carrying a kit of tools around in my trunk, and there isn't much of anything you can't open with these.

"The minute I got inside the car and the door clicked I felt that I was in for some excitement. Then when the second man climbed up beside the driver, and I tried the doors softly and found they were both locked, I was sure of it.

"They didn't expect me to do anything until after they had got past Washington Square, so they didn't watch me. The second man acted as if he didn't want me to see his face."

"That must have been Simon," suggested Jimmy.

"Ugh, the beast!" the girl exclaimed. "We've got one of his lairs marked down, at any rate. I suppose it will be your job to round him up, but I want a hand in it."

"You shall have, if I have anything to say about it," Jimmy promised. "But go on with your adventure in the limousine."

"I wasn't afraid of anything they could do to me; anything violent, that is, as long as I was conscious," the girl resumed. "I'm never without this."

The black snout of an automatic poked itself out from her sleeve as she spoke.

"I knew I could stop the car whenever I wanted to, but I began to get nervous about gas."

"Gas?" Jimmy echoed.

"Poison gas; chloroform or anything like that," she explained. "I didn't know at the time what made me think of it, but now I know; I had a subconscious memory of what that English girl in Constantinople told me just before she died. They played the gas trick on her.

"I was in a practically air-tight compartment. Any time they wanted to shoot a little chloroform in to keep me company it was good night for me. So I got busy with the pinch bar and pried up the floor boards. That gave me ventilation, at any rate.

"And, sure enough, they turned on the gas. Even then I wasn't bright enough to think of Paul Simon.

"I flopped to the floor with the first whiff of it, and they must have felt sure it had

got me. Then I waited until the car turned into a narrow street down here, and I stopped the car."

"Stopped the car? How?" asked Jimmy.

"Cut the gas line with the pliers," she replied. "No trick at all. The car ran on for a block or so, on the gas that was in the carburetor, and the minute it slowed down I dropped through the floor and let it go on. That's one good thing about a Cadillac; there's lots of clearance for a trick like that.

"When I looked around, from behind an Italian's pushcart, the chauffeur and the other man were making motions toward the rear windows of a house which, I calculated, must have its front about where we saw them go in, so I thought I'd stick around a while and see what I could see."

"I'm glad you did," said Jimmy. "It has given us a chance to get acquainted. You'll have to keep your eyes peeled for Paul Simon, though. He's a vindictive devil, and he'll try something more direct next time.

"You surely did have your nerve with you to-day. You're the first girl I ever saw that I felt that I'd like to team up with."

"Team up? What do you mean?"

"Work together, pull together in this big game," he replied. "This is the biggest thing, in its implications and possibilities, that I've ever tackled. Instead of working for one government, we're working for practically every government in the world."

"Except our own," Mary Monckton added, with a regretful note in her voice. "Do you think the United States will always stay out of the League?"

"No; but whether it does or not we're working for our country just the same," responded Jimmy. "We're working for all the people of all the world, the way I see it; and the fact that we have to work unofficially and under cover adds zest to the game."

"What did you mean by our working together?" she asked. "I thought you were a single-hand worker."

"Not where the problem is as big as this one, and with as many angles as it promises to have, now that we know Paul Simon is in the game," he replied. "What's needed is a team, a good, strong team and big team, all working together under unified direction on whatever phase of the work is uppermost. I don't know whether that's Forsyth's idea or not, but it's mine."

"It's mine, too," she answered. "Mr. Forsyth is not a secret-service man himself, you know; he's got all of the League's business in America to look after. So when I told him that you—at least I was almost sure it was you—were in New York and looking for a job, he said: 'Let's get hold of him and have him organize the secret-service end.' Didn't he tell you that?"

"We hadn't got that far when you pulled this vanishing act of yours," smiled Jimmy. "It suits me, down to the ground. But if you and I are going to be pals, you've got to give me light on one point. I know how you found out I was looking for a job; that was easy enough for any one who saw me reading the 'Help Wanted' pages every morning. But how did you spot me for one Jimmy Williams?"

"It's the way you wiggled your left ear whenever you were interested and trying not to show it," she laughed. "I saw you do it twice, in Paris, at my cousin's party."

"Your cousin's party?" Jimmy asked, blankly.

"Emily Austin. Remember the dance she gave just after the armistice?"

"Yes, yes; go on," said Jimmy.

"Nobody else in the world ever did that, so far as I know, and I saw you do it several times in Rogatti's, especially when you heard me talking to the waiter in the Levantine patois. But I wasn't quite sure until to-day. You did it again when I called your name in the hall, up at headquarters.

"So that's that; and you'd better break yourself of that habit, Mr. Williams, or some one else will spot you when you don't want to be spotted."

"I'll try," agreed Jimmy, looking at the girl with admiration. "And—if we're going to be pals—my name's 'Jimmy.' "

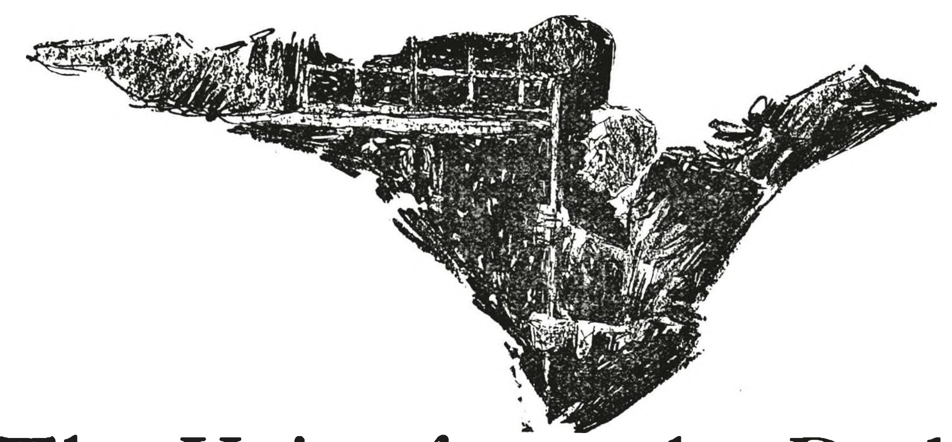
"And mine's 'Mary,' " she responded, extending her hand.

Jimmy took it in his own. Behind its soft warmth there were muscles as resilient and wiry as his own, and the grip was the firm, friendly grip of a boy.

"That goes, then, Mary," he said. "No sentiment, nothing sloppy, just good pals working together like hell to put these scoundrels out of business."

"Like hell, Jimmy," she responded.

Another adventure of Jimmy Williams in the next issue.



The Voice from the Dark

By Eden Phillpotts

Author of "The Red Redmaynes," "The Gray Room," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

It was on the very heels of his retirement from active service with Scotland Yard that Mr. John Ringrose, whose experience of crime ran back through a long and distinguished career, stumbled into the deepest and most hideous mystery of a life devoted to the problems and vicissitudes of criminology. It confronted him at night, in the country inn where he had withdrawn for a period of rest—the pitiable outcry of a child in mortal terror. But when he turned up the lights in his room there was no child—nothing! Yet he had not dreamed that cry. It came from somewhere beyond his own imagination. He wondered if any one else had ever heard the agonized voice of that invisible child. Deftly seeking, he found two others who shared his experience. They were an aged lady, Mrs. Bellairs, and her companion, a Miss Susan Manley. They had heard the cry. Better than that they had known the murdered child in life. And still better they had probed into the matter and learned the manner of his death. From them the veteran detective, Ringrose, heard the story of the boy Ludovic Bewes. Like Mrs. Bellairs and her companion, the boy was a guest at the Old Manor House. He had come there with a manservant to attend him, following the death of his widowed father, Lord Brooke. A nervous child, his death had been brought about through sustained terror. As Mrs. Bellairs had discovered, the boy's servant, Arthur Bitton, possessed a waxwork effigy, a demoniac image, the head of a man—yet not a man. And at night Bitton systematically presented this frightful image to the boy. In the end the heir to the Brooke estates and fortunes died. And his uncle, who was also his guardian—Burgoyne Bewes, a collector of debts and old ivories—inherited title and fortune. Mrs. Bellairs had since kept silence, for there was no direct evidence of crime. She had bided her time against just such a fortuitous circumstance as the advent of John Ringrose. To him alone she confided her knowledge and also a sketch of the golliwog head that had killed the young lord of Brooke-Norton. It was some months later that the murderer, Arthur Bitton, now married and living a retired life in the village of Bridport, was served a dose of his own bitter medicine. In the room of his lately acquired friend, one "Alec West," he came face to face with a frightful apparition. It was the once familiar head of the golliwog demon! It peered at him and rattled its jaws! For a time he was bereft of reason. He could only point and gibber piteously. Alec West swore there was nothing. A search of the room disclosed nothing. Naturally enough. For Alec West, the "gentleman's gentleman" retired, was John Ringrose! And the resurrection of the golliwog was of his devising!

(***A Four-Part Story—Part II.***)

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHERATON BOOKCASE.

SHORTLY before noon on the following day, Ringrose called to learn how Bitton fared. The storm had blown itself out, the sky was nearly clear, and the morning shone with the low, pale golden sunlight of winter.

Arthur himself answered the detective's knock. He was in his shirt sleeves and wore gray carpet slippers. He looked pale and haggard and had a bandage bound over one eye.

The man proved full of apologies.

"I'm ashamed to look at you," he said. "You'll turn me down for a slack-twisted fool I should think, or even a drunkard. I

led you a proper dance last night, I'm afraid."

"No matter for that so long as you're all right. What's wrong with your eye?"

"Come in half a minute."

Ringrose followed him to a little kitchen whose window opened on a vegetable garden behind it.

"I thought a bit about you last night," began John, "and first I thought, as you say, you might be fond of a drop out of sight of your neighbors. A secret drinker sometimes gives himself away like that. But I've seen 'em in higher stations than ours, Arthur, and I know the signs. There's none about you. And then I wondered if your eyes were all right. And by the look of that bandage they are not."

"Exactly what it was I was fearing," answered the other. He was cool and calm and had evidently quite recovered from his shock.

"Last night, when I got to bed," he continued, "I felt no ill effects from that ugly jar, and laughed at myself; then a cruel sharp pain in my left eye came on me, like a stab. It kept me awake two hours or more, and then went off; but the eye don't look right to me, and I'm rather frightened about it."

"You can't have it attended too soon then. You go to an oculist this very afternoon," urged the other.

"There's no man here I'd trust. But, as you say, a man mustn't play about with his eyes. Mrs. Bitton's going to take me to London to-morrow."

For a moment suspicions awoke in the mind of Ringrose. Was it possible the man meant a hurried departure and disappearance? But he did not find the fear grow. Bitton was taking precautions to explain his collapse of the previous night. Arthur might be expected to do so. He would probably act as he intended, learn there was nothing amiss with his sight and return home.

Upon the whole John was not sorry that his victim had made so complete a recovery. Time must elapse before the second application, and he had not yet determined when and how it would be administered. He judged that three would be sufficient.

Arthur's wife returned while still they talked, and for the moment she showed more concern than her husband. She was curious, and John found that Bitton had confessed to seeing something that was not there. She now questioned Ringrose closely as to the incident. But he had no particulars to add.

"I had a close look by daylight this morning," he said. "I thought, perhaps, there was some china ornament somewhere, or a funny face in a picture, or some such thing that might have caught the light and shown up to startle Arthur; but no—nothing of the kind. I expect it's what they call an optical illusion, Mrs. Bitton; and that, in his case, means eyes and no more. Don't neither of you fret about it; but go and consult a tiptop eye doctor. Then he'll soon be all right."

Jane Bitton remembered that their new friend had expressed a wish to Bitton to see the house; and now she invited him to do so. It was all on one floor, and John admired it considerably, praised the size of the rooms and wished himself in such another.

"I couldn't run to anything so spacious," he said; "but the plan is fine, and I might manage something like it on a smaller scale, I dare say."

After returning home, while the matter was still in his mind, he made a plan of the dwelling; and when, on the following morning, the Bittons started for London, he saw them off.

In two days they returned with satisfactory news. The oculist could find no explanation for Arthur's alarm and reported his eyesight unusually good for a man of his age. Some strain, or possibly a blow he had received and forgotten, might have accounted for the passing pain; but there was nothing whatever the matter.

Bitton came back in good spirits and proceeded with the ordinary course of his days. He became more friendly and sociable; but, guessing that he would probably shy at spending an evening with him for some while, Ringrose offered no invitation to do so. For a fortnight he waited and, meantime, with the lengthening days of spring, Bitton began his walks again and invited John to accompany him.

"It keeps down the fat and makes you hard," he said. "There's a nice pub up upon the hills by the name of the Old Manor House, and I take a cup of tea there sometimes."

John, however, had no intention of visiting Mr. Brent's hostelry. He declared himself a poor walker, and presently, on the

plea of a birthday, invited Arthur and his wife to supper.

Bitton at first refused, but two days later accepted, and the trio passed a pleasant evening together. John had been at pains to prepare an excellent entertainment, and he had lighted his room so cheerfully that not a dark corner remained in it. They drew to the fire afterward, but Arthur avoided the armchair of his torment. Jane Bitton sat in it, and her husband, with his face to the grate, occupied a seat between his wife and their host.

The evening passed off very pleasantly, and Lord Brooke's old valet expanded as he had not done before. He told stories, to cap those of Mr. Ringrose, and added a little to the latter's knowledge of his late master.

"I thought sometimes he properly enjoyed being threatened with the bailiffs," declared Arthur. "He'd leave it till the last moment and then bolt off under cover of night and get to his brother by hook or crook. His late lordship spent a lot of time in Italy, too—he had a villa on the Lake of Como—and my master would slip off and get to him and knock the money out of him on all sorts of threats that he'd be locked up and disgrace the family if he didn't get it. But he always did get it. Born to outrun the constable, that man. I often wonder how long he'll stop at Brooke-Norton."

"Not married, you told me?" probed John Ringrose.

"Not he. No use for the women. My wife, who's a Brooke-Norton native, tells me that he has a man to stop with him now and then, but only maniacs like himself. He'll let the shooting down and grudge a new roof to a farm presently, if the money gets short."

"And his brother—was he all for art and such like?"

"No; his brother was an open-air man. Golf and riding and sport. He came home for autumn most years, till his wife died in Italy."

"No children, I suppose, as his brother inherited?"

"Ah, that's a sad story," answered Mr. Bitton thoughtfully. "A son he had—weak witted. The little boy died a year or more after his father. And there was one daughter also—older than the boy. She lives with her uncle."

"I saw her out with him in a motor car last time I went over," said Jane. "A pale girl, but mighty pretty."

"The boy was a good-looking child also; the father—Lord Rupert—was a big, handsome chap—would have made two of my master. But he always looked upon his brother as a boy and forgave him his silly ways."

Ringrose observed that his guest, while stating the facts of the child's death, exercised considerable reserve with respect to details. But the detective revealed no special interest in the affairs of the family, and presently he spread a plan before Mrs. Bitton and invited her to applaud it. An architect had drawn a design for the imaginary bungalow under John's direction. Such detail was typical of him.

"You'll find yourself wanting a spare room, however," prophesied Jane. "Everybody wants a spare room, soon or late."

"Not me, ma'am. I'm the loneliest chap on earth. Not so much as a niece or nephew to pay me a visit."

"No relations is a state that has got its bright side as well as its dark, Alec," the other man assured him.

The evening passed and a week later John visited the Bittons. He found himself rather liking Jane. She could not be called attractive and her manners were abrupt; but she proved sincere and straightforward. Thrift was her favorite theme. She loved devices for saving the pennies, and Arthur applauded her. John Ringrose was convinced that no shadow of the truth had ever entered Mrs. Bitton's head. She was not the woman to have condoned a crime—least of all such a crime as her husband had committed. She professed a fondness for children; but had no desire to possess any of her own. Her husband shared her sentiments and Ringrose applauded them as highly sensible.

Arthur never returned to the subject of his fright, nor did John; and at length, on an occasion when his wife was going with another woman to the theater, Bitton consented to spend an hour alone with his new friend before he fetched her home. He appeared uneasy and his mind wandered, while the other knew well enough what occupied Arthur's thoughts; but Mr. Ringrose did not touch the subject and cast his own ideas in pleasant channels. He welcomed the approach of spring and he was full of a book

which he had discovered in the library of his landlady.

"You must read it when I'm through," he said. "There's little enough on her bookshelf to waste your time with. Sermons mostly. I didn't know there were so many sermons printed in the world. But her husband was a minister and that accounts for it. The book I'm reading is 'Gulliver's Travels'—by a clergyman too, apparently; but it doesn't much smack of the pulpit. You'd die of laughing—such a man for a bit of fun as you. It all means something—a satirical affair aimed at the follies of those days, which are much like the follies of these for that matter; but the fun is in the adventures of the hero. And the reverend gentleman doesn't mince words neither. Mighty near the wind he sails. The wonder is the book's allowed. It's audacious, to say the least."

Mr. Bitton's reading had not embraced "Gulliver's Travels," but he decided that it should do so.

Nothing happened that night; then came a second occasion when, with gathering courage, Arthur stopped until eleven o'clock beside John's fireside. They had conversed as before, and their relations now approached intimacy, for the detective never played a part long without elaborating it. He was now a retired manservant in every visible particular—spoke, and even thought like one. Sometimes, in private, he almost believed his own elaborate fiction. He had sketched his life in every detail, declared his means and indicated his tastes. In truth the reality conformed so nearly with the pretense that no difficulties at any time presented themselves.

As the clock struck eleven on this occasion, Arthur rose and knocked the ashes from his pipe. The night was still and a bright moon shone over the meadows and woods where they stretched glimmering with the first touch of spring.

"I found a primrose in Lover's Lane today," said John.

"Primrose be damned," answered Bitton. "What about 'Gulliver's Travels?' Are you through with it yet?"

"How did you know I'd been reading 'Gulliver's Travels?' " asked John, indicating complete loss of memory in his blank stare.

"Didn't you tell me you were, and didn't you say it was a bit thick?"

"It's more than thick. I've finished with it. Don't you read it, Arthur."

But Mr. Bitton was resolved to read it.

"I'll take it now," he said. "Your landlady won't mind. Mrs. Grey's very friendly with my wife."

John made no verbal reply for a moment. Then he shrugged his shoulders and pointed to the bookcase. Had Bitton not named the book, he himself might have done so; but John had a theory that it was well a criminal should do the detective's work for him, when possible.

"If you will, you will; but if Mrs. Bitton dips into it, as like as not she'll fling it over the fence. The big book, with gold lettering, on the top shelf but one."

Mr. Ringrose removed the lamp shade and cast a steadfast beam on a beautiful but battered bit of Sheraton; while Arthur, opening the glass doors, peered for the book and saw it.

"Mother Grey would have a fit—eh?" he laughed, and then pulled out "Gulliver's Travels."

But something instantly followed.

As Bitton withdrew the book, from behind it appeared bared, bodiless head, glaring eyes and gibbering mouth. Arthur reeled back as though shot, uttered one inarticulate sound and fell. Nor did he make any effort to rise. The other sprang to him and found him quite unconscious. This time Ringrose had deprived his victim of all sense, and now he set to work, without haste, to revive him. The fall had caused Bitton no injury, but it was five minutes before he came to himself and found a cushion beneath his head and John kneeling beside him with a glass of spirits.

"Lie still, Arthur; lie still for a bit," he said. "I'm terrible afraid, old man, you've had a stroke, or some such thing."

"Keep it away; keep it away," groaned the sufferer, who only opened his eyes to shut them again.

"Keep what away? Good Lord, man, there's nothing here. Drink—take down the lot. Your heart's had a jar, I'm fearing."

The recumbent man gulped his liquor and bidding him on no account to move, Ringrose went for more. Bitton was groaning.

"And what was it all about?" asked the other. "Surely you didn't see nothing again, did you?"

"That cursed head—that head it was—right on top of me, Alec."

"Then it's pure imagination, Arthur—just a trick of your brain."

"I saw it—I'll swear to God it was there. I—I—heard its teeth."

"Where, then—where was it? Didn't I stand at your elbow? How the mischief could it be there and me not see it?"

"Behind the book. When I fetched out the book—it was there. It came out—it came out at me."

Ringrose looked up at the open bookcase.

"You never fetched down the book," he said calmly. "There's the book in its place. You lifted your hand and then you just gave a bit of a groan and down you dropped."

The other forgot his terror for a moment.

"Didn't fetch down the book? It—it was behind the book I tell you."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow! Pull yourself together. Watch me now and speak if you see it again."

Despite the other's protests Ringrose marched to the bookcase and pulled "Gulliver's Travels" boldly from its place. Only a hole gaped behind and he thrust his hand into it.

"There—see for yourself. There's nothing there, or could be. There's a bee in your bonnet. Come back to the fire. You can move now."

He helped Bitton to the fire.

"I'm none too sure if you ought to walk home to-night," he said.

But Arthur was recovering and John strove to help him to do so.

"This is a terribly interesting thing to me, Arthur," he declared, "and I'm none too comfortable about it. Is there second sight, or any mystery like that, in your family? I believe in second sight and I know there are people who see things that everyday folk do not. If there was an evil spirit or any such thing hid in this room, that your eyes can see and mine can't see, then, even though it's hidden from me, I shouldn't stop in this house. I hate weird, uncanny rooms."

The other breathed hard and held his hands to the fire. He was still shaking and fearful, and found it hard to speak. A hunted, hopeless look sat in his face.

"I wish you could tell me what it was you did see? Not a dead relation, or a relation in foreign parts, or anybody like that?"

Arthur shook his head.

"It's not a human face," he said.

"A monkey, then, or some freak?"

"No. I can't describe it—just a horrible grinning sort of a—devil."

"Was it the same horror as you saw the first time?"

"Yes."

"Then I get out of here," declared John. "You've got the second sight I expect; and if there's some bad influence here—if a thing—not even a human ghost—haunts this room, though I've never seen it, I might do, and it's not good enough. I shall clear out to-morrow, Arthur."

The other looked at him helplessly but did not speak. He was still unnerved by his own thoughts.

"I'll find a couple of rooms in Bridport if I can," continued Mr. Ringrose, "or else put up with Mr. Tinkler, very likely. I don't care about this, and I won't have you come into this room again. You see your doctor to-morrow and get some tonic, or something. Would you like me to fetch a doctor now? Perhaps you'll tell him more than you feel you can tell me?"

But the sufferer shook his head. He was making a great effort to get his nerves under control.

"No, no—a doctor couldn't do anything for me. I'll see one to-morrow and get some bromide. Bromide is what I want. I don't believe I've got second sight."

He drank again, but though he had taken enough to intoxicate him, Mr. Bitton was quite clear in his mind.

"Now I'll get going," he said.

"If you're sure you can. I'll see you home. You'll be all right out of this room, Arthur. And I'll be out of it to-morrow. You've seen an evil ghost—that's what you've seen; and it's not good enough."

"Don't you tell Mrs. Grey."

"Certainly not. I'll just say I want a change. No good frightening the poor woman. She's never seen it, I expect."

Then the other spoke. He was weak and for a moment caution failed him.

"Nobody's ever seen it but me," he said.

In half an hour Bitton was at his own front door. The night air braced him; but John observed that he shrank from the moonlight, held his arm tightly and kept his eyes for the most part shut. He was still deathly pale, but his physical strength had returned.

As they parted Arthur made a request.

"I can carry on now, all right," he said, "and I'm not going to tell Jane this time.

I don't want her to think I'm a ghost seer or anything like that. I'll be all right to-morrow. She'll think I've had a drop too much—that's all. Let her. I'll keep shut about it and you do the same."

John promised; then he asked one question.

"And you never saw any such thing as this horror in real life, Arthur? It don't call back any adventure of the past?"

For a moment he thought Bitton was going to collapse again; but, with a tremendous effort, he maintained his composure and replied:

"Good God, no! Never was such a thing on earth. There ain't such a thing really."

"Then it's that room," vowed the detective. "Some fearful deed has been done in that room very like, and I'm out of it to-morrow. And you keep smiling, Arthur. You bet your life you'll never see it again."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST TIME.

HIS own thoughts slowed his footsteps as Ringrose strolled back through the peaceful night. He considered every least incident resulting from the second application of his torment. The effect had been more severe, but the reaction quicker. His own pretended alarm was a performance destined to keep himself out of any calculations Bitton might presently make, when he, too, considered this experience. It must dispel any suspicion of Ringrose himself in the other man's mind, for none could know better than the victim that his adventures had nothing to do with John's apartment. The detective, however, never denied himself trouble, or evaded any details destined to strengthen his position. By sharing Bitton's dread, he escaped the risk of forfeiting his confidence.

On the occasion of this second experiment John found himself personally unmoved. His hatred of the man steeled him to proceed, and he anticipated the following day with some anxiety, for Arthur's condition would probably determine his future actions. He desired no more than one further scene of torture; but it would need to be severe and, as yet, he had not planned the details. They must depend on developments of which he remained at present in ignorance.

Bitton was not visible on the following day and, after he had taken his tea Ringrose went to see him. But as he lifted his hand to the electric bell the door was opened by Arthur's wife. She looked anxious and had evidently been weeping.

She put up her hand for silence and came into the garden.

"I saw you walking up the path," she said, "and I came out to stop your ringing. He's asleep—Arthur. I've had a bad time with him. I'm a bit frightened. Was he drunk last night? I'll beg you to tell me the truth, Mr. West, because if you don't, nobody will. He didn't name you, but I was up waiting for him and I heard your voice. And, when I asked him if you'd seen him home, he lied and said you had not. He swore he was quite all right; but he was far from right. He was white as a dog's tooth and surly and harsh—very unlike himself. And I've known drunken men to take it that way."

"I did see him home, Mrs. Bitton," confessed John; "but if he doesn't want you to know it, better say nothing. And if he doesn't know I've called this evening, when he wakes up, don't you mention it. No doubt he's got his reasons. To be quite honest with you, Arthur did let himself go a bit. We were having a great palaver and filled our glasses a thought too often. My fault as much as his own."

She nodded.

"He was very wild when I got him to bed and using bad language—a thing he never did before. And his eyes were fearful. I'm afraid something is going to happen to 'em. I did what I could, but it was a long time before he got to sleep, and so soon as he did he began to dream bad dreams. 'Don't let it see me!' he yelled out; and then 'Keep the devil off me!' he shouted—so loud that I was feared of my life that he'd wake the servant girl. But she sleeps like all general servants sleep in my experience.

"Arthur woke up about three o'clock, his teeth chattering and his head streaming with perspiration. Then I fetched him some hot milk, and he drank it and cried out to know the time. After dawn he went off and slept quiet; and this morning he drank a lot of tea but wouldn't eat a bite. He said he wanted to see the doctor for some bromide. Bromide was what he clamored for; and the doctor came by noon and wrote an order, and Arthur took two doses. Then he went to sleep and he's not woke since."

"My!" said Mr. Ringrose. "I am sorry.

He oughtn't to touch liquor, I expect—even the little he allows himself. And what did the doctor say to you, ma'am?"

"I saw him back to his motor, out of earshot of Arthur, and begged to know if anything very bad was to be feared; but he thought not. He says Arthur's sound everywhere; but his mind's had an upset of some kind. He says that he seems to have undergone an ordeal—been very near frightened out of his wits. He asked if he drank, and I said he did not worth mentioning, and I'd never known him the worse for it in my life. Then he was hopeful and said I should probably find him quite himself to-morrow."

"And what did Arthur say to him?"

"Not much—just that he had come over very queer the night afore, and felt his nerves very much out of order and so on."

"And he's said nothing to you neither?"

"Only the same."

"Hadn't seen no hobgoblins again?"

She looked at Mr. Ringrose.

"I thought of that; but he didn't say so. He'd have told me, wouldn't he?"

"I'm glad," said John. "Then you may be sure it's only the whisky. I'm none too gay myself to-day, and busy, too, about one thing and another. Don't you say I've called, or—yes—he'd think it unkind if he thought I didn't care. Just tell him I've asked for him and am glad to hear he's all right. Perhaps, when he feels like it, you'll invite me along to supper presently."

She undertook to do as he desired and Ringrose left her. For the woman he now entertained genuine sorrow; but evil has an art to bring grief upon those least responsible for it. Ringrose had never known a crime that failed to strike the innocent.

He did not see Bitton for three days, and then they met at The Crown. Arthur made no mention of his health in public, but when, presently, they left the inn together, he discussed the matter freely. It was an interview that John had impatiently awaited, for he much desired to know what progress in the vital direction he might be supposed to have made. Not on this occasion, however, did he glean much. The man was concerned with his health and in better spirits, because he found himself stronger and more cheerful. He had been taking long tramps, in which his wife had joined him.

"But now I've walked her footsore," said Mr. Bitton, "and so I've got to trudge alone. But walking is the best cure for the nerves, and it makes me sleep, if I go on till I'm dog tired."

"Then I'll try it," vowed Ringrose, "for I don't sleep too well in my new quarters."

A day later, with a sandwich and a flask in his pocket, he joined Arthur, and together they went to Golden Cap, a lofty cliff westward of Bridport, overlooking the sea. The troubled man was more communicative on this occasion. He returned to his sufferings and evidently desired Ringrose to believe that the theory of a haunted room must be correct. John understood his motive.

"You've seen no more of that horror I hope?" he asked, and was surprised at the answer.

"Not when I'm awake—never; but in dreams—yes," he admitted. "That's no wonder, all the same, because you do go back to shocks and startling things, off and on, when you're asleep. I dream of it."

Ringrose stuck to the subject.

"That's a true word, Arthur. Dreams show up real life. And nobody knows it better than I do. And, in my own case, in confidence, as friend to friend, I may tell you that it's not the good things that I've done that crop up again in dreams, but the bad ones. Curious that. I wouldn't say that I was worse than another; but I'm human, and I've had temptations in my time to kick over the ropes here and there. And I've yielded to them. I've done a few deeds I don't look back upon with much satisfaction; and it's just those that rise up by night, and sting, and make you fearful they've been found out at last. And when that happens, I'm jolly glad to wake up! Conscience will get at us in our sleep now and again, even if it can't when we are awake. A queer thing that; but so it is."

He prosed on and the other listened with a deep but dreadful interest. Mr. Bitton was much moved, and John, furtively watching him, observed the fact.

"Conscience is a fact," he continued, "and you can tackle it and knock it out, I believe. That's the dark knowledge that comes from religion. Religion tells us to confess our sins to our fellow creatures, well knowing, no doubt, that by so doing we clean our hearts and get rid of what's called a bad conscience. I've sometimes thought I'd make a clean breast of a thing or two, to a parson; they can't say nothing about it; but they can forgive you. And then, again, I've felt that if ever I did own up, I'd far sooner

go to a good, understanding friend—one who knew human nature and was a faulty man like myself, with wider sympathy and understanding of wrongdoing than a holy priest, who's lived a life without crime and never been tempted."

Those who accused John Ringrose of lacking subtlety must have admitted that during this conversation he did not fail in that respect. Indeed for a moment he believed that his reward was near. Bitton faltered. The wretch nodded his head, agreeing silently. It was certain in the mind of Ringrose that, had any lesser villainy than that actually upon his soul distressed him, he would have confided there and then. It almost seemed that he proposed to do so.

"Once I did a thing—a thing——" he murmured, half to himself, and the other felt every nerve go taut. But Bitton stopped and asked a question. The horror of confessing probably tied his tongue, which a sudden, human longing had set in motion.

"Have you practiced what you preached, Alec?" he asked.

"I have," answered the other. "I served a good and strong man once, and fretting over a failure—a pretty bad failure too. I told him; and I got advice and pardon in the bargain."

"Not a parson?"

"No—just a man like myself. He did me a power of good."

Bitton was silent and the detective probed him delicately.

"We all do things we're sorry for—men, I mean, like you and me, who are all right at bottom and only weak under sudden assault. Our sins get back on us, and the better we are at heart the worse they get back on us. If a man feels no remorse, then I expect he's a wrong un by nature."

But the other did not proceed.

"No doubt you're right," he answered and left it.

Ringrose felt heartened, nevertheless, and he was now willing to change the subject. He had made very genuine progress and believed that a substantial dent at last existed in his opponent's armor. The confession had hovered on Bitton's lips, and a time would soon come when this man's fainting courage must fail him. Then, driven desperate, he would seek to share his guilt with another, and so escape the curse that he imagined his own black and evil spirit had bred from it.

Ringrose often speculated on Arthur's old employer at this season, and one day it chanced, when walking in Bridport with Bitton, that they met Lord Brooke upon the High Street. Some instinct warned John that it was he, as a small, somewhat untidy and undersized man approached them and saluted Bitton genially. There was an air of distinction about him and he conformed to the description that Mrs. Bellairs had given. Ringrose, therefore, passed on swiftly with averted face, and dived into the first shop that he came to. There he remained about some trivial purchases; but the interview between Bitton and his former master was brief and in two minutes they parted.

"His lordship," he said when John emerged and rejoined him.

"Lord Brooke! That little shabby chap?"

"Yes—just as he always was. His clothes used to turn my hair gray. He didn't care and now, when he might wear the best, he goes to a Bridport tailor and then not till his togs are in holes."

"Who's his man nowadays?"

"A chap by the name of Burleigh—one that served in the war. He won't have any young men about him unless they did their bit."

"Did he serve?"

"Yes, with the Italian army—intelligence work."

"A clever man?"

"As clever as they make 'em."

"But he looked so young."

"He is young, Alec. I wouldn't say he was forty. He was a good few years younger than the late lord."

Time passed and Bitton recovered his health, but not his nerve. More than once Ringrose strove to turn the subject of their conversation to serious things; but never again did the other come so near confession as on the walk to Golden Cap. Ringrose observed that only personal fear and misery had broken Bitton. At no time did he reveal or confess to a trace of remorse, though John gave him more than one opportunity. The detective had made various friends at Bridport ere now, and among them were children. He pressed a little boy on Bitton, with appropriate sentiments as to the hopes of youth and the duties demanded by the helplessness and appealing qualities of the young. But Arthur showed no signs. He

did not like children and revealed a callous attitude toward even the most attractive.

Disappointment lay here, for upon the work of those shadowy Eumenides that haunt most hearts, John in a measure had built. Bitton, however, gave no sign of any moral torment. It was not the thing that he had done which made him nervous and anxious of spirit. Physical fear and the horror of being haunted by an abomination with which he was too balefully familiar—these emotions alone distressed Arthur Bitton.

At this moment it happened that there were housebreakers in Bridport and a series of minor robberies agitated many people. Bold and skillful these rascals proved to be, and at another time Ringrose might have felt interested in their operations. The new, one-storied bungalows were easy game; but John observed that Bitton felt no fear in this connection. Objective physical perils found him equal to them, and he explained that any burglar who challenged him would meet a painful reception. The subject occupied conversation in the private bar of The Crown, on an evening when both Ringrose and Bitton were present, and an inspector of police, half in jest, half in earnest, warned the company not to be alarmed if they should chance to hear footsteps in their gardens, or nocturnal taps at their windows.

"You bungalow fellows are the mark most times, we find," he told them, "and if you hear anything, you need not fear it. You won't hear the burglars—you may take your oath of that—but my chaps are keen as mustard nowadays and getting tired of being laughed at. They go round the gardens by night and poke about; and if there's anything that looks doubtful, they'll wake the sleepers sometimes."

"I hear the nights are safe, mister," answered John. "These little thieves break into a place when the people are out at church, or shopping, or theatergoing of a Saturday night."

Two days later Jane Bitton went home for the week-end and, under the present social threat, her husband decided not to accompany her. Indeed, their maid of all work declined to be left alone. Arthur was not nervous and John spent an evening in his company.

Then came a Sunday night, which curiously reminded the detective of many a nocturnal chapter in his past career. It was long since he had turned night into day, but the necessity now confronted him and an element of genuine risk attended his program, for the reason that the police were aroused and alert to the continued menace.

At half past two o'clock in the morning Ringrose let himself out of his lodgings, took a road that led him directly from Bridport to the north, and then by fields, where safety lay, descended into a lane which ran behind the new bungalows, of which Arthur Bitton's home was one. The night proved very dark and windless. The least sound traveled in the silence, and a policeman's measured footsteps reached John's ear while the man was yet seventy yards away. To conceal himself, where no lantern ray could pierce, he mounted over a low wall and crouched beneath it till the constable had passed upon his beat; ten minutes later, John stood in Bitton's vegetable garden. He knew the house and was aware that the sleeper's chamber window opened upon this garden, its sill but four feet from the ground. A brick path ran beneath it, and Ringrose took off his shoes, that he might make no sound and leave no impression thereon. Then, swiftly and silently he crept before the window, drew something from within his coat, wound a key, tapped on the glass, and bent down to hide against the wall beneath. Twice cautiously he tapped, then a light sprang up above him, and his ears heard the man within leap out of bed. The blind ran up and a broad beam of light spread upon the garden. But one small obstacle blocked its level way. A thing was staring in at Arthur—a red-haired bodiless head pressed to the glass, chattering its teeth and glaring upon him. Ringrose endured a silence of seconds that seemed minutes; then he heard a smothered shriek and a fall.

A moment later, avoiding the band of light, he had crept away.

CHAPTER IX.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

RETURNING cautiously and without incident, John Ringrose went to bed and soon slept soundly. He had a craft to empty his mind of any subject and banish it until such time as it demanded further thought and elaboration. He would reach a point and then shut off the inquiry completely, perhaps not resuming reflection upon it for a week. But his memory was strong and

he could always pick up any problem again at the place to which he had brought it. On the following morning, when breakfast, which he took at eight o'clock, was ended, his dinner ordered and his sitting room private until midday, he locked the door, approached his fireplace and prepared for an act of destruction. For good or ill he was about to burn the machine with which he had operated, and he produced now from its little box the dummy head employed upon Arthur Bitton to such terrible purpose. Bitton he knew had dropped insensible on the preceding night. Such an effect he had anticipated, and he was content that it should be so. But he designed no further assault on the other's nerves. His future attack was planned against Bitton's conscience. He intended presently to visit Bitton and, when the man was in a condition to listen and comprehend, Ringrose proposed to challenge him and, if need be, indicate that he knew his secret crime. He desired and hoped that the other—now wrought to needful pitch—would confess without pressure and lay bare all needful details of his action and the incentives to commit it; but, failing that, Ringrose intended to accuse him and declare his own theory of Arthur's torment. This, he judged, must result in confession.

His own preliminary course of action had distressed the detective no little; but it was ended. Not again would he use the instrument of torture. He himself now loathed the object with an irrational and active dislike, that almost amused him at times when he considered it. More than its inherent hideousness awoke this sensation, for the purpose to which it had been put seemed to impart a moral significance to the inanimate object and gild it with evil. John felt in a measure unclean and almost demoralized by the horrible things for which he was responsible. He had sent the drawing made at the Old Manor House to London under strictest secrecy, and the artist who received it was a professional manufacturer of theatrical properties. John knew him well as a personal friend, and this uncanny genius had been quick to create an abomination that made even Ringrose gasp when first he unpacked it. He had bettered the description and, while adhering exactly to the colors, shape and proportions of the dummy head, added, at John's wish, a mechanical addition by which clockwork within might make the jaws open and shut for two hours on end. Armed with this instrument the detective set out upon his horrible task, and any doubt whether the machine were near enough to the vanished original had been dispelled at its first application. By a simple arrangement of strings, wound with his right hand under cover of his left elbow, while his arms were crossed and he was talking seriously to Bitton, he had lifted the head behind his chair on the first night and lowered it again by breaking the string when its work was done; while the second time, a spring behind it pushed the thing out upon its vicitim from the bookshelf when he drew forth the big book that held it back. When Bitton lay insensible, Ringrose had removed the effigy and restored "Gulliver's Travels" to its place. The third apparition only entailed personal trouble for John, and he little doubted that it had proved the most efficacious and terrific of the three. Always quick to avail himself of passing circumstance, and while yet with an open mind as to the final stroke, there had come the general threat of burglars, and the obvious inspiration by which he might avail himself of it. Chance played into his hands and, when he knew that Bitton's wife was to leave him for a night or two, he delayed only until the night before she returned.

And now in the frank morning light, like the decapitated skull of a demon, the foul thing leered up at him and he wound the clockwork and watched its mouth open and shut with a rattle. Under other circumstances he might have been tempted to keep it and add the monster to his little museum of strange and interesting objects locked up at home. But he felt no desire to do so. The creation was unclean: it exercised a curious psychological effect on Ringrose himself. He would not use it again in any case, for sure instinct told him in the greater game presently to be played against a man of harder fiber, keener intellect than Arthur Bitton, very different and less crude means must be necessary. Yet the doll seemed to tell him something of Lord Brooke, for Lord Brooke it must be who had invented, if he had not actually manufactured, the original. Not fifty Bittons had been equal to any such feat of perverted imagination; indeed John in his experience could summon no recollection of a criminal mind quite capable of this. It argued a creative instinct that had surely died out of human nature. Such

an embodiment of evil and aboriginal bestiality could surely never quicken even the subconscious mind of a modern man. So thought Ringrose. It belonged to the time when humanity believed in devils and the pit, and artists exhausted their macabre genius in inventions of the diabolic and infamous.

Heartily glad to see the end of the thing, John thrust it into his fire, and there it gibbered and gnashed and presently caught alight. Its red hair frizzled away and the papier-mâché of which it was modeled soon yielded to the flames. It grew red hot, then, with a poker the detective beat it into dust. He almost fancied that it would incarnate itself again from the ashes; and his stolid mind actually wondered what he would do if such a shadow pursued him henceforth, to fasten upon him no less a crime than that for which Bitton had suffered. But Ringrose, though he sometimes cultivated imagination, had never known it to play tricks with him. Nor did it now. The future already presented far more interesting material than the past. He was called to reap what he had sown. Even did Bitton confess and ease his bosom of a burden unsupportable, there remained the master criminal for whom he had committed his crime—Lord Brooke and none other. Well pleased that these preliminary phases, long grown very painful to him, were ended, John presently set forth to the Bitton bungalow. Neither terror nor evil breathed in the cool gray rain that fell steadily. Green had broken everywhere on the bough, and the birds sang. Bridport's broad pavements shone, and already northward rifts of azure broke the sky. The air was mild and before noon the sun promised to shine.

Ringrose lit his pipe, put up his umbrella and strolled into the purlieus of the town. He judged that his victim would probably be ill and possibly telegraph for his wife to return sooner than she intended. He had thought it possible that he himself might receive a message; but no message came. It was half past ten o'clock when he sighted the wicket that led into Bitton's front garden; and as he did so a spectacle, familiar enough to him, confronted the detective. He stood still and his heart sank while he stared before him. He had seen many a similar incident and they meant one thing only.

Too well he knew what had happened, but went forward into a cluster of chattering people converging to a dense company round Arthur Bitton's gate. A constable stood at the entrance and another strove to thrust the crowd back; but it gathered again immediately behind him as he moved up and down.

At the moment when Ringrose reached the gate an inspector of police descended the garden path. It was he who had spoken at The Crown and he recognized John.

"What's up, Mr. Inspector?" asked the detective, and the answer he expected came.

"You're Mr. West, aren't you—his friend? It's all up with him. Brains blown out. Suicide, by the look of it. Here's his wife, I expect."

A cab had just driven up and from it alighted Jane Bitton. But Ringrose did not desire to be seen by her. He put up his umbrella again, expressed horror at what he heard and slunk away—a bitterly disappointed man. He analyzed his feelings later in the morning and found his first emotion unchanged. Keen disappointment it was and not remorse that cast him down. He put the case to himself with cold impartiality as he sat before an untasted meal.

"I've terrified that man to death; and, seeing what he was, I don't ache about that," thought John; "but I've missed his character; I've misread the wretch. I never thought he'd take that way out, and now I've got to pay for my bungling."

He calculated that he had misemployed and squandered six months of his time. Worse than that, he had made the major task still lying before him a thousand times more difficult than it might have been with greater efficiency on his part. But the reverse, so shattering as it must have appeared to another order of intellect, angered Ringrose with nobody but himself. Indeed there was none else to blame. His remorse did not exist for the dead man, who had taken a life he found himself unable longer to support; it fell on his own head in a manner crushing but also tonic. John Ringrose was in fact heartily ashamed of himself, and he soon knew that only one means existed by which he might hope to regain self-respect. As time passed and he grew cooler, he found himself astonished at the depth of his own concern and disappointment. He had failed before and yet not suffered so acutely. Failure often had to be endured: it was an inevitable part of his profession and the most successful men were merely

those who failed least often. So it was with him now upon the death of Arthur Bitton; but there awoke an obstinacy, almost ferocious, to recover the situation and achieve what, at a first glance, now appeared impossible.

There came a moment in his interminable reflections when he could find himself almost glad that Bitton was forever out of the way. With his passing, if certain immense new difficulties were created, others, massive enough, had ceased to be. He was dead, and all the restrictions and conditions, that he had probably raised to save his own skin after confession, could now be disregarded. The road ahead of John Ringrose was steep and might prove insurmountable; but it was clear. He paid the widow a visit of condolence during the evening and she was willing to see him and give him all known particulars of her husband's end.

The facts proved much as he had expected to learn them, and there was only one who could furnish any information. The general servant of the Bittons, when questioned by the police, was able to tell that at an uncertain hour she had been suddenly awakened by a sound. A noise broke her sleep and she sat up, dimly conscious of the fact; but she had not heard the noise to judge what it might be, or whence it had come. Suspecting the hoot of a motor car on the road, she had gone to sleep again immediately and not wakened until the morning. The moment at which the noise had awakened her she could not tell. Arthur Bitton was never called by her. He always rose at half past seven o'clock and went to the bathroom, where he dressed and made his toilet. He then proceeded to the parlor and joined his wife at breakfast. Upon this day the maid followed her usual routine and took in breakfast at half past eight. Mr. Bitton was a punctual man, but he had not as yet appeared. Half an hour later she wondered concerning him and went to the bathroom door. But it was open and she perceived that he had not yet visited it. She waited another twenty minutes and then knocked at his door but received no answer. After a further interval she grew nervous and went into the garden to see if his blind were raised. It was down; but on a nearer approach, the morning being dull, she noticed that his electric light was burning. She returned to the house, knocked noisily and shouted to him, but won no reply. She then tried the bedroom door and found it locked. Now frightened, she put on her hat, took an umbrella and walked down the street until she found a policeman. He summoned another and they returned with her and broke into the room.

Arthur Bitton was lying in his bed with a revolver still held in his hand. He had fired into his right temple and destroyed himself instantly.

It was clear to Ringrose that the dead man had recovered from his swoon and pulled down the blind again. He had then taken his life, probably with little delay, for though the maid could not tell the time at which she awoke, she affirmed with certainty that no ray of dawn had yet broken.

The detective expressed sympathetic regrets and perceived that, though deeply distressed and dismayed by her tragic loss, Mrs. Bitton appeared neither profoundly astonished nor bewildered. She was collected and could speak to him. She had known for a considerable time that her husband harbored some evil secret, for he had grown nervous and depressed, suffered from intervals of morbid fear and wakened not seldom in frenzy from bad dreams. Particulars of his discomfort Bitton never gave her, but he had hinted more than once at self-destruction.

So much Ringrose learned and was able to tell Mrs. Bitton that he had not seen Arthur on the previous day, but came that morning by appointment to take a walk.

He then left her and found himself confronted by personal problems. That he might be summoned to attend the inquest, as a close friend of the dead man, was probable; but suspecting that Lord Brooke would almost certainly be interested in that inquiry, and having no desire to be seen by his lordship, he determined to evade this danger. His purpose was instantly to disappear from Bridport, and since he had dwelt here in an assumed character and under an assumed name, he would not be traced even if search were made. But against this course one peril presented itself. If inquiry involved him, and Mrs. Bitton was able on consideration to declare her husband's illnesses synchronized with John's acquaintance, then the accomplice of Bitton might possibly associate the vanished stranger with his death. Lord Brooke knew Bitton intimately; and it was possible, under certain circumstances, that he might

suspect "Alec West," the retired butler, to be an enemy. In any case, to submit to a probably lengthy cross-examination at the inquest under the eye of his lordship must handicap him gravely in the future. Moreover, the necessity for lying on oath by no means appealed to Mr. Ringrose, no matter what exonerating circumstances might rest with his own conscience.

He made a hurried departure therefore, and before it was possible for any to seek him had taken train from Bridport for London.

Thus departed the genial Alec West from earth—to return once more at a later time. A week afterward he discussed the suicide with an old colleague, who had acquaintance at the town, and found himself much interested by the report in a local newspaper. The retired butler—Bitton's friend—was merely mentioned, but no attempt to find him had been made. Mrs. Bitton's testimony and the clear evidence of self-destruction resolved the matter and a conventional verdict concluded the proceedings.

John Ringrose was glad to read the full local account in his friend's newspaper, for it related a minor incident of considerable interest to him.

Lord Brooke had been present at the coroner's inquest, and his relations with the dead man being known, he was invited to answer a few questions, which he readily did. He had employed Arthur Bitton for many years and found him a trustworthy and intelligent body servant. He was unaware of any private anxieties from which the valet might suffer, and he knew nothing of his private life. He had left his service on being married. In temper he was excitable and highly strung, but with those qualities went many virtues. He expressed his sympathy with the widow, that her husband's mind should have given way and provoked such a terrible catastrophe.

CHAPTER X.

THE SECOND CAMPAIGN OPENS.

JOHN RINGROSE well knew that far greater difficulties now challenged him than those the death of Arthur Bitton had resolved. He defined his position and took a week to consider it.

A child had been murdered and the instrument of the crime was dead; but the hand that held that weapon—the evil genius responsible and the reaper of the reward—still went unsuspected.

He weighed the scanty material of knowledge that he possessed. Bitton had never been communicative touching his former master and the detective could command few facts to guide him. He knew, however, that Lord Brooke was difficult of approach save on the ground of his hobby. Nothing else interested him, and of personal friends and intimates Bitton had always maintained that he possessed but few. He did not need friends. He was genial and kindly to everybody; yet cultivated no wide circle of acquaintance and entertained only such as shared his knowledge and enthusiasms. More than that John Ringrose did not know.

To approach as an equal was impossible. He could not pretend to belong to Lord Brooke's order; because, though members of it might not know each other, they invariably knew all about each other. Neither would John pretend to knowledge of his lordship's subject. Such a past master would instantly see through any attempted deception of that sort. To work up the necessary material was easy; but to build upon it the wide grasp and familiarity of a specialist could not be done.

He learned all there was to know of Lord Brooke's family and found the title of very recent creation. Indeed only the present holder's father and elder brother had borne it before him. But the race of the Bewes had resided at Brooke-Norton for centuries. Ambition had prompted Algernon Bewes to aspire to a peerage, and as a man of great wealth and an economic specialist, his services to the government during the war achieved a barony. Dying two years after his distinction, he left two sons, Rupert Bewes, who succeeded him, and Burgoyne, the present holder of the title. With the latter his father had quarreled. Burgoyne, until his accession, dwelt at Florence, and Arthur Bitton had mentioned an old retainer, one William Rockley, who was lodge keeper at his master's Italian villa. As for the late lord, he had died as a widower in Italy, leaving two children—the boy, Ludovic, and an elder girl called Mildred. The Honorable Mildred Bewes dwelt with Lord Brooke.

In a week John Ringrose had matured his plans; and once again preliminary action led him to another man—a gentleman who most certainly owed the detective his best

services. For Mr. Caleb Prosser had at one time stood within a step of the dock, as a receiver, or "fence;" and but for John's good offices must have gone to prison. Ringrose, however, convinced that the old man was an innocent victim of certain rogues and assured in his own mind that Mr. Prosser had acted in perfect honesty, saved a perilous situation and won another friend.

He called at the business premises of Caleb Prosser, to find a tall and stooping veteran very glad to see him. John joined the pawnbroker at his tea and chatted on general subjects a while until the meal was ended. Mr. Prosser not only traded under the three golden balls, but dealt in old furniture, old china, old armor and indeed everything old, or pseudoancient. Wardour Street held no more heterogeneous collection than his, yet he knew all that he possessed to the least trinket and curio. His memory was as well stored as his shop and the cavernous warehouse behind it. The pawnbroking, under direction of Mrs. Prosser, occupied a separate establishment next door to the curiosity shop, and over the latter Caleb dwelt.

"I've come," said Ringrose, "on the subject of old ivories, Prosser; and I mustn't be fobbed off with any of your doubtful stuff. Medieval ivories are my mark for the moment, and some day, perhaps, I'll tell you why I want them, but not now."

Mr. Prosser looked thoughtfully from under his coarse eyebrows at the detective.

"Not something you think you've traced to me? Not something—missing?"

"No, nothing of that sort. But I want to lay my hand on ivories, even one ivory, about which there's no manner of doubt that it's very choice and very valuable—such a rare ivory that a collector would strain his resources to add it to his collection. Something unique and worth a lot of money."

Mr. Prosser was interested.

"I understand 'em," he said. "I know about that stuff—quite a lot. The demand is narrow and limited, but a few collect them, and they've raked my shop before today. The things are rare, and experts don't make any mistake of course. My last real treasure I sold six months ago to Lord Brooke. He's the biggest amateur. But you'd look far to find anything to interest him. I've got ivories that I can show you—a dozen; but when you say 'something worth a lot of money,' I can't help you."

"Then somebody else must. Who are the big men in the trade?"

"It's not a trade. It's just a line. You won't find any specialists, and when a very good thing comes into the market the two or three who are known to want it will always get the first refusal. Only when folk die and collections go to the hammer does a great ivory change hands nowadays. The famous pieces are almost as well known as the famous gems."

Ringrose nodded.

"What I want," he said, "is not necessarily to purchase, but to borrow. I want the loan of a tiptop thing for my own purposes. But nothing less than a real masterpiece will do. I'd pay for the privilege of the loan, Prosser, and of course insure the treasure while in my possession. If I may sell it, so much the better. Suppose, now, I offered a hundred pounds for the loan of an ivory that the collectors would be glad to purchase. Could you borrow such a piece?"

The old man considered. He took off a little black cap of silk and scratched the bald head under it. Presently he resumed his black cap, looked up, and said:

"You ask a peculiar question and make a peculiar offer," he said; "but I'm not very hopeful. There is such a piece as you're after—the property of a woman friend of mine—a genuine Goldoni of the Italian Renaissance period, and worth, I dare say, a thousand pounds. She was a rich woman's housekeeper in Scotland, and the ivory came to her when her mistress died. It was meant as a legacy and to be sold; but Mrs. Campbell wouldn't part with it. I offered her six hundred—all I could afford; but she's comfortably off and though four figures might tempt her, I dare say, three did not."

"That looks right. And where's Mrs. Campbell?"

"At Edinburgh—No. 13 Rice Street. She's one of the best and would gladly pleasure any friend of mine if in her power, Mr. Ringrose."

"I must go up then; and I'll ask you to write me a letter of introduction—merely saying that you can vouch for me and that I may be able to do her a service. It will be true. You must not tell her my real name, however."

"It never does to ask too much about your business, my good friend. But I thought

you'd retired. Didn't your folk give you a rare send-off and a gold watch?"

Ringrose laughed.

"That's right. But this is another story, Prosser—a story I'll tell you, maybe, when I know the end of it."

He waited for his letter, decided to be known as "Mr. Norman Fordyce," and two days later was in Edinburgh—a city very familiar to him.

Armed with the introduction, he found Rice Street and Mrs. Campbell, won her with no great difficulty and explained that he had sought their common friend, Caleb Prosser, who on learning the nature of his quest, had instantly remembered Mrs. Campbell and the Goldoni ivory in her possession.

She showed it to him and he thought it more curious than beautiful. But the lady had found her life complicated since last she saw Mr. Prosser. A nephew out of work made demands upon her purse, and, for his mother's sake, Rose Campbell spent money upon him and needed more to spend. She was, in fact, prepared to sell the ivory and had already contemplated writing to Caleb Prosser on the subject.

John explained that he knew a client who might very likely pay more for the piece than Mr. Prosser, and before they had reached this stage in the bargain Mrs. Campbell already believed in Mr. Fordyce and found him a cheerful and agreeable acquaintance.

The upshot was a letter to Lord Brooke, and on a morning in June his lordship, descending to breakfast, discovered the following communication awaiting him:

THE ANCHOR AND CROWN HOTEL,
EDINBURGH.

TO THE BARON BROOKE,
Brooke-Norton,
Bridport,
Dorset.

MY LORD: There has come into my hands for disposal a piece of old carved ivory, once an heirloom in the ancient family of the Gowers, and said to have been the property of Mary, Queen of Scots. The specimen is the work of Goldoni, the famous carver of Florence, and it is now in the possession of a lady, once housekeeper in the Gower family, to whom it was bequeathed by a former mistress.

Mrs. Campbell is her name, and she has intrusted the treasure to me in hope that I may be able to find a purchaser for it. Experts have informed her that the specimen is worth not less than one thousand pounds, and possibly more to the few who collect such treasures. I learn, also, that you are first among such collectors and would wish, therefore, to submit it to you before taking it elsewhere.

I am your lordship's obedient servant,
NORMAN FORDYCE.

An answer came within three days:

BROOKE-NORTON,
DORSET.

DEAR SIR: I beg to thank you for your interesting communication. If you will send the ivory to me by registered post, I shall be able to tell you all about it. If a genuine Goldoni, it should possess some value, but alas! I fear that is improbable. In any case the sum you mention would seem to argue mistaken knowledge on the part of the Edinburgh experts. But are there any experts in Edinburgh? I never heard of any. Faithfully yours,
BROOKE.

MR. NORMAN FORDYCE.

To this proposal John replied that the possessor of the treasure declined to trust it in the post. He proposed, if agreeable, to bring the ivory himself, and asked if it were possible to put him up for the night, that time might be gained. He trusted his own talents to win a welcome if once he was received, and the entertaining history and experiences of Norman Fordyce, retired commercial traveler, were already at the detective's command.

With some anxiety he awaited the reply to his request and it proved satisfactory. The Goldoni was evidently a worthy object. In his second letter John had expatiated on the ivory and added certain particulars concerning it gleaned from a Scots jeweler, who was well known to Mrs. Campbell and familiar with the treasure.

Lord Brooke desired only to know the train by which Mr. Fordyce would reach Bridport. A car for Brooke-Norton would await him and he might count on his lordship's hospitality.

Of these details, however, Rose Campbell learned nothing. John, having enjoyed a few days at Edinburgh, departed with the ivory, nor did its owner feel the least uneasiness, for she was skilled in human nature and a canny woman, who knew where she might trust. They agreed that she would accept not less than a thousand pounds, and if the ivory commanded more, so much the better.

"Don't miss the thousand, Mr. Fordyce," was her parting instruction, "but if you can screw the gentleman up another hundred, it's going to mean a braw case of whisky for you if you'll accept the same."

She proposed buying a jeweler's new

casket for the treasure, but this Mr. Ringrose would not permit.

"The old one will suit him better," he assured her.

In fading light the detective arrived after his long journey and found a closed motor car awaiting him. He ran through the familiar streets of Bridport and passed his old quarters and the home of the late Arthur Bitton. Then, over fair green country in the dusk he sped, and at half past nine o'clock passed twin lodges and ran a final mile through park lands to a great Jacobean dwelling that towered ash gray through the gloaming. He carried a hand bag, was clad in Harris tweed, with a hat of the same material, and had adopted no disguise whatever.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BARTHEL IVORY.

AN excellent meal awaited John Ringrose. Dinner was done, but while he ate and drank his host walked up and down the great dining room and chatted with urbanity, hoping that he had made good travel and was not fatigued.

But the visitor suffered from a headache and felt indeed exceedingly weary after a hot and protracted journey. He struck the right note, however, and responded to his welcome. He entertained his host with certain humorous adventures on the way, and finding the master of Brooke-Norton not lacking in humor, albeit of a satirical and mischievous quality, was quick to chime with him and create the impression of a kindred spirit from another sphere than his lordship's own. The collector was cheerful and full of vitality. He displayed a lively if somewhat cynical temperament. For a moment a shadow of thought clouded his eyes when first he looked at John, but it passed and he accorded the heartiest greeting. No mention whatever was made of the reason for Mr. Ringrose's visit. During the hour they spent together, after John had supped, they chatted upon indifferent topics, and when they left the dining room for a billiard room, a second man joined them. He was tall, handsome, easy and amiable. Lord Brooke introduced him as Nicholas Tremayne, and presently, refusing to play, the newcomer marked for the younger men. Both were above average amateur form, but Tremayne proved the better player.

While he sat and watched, John had leisure to study the man he regarded as a murderer. Lord Brooke had the direct and fearless gaze of a practiced liar. The detective was an unconscious but sound student of physiognomy, and he saw here one whose eyes struck him as too honest. So, surely, Iago must have looked. It seemed an absurd suspicion, yet he knew that he was right. A straight man may be self-confident and assertive, or diffident and modest. Some of the most trustworthy men whom John had known never looked him in the face; while others did; but seldom in this unwinking, genial fashion. It was not that Lord Brooke treated him as an inferior, or with the slightly contemptuous familiarity, to be observed when one person entertains that impression of another. His manners were perfect. He proved a splendid listener and his cynicism possessed such a fine quality and played so delicately through the texture of his thought that even a humanist might hardly have quarreled with it. He suggested an onlooker rather than a participant in the battle of life. He was generally interested in existence and found life an entertaining experience; but not until he touched his own subject did he show any absorbing and avid preoccupation.

To that they came next day; but John dropped one word, after the game had ended in a victory for Mr. Tremayne, and he asked permission to retire.

"Your lordship will forgive me for leaving the ivory until to-morrow?" he begged, and Lord Brooke made answer:

"Why, of course, Mr. Fordyce. Indeed I'd forgotten all about it. Because I'm a crazy man, I don't expect others to share my craze. Tremayne here is only interested in ivory when it takes the shape of billiard balls; yet I forgive him his Philistinism. To quarrel with the Philistines is to become a very lonely being, and I hate loneliness. D'you like your breakfast in your room, or will you join us at any time after nine o'clock?"

"I'll join you, please. Breakfast in bed is a hateful thought," declared Ringrose.

He slept soundly, awoke refreshed by seven o'clock, and seeing a very beautiful, formal garden spreading in the morning sunshine beneath his window, quickly rose, entered the bathroom which adjoined his

apartment, enjoyed a cold shower, and presently descended and went out of doors.

His purpose was to stay for at least another night, if not longer, at Brooke-Norton, and he believed that tact and judicious treatment of his host might secure this end. In any case it could be managed through the ivory he had brought; but he preferred that the invitation to remain should come spontaneously if possible. His powers of adaptation, and that subtle gift to win a fellow man, he trusted to work his way.

Mr. Ringrose strolled in the flower-lighted garden, rejoiced at the unclouded joy of a June morning and was presently turning to extend his ramble when, at the corner of a lofty yew hedge, cut stiff and square to the height of a man's shoulder, he came upon a fellow creature.

A girl approached him clad in white. She carried a basket of crimson and orange-colored roses, looked up shyly and gave the visitor a little ghostly smile. The detective took off his hat and bowed genially. He knew that he stood before Miss Mildred Bewes; but since he was supposed to be unaware of her existence, saluted her in an impersonal though kindly fashion. The difference in their ages excused him for this intrusion.

"Good morning, miss—an early bird like myself, I see! D'you know that this is about the loveliest garden I've ever set eyes on? I didn't believe there was such a fairyland."

Mildred Bewes looked even younger than her years. She was fair, with pale brown eyes and a beautifully modeled little head surmounted by great riches of flaxen hair. She was lovelier than the flowers, thought John, but something very wistful and sad looked out of her eyes. The girl possessed distinction combined with delicacy. She was tall and slight, but seemed to lack the hearty vitality of youth. An expression suggesting that life had both puzzled and saddened Mildred Bewes sat upon her young face.

She answered Mr. Ringrose, unconsciously at ease in his kindly presence.

"You're Uncle Burgoyne's friend, I expect? I ought to have welcomed you last night. I hope you had a good journey, though it must have been a very long one."

"It was, but I've forgotten it. What grand roses! You're coming from a rose garden perhaps?"

"Yes, my very own. Would you like to see it?"

They strolled together amid a riot of bright blossoms, and the least flush of excitement tinged the girl's cheeks as she told the sympathetic listener of her treasures. But it seemed that the past had left its stamp upon her face as well as her heart. She was not a happy girl and her voice had something melancholy in its gentle notes. Then a strange thing happened, for from her temporary cheerfulness among the roses and pleasure excited by the stranger's interest, sudden complete silence fell upon Mildred at the advent of another. He looked a pleasant and agreeable object—this tall, brown-faced, handsome young Englishman; but Nicholas Tremayne's appearance, bareheaded, in white flannels and with a towel over his shoulder, woke no friendly response in the girl. She fell behind the men as they returned to the house.

"Had a dip in the lake," said Tremayne. "Thought you were coming, Mildred."

She shook her head.

"I've been gardening. My roses are so busy coming out just now."

He took a bud from her basket and put it in his buttonhole. Then he turned to John.

"Hope you slept well and are rested, Mr. Fordyce?" he said. "Isn't this a ripping place? I live on the north coast of Cornwall, you know, where the west wind simply defies gardening. But I've got some trees, haven't I, Mildred?"

"Noble trees," she answered, and then fell farther behind and left them at a turning. A moment of discontent darkened Tremayne's eyes, but it soon vanished and he was talking amiably to the other visitor again.

At breakfast Mildred took the foot of the round table, while Lord Brooke sat at the head of it. They helped themselves from the sideboard and Ringrose made his observations. He perceived that the Cornishman was genuinely attached to Lord Brooke's niece, but that her attitude to him was one of real or apparent indifference. She showed no active aversion and fell into fitful moments of animated talk between intervals of silence. She ate little and relapsed sometimes, as though private reflection shut out her surroundings. Then she would come to herself again and chat amiably, yet always with a note of reserve in her voice. Her af-

fection for her uncle was evidently genuine enough and she looked after him and made him eat and drink. He talked much, however.

"After breakfast," he said, "and before I see your treasure, Mr. Fordyce, you must see some of mine. You say that ivories don't interest you personally. Well, others have said the same until I introduced them to a wonderful subject. You are going to be interested in spite of yourself. Then we'll look at the Goldoni and see, first, if it is a Goldoni, secondly whether the owner has not been misinformed as to its value."

He talked of his adventures with humor and surprising candor; but it was the art that concealed art. Ringrose knew that he confronted a villain; yet he did not permit the knowledge to confuse or influence impartial judgment. He came to Lord Brooke with an open mind, unbiased by his secret information. He was quick to tune his note to the other and found his lordship apparently neither moral nor unmoral in his values, his outlook on life and its obligations.

"A zamindar in Trichinopoly had a marvelous Chinese piece purchased from a coolie for a few beggarly pice," he said, "and seeing the man had deliberately robbed his servant, I robbed him. The zamindar knew well enough that his ivory was worth much more than he paid; but he had not the faintest idea of its true value. I went all across India for that specimen. And I got it for one third of its value. No use being an expert, Mr. Fordyce, if you're going to pay what things are worth! One attains to knowledge, with prayer and fasting, in order to avail oneself of other people's ignorance. I've often paid more than a thing was intrinsically worth, for my own reasons; and that being so, I have equally often paid less than real value, to right the balance."

Mr. Ringrose laughed.

"That bodes ill for the Goldoni," he said.

He had already appreciated the fact that Lord Brooke desired him to see great and inestimably precious ivories, that the one in his pocket might look poor beside them.

And presently they met in a long gallery lighted from the roof, through which ran glass-topped cases as in a museum. The walls were a dark purple and upon them hung pictures of the Flemish school collected by a former head of the family. But these did not interest Lord Brooke. He drew up blinds, that ran over the top lights of the apartment, and threw morning illumination upon the cases. Then, accompanied by John and young Tremayne, his lordship set out on a perambulation among his treasures.

"Roman ivories earlier than the fourth century are infinitely rare," he began, "but here's one from an Etruscan tomb. There's a better in the British Museum, which I hope to steal some day if I get an opportunity. Here you see a complete, consular diptych: a great gem. Many good men have broken the tenth commandment when they first saw that. These things were used by the Roman consuls, so history affirms. The best in the world languishes in two parts—half at South Kensington Museum, the remainder at Hôtel de Cluny in Paris. If the French won't pay our debts in cash they might in kind. We ought to have their half. But Latins are ever greedy as the grave. If you want to know how to steal like a gentleman, you must live in Italy, as I used to do."

He chattered on, with a flood of knowledge over which ran ripples of ribaldry and sardonic humor. He loved to talk upon his subject and Ringrose did not withhold admiration. He was genuinely entertained, and while the information respecting the ivories went in at one ear and out at the other, the more valuable, implicit demonstration of the owner's character was not lost upon him. He found in Lord Brooke pretty much what he had expected to find. His lordship revealed a disarming quality that implied an ingenuous nature, for he appeared to be amazingly frank and talked about himself, his triumphs and also his disappointments without reserve. He had no objection to a joke against himself, and made the visitor laugh long and loud with his description of a Sicilian prince who, having sold him a forgery, had been cornered and beaten by superior cunning in the end.

Through a maze of carven horns, combs, caskets, sword hilts, powder flasks and tiny statuettes, Lord Brooke led the attentive eyes of Mr. Ringrose. Then they inspected book covers, rosaries of beads carved with sacred subjects, pyxes and other objects of church use. There were images of the Virgin and the saints, and crucifixes of exquisite workmanship, inspired with the patient genius of a thousand medieval craftsmen.

"Men loved their work as well as their

wages in those days," explained Lord Brooke. "Now only the number of hours and the number of shillings are the things that interest the artificer—the number of hours he must spend pretending to work and the number of shillings he must dishonestly acquire by doing so.

"It is thought," he continued, "that the great Renaissance sculptors are responsible for many of these glorious treasures. But we cannot attribute many special pieces to the known masters. We may be looking at authentic masterpieces of Cellini, or Raphael, for both loved to play with ivory. One can hardly imagine that Michelangelo himself touched anything so small. It would have been rather like an elephant picking up a pin: yet I have ivories quite as majestic and mighty in their own way as the Medici monuments. Size is nothing when you understand these things rightly."

He showed John the Italian work of the sixteenth century from the pupils of Vicentino and Bernardo; while examples of Du Quesnoy, "the Fleming;" of Zeller; of Leo Pronner, Van Obstal, Kern and a dozen others were also displayed.

It was among the examples of Dutch work that Ringrose received a curious shock. Something familiar, though reduced to the size of a filbert nut, suddenly stared at him from a great ivory, a work of a fanatic genius. It was a carving of the mouth of hell from which peeped two devils as large as mice. Infinite horror was packed into that plate of bone, and something like a shiver of repulsion went through Ringrose as he scanned it; for it awakened memory and solved a problem from the past. He restrained himself, believed his surprise unobserved and moved his glance quickly to the next case, before which his host now stood.

"My tiniest treasures," explained Lord Brooke. "The sixteenth century gives us some exceedingly curious, minute works, and I have a fairly representative collection. They are worth their weight in diamonds, Fordyce. Entire compositions of numerous figures are here carved by that amazing miniaturist, Properzia de Rossi, on a peach stone. At Florence is a cherry stone on which a whole "Gloria" of saints is carved. God knows who did it. I may convey that to my collection yet. Not difficult to conceal a cherry stone. Leo Pronner, too, the Nuremberg master, whose work I showed you, carved microscopic works on cherry stones. Now we come to the realists."

He brought them to a case containing a thousand netsuke, and John—a realist himself—enjoyed the Japanese art more genuinely than all that had gone before it.

Two hours thus passed and then Lord Brooke called a halt.

"You'll get a headache if you see any more," he said. "This fine work means a tremendous strain on the optic nerve, and you've been uncommonly keen and attentive. I'll let you off now, Mr. Fordyce. Enjoyed it?"

"Profoundly," answered the other. "An expert always fills me with admiration—except a handwriting expert."

It was an unguarded admission and he cursed himself and hastened to qualify it with a funny story. Then they left the gallery and Lord Brooke demanded to see the Italian ivory, to be sold to him if he so willed.

"Come and have a drink in the library, and rest your fevered brow and show me the Goldoni," said his lordship; and ten minutes later the piece from Edinburgh lay in Lord Brooke's hand.

"I'm afraid it looks commonplace enough after the magic things you've shown me," confessed the detective, helping himself to a cigar. "You've given me some very genuine entertainment and generous hospitality; but I hope you won't think it was wasted and that I'm here under false pretences."

"Ivory or no ivory, you were welcome for yourself, and my debt is to you for some very lively companionship," answered the other gracefully. But he spoke mechanically, for his attention was entirely upon the little work of art in his hand. He rose, took a large magnifying glass from his table and then returned with it to the bay of the window, where ran a wide, upholstered seat.

Ringrose was now planning to extend his visit and desired an invitation to come from the other. He smoked and kept silent; while Tremayne, realizing that a private business transaction would now occupy his friend, finished a whisky and soda and left the room.

At last Lord Brooke spoke.

"This is a genuine Goldoni and I won't treat you to any humbug. It's a great piece. What more likely than the truth of the legend you report concerning it? What more probable than that David Riccio pre-

sented this brooch to Mary, Queen of Scots? What more certain than that this beautiful thing adorned her majesty's fair bosom? I, for one, believe it. It ought to be true and I will make it true."

"Glad your lordship is pleased," said John.

"Exceedingly pleased. I will give seven hundred and fifty pounds for it."

But Ringrose shook his head.

"I'm much afraid that won't meet the case. The lady was very definite for four figures."

"Ready money has such charm. At least I always found it so when it was scarce with me. Let us telegraph. Eight hundred down —really a good price. I don't pretend it's not a splendid thing and I don't want it; but shouldn't you say eight hundred was handsome?"

"I cannot pretend to judge, Lord Brooke; but you know. I'll do as you will, however, and telegraph this morning. Mrs. Campbell may share your natural feeling for the charm of ready money. I'm sure I do."

Half an hour later the detective strolled into the little township of Brooke-Norton; and he had a companion, for on learning of his intention, young Tremayne expressed a wish to join him. Ringrose had made a conquest of the Cornishman and now found him amiable and communicative. It was a gift rather than an acquired art to win the rising generation, for John continued young enough in spirit to share their interest; he inspired confidence and his honest enthusiasm for young humanity won their trust.

Nicholas Tremayne listened while the elder praised Lord Brooke.

"Amazing man—an example of real, expert knowledge. And amazingly generous too, for nothing can be more deadly dull to an expert than grinding over the old ground with a duffer."

"You're not a duffer, though. You asked him a number of questions that no duffer would have asked. You interested him. He liked you tremendously."

"He'll like me less, I fear, if I can't meet him over the ivory. But he mustn't blame me. The owner is a Scot and quite sure her treasure is worth a thousand pounds."

"Take it easy," advised Tremayne. "I know Burgoyne so well. He loves to bargain. He's more Oriental than English at heart—an extraordinary chap. If you can stop another night and work him up into one of his generous moods you'll get the money all right."

"I shouldn't like to take more than the thing is worth, however."

"You needn't bother about that. Money's no object to him."

Ringrose, guessing how the wind blew, sounded his companion upon the subject of Lord Brooke's niece.

"What a charming girl," he said. "There's something strangely winning about her. She's lovely, of course; but she's more than that. One feels almost as though there were a mystery there. She evidently cares a great deal for his lordship and she loves her beautiful home; but is she happy? It may be an accident of expression, yet a young, splendid creature in the flush of youth ought not to look so melancholy. I hope she isn't sad. I don't like to think of young people sad."

Tremayne hesitated to enter upon personal subjects, but John's frank interest and the humane quality of his voice compelled. The power of sympathy, as love itself, is infinitely greater than any accident of class. Indeed Nicholas, who was a warm-hearted youth and very much in love, recognized that no mere curiosity inspired the visitor. He was soon revealing his story, and much of it Ringrose already knew.

"She is lovely—an angel—and she is sad; and she's got a jolly good reason for being sad, Mr. Fordyce. If it interests you, I'll tell you. Mildred used to live in Italy with her father and brother. Then the late Lord Brooke met with his tragic death, two years after Lady Brooke died, and his girl and boy were left for their uncle to take care of. Burgoyne Bewes, as he was then, did everything possible. As for the boy, he was a weakling—a hopeless invalid from his childhood—mental trouble and general feebleness, so I understand. Soon the girl was left alone; but an infernal complication occurred. During her father's life she became engaged to a chap—a doctor, who practiced on Lake Como, at Menaggio, where her father lived and her mother died. It happened that the late Lord Brooke sanctioned the engagement, though not really a suitable one, because he happened to be sentimentally attached to the doctor. The man, apparently, was all that he should be as a physician, and he attended Lady Brooke with devotion to the end of her life. But after Lord Brooke himself died, and the girl

came home with her uncle to this place, the blasted doctor broke off the engagement. Brooke says he doesn't believe the chap really cared a button for Mildred. At any rate he never wrote to her again, but let her uncle know he thought that Mildred was rather too young for him, and that they had better allow their understanding to cease. A blessing in disguise for Mildred really, and Brooke was thankful, though he had to work up a certain amount of indignation on poor Mildred's behalf."

"Indeed I'm sorry for the beautiful child. But we'll hope, as you say, it was a blessing in disguise. And, since your friend has succeeded to the title, I suppose she lost her brother too?"

"Yes; he died, mercifully. But now you see why she's sad. She hasn't got over it yet, though God knows I'm trying to help!"

"I gathered that! Good luck. Maybe it's too soon if she really loved the doctor. But she must be very young still."

"Eighteen."

"She doesn't look it even in her melancholy moments. She seems to have a tender, gentle nature. Who was the doctor?"

"A blighter called Considine—that's all I ever knew of him. Brooke says he heard that he had married an American widow with tons of cash a year ago. He was only after Mildred's fortune probably and, when he found the American lady, guessed she would suit him better."

John Ringrose listened, but only one word of the young man's chatter had arrested his thoughts. They reached the post office, dispatched the telegram to Mrs. Campbell, then strolled over the neighboring golf links until an answer should be received.

John continued to interest Tremayne, but he dropped the subject of Mildred. He spoke of Cornwall and on general subjects, for already his mind found itself occupied with greater matters than the young man's love affair. Presently they returned to the post office. A reply to the telegram had arrived and it was exceedingly definite. The owner would not take a penny less than one thousand pounds.

Ringrose, on their return, coupled with this intelligence a proposition. He spoke, after Lord Brooke had read the telegram and lifted his eyes to the visitor's face.

"I'm sorry, but what say you to this? Shall I write to her and tell her more than was possible in the telegram? Perhaps persuasion might have good results. If I wrote to-day and put it, perhaps, that you can turn your offer into guineas, she might relent. I mustn't trespass on your hospitality longer, but could stop at Bridport until Mrs. Campbell had time to reflect and reply."

Then that happened which he desired and Lord Brooke approved his plan, save in one particular.

"Probably useless, but worth trying. I'll give eight hundred and fifty pounds—that's the limit, and really a good price. But, meanwhile, you must stop with me, if I don't bore you."

"Nothing would please me better, but I'm rather an intruder, I fear. You see, if you can't come to terms I shall have enjoyed your company and hospitality under false pretenses, in a way."

Lord Brooke, however, would take no denial and Ringrose prolonged his visit. The letter was written, with certain inspirations from his lordship, and John remained for another twenty-four hours. He found his host exceedingly agreeable and considerate. They met on common ground of acute intelligence, and the visitor granted to himself that the collector possessed a wit and quickness of perception superior to his own in certain directions. He was faced with an un-English order of mind—a sort of cosmopolitan intellect that he had observed working in many a criminal head. The man did not appear to act, because it was his nature to be always acting. He looked at life histrionically, yet could be serious enough on his one subject. For the rest, his attitude to existence and its problems was ironic and indifferent, but highly experienced. He had plenty of imagination, yet reserved its use for the ivories and all they embraced of story. He was far from reticent, indeed communicative and even confidential in his conversation. He spoke of his niece, indicated that she had suffered a cruel disappointment and hoped that she might presently learn to care for the Cornishman. On the subject of literature, Lord Brooke declared that he read only Italian authors and found them answer his needs.

"Machiavelli, Gobineau and d'Annunzio meet my mental requirements," he said. "Sometimes I think I will translate Machiavelli again; but it's been done so often. Gobineau is translated also—a great man without illusions. There's Nietzsche too, of course. He's slowly coming into his own."

Exceedingly clever, genial on the surface and as hard as flint underneath: thus the detective summed up Lord Brooke.

They sat talking until after midnight, and when he went to bed Ringrose, at the other's request, took with him "The Inequality of Human Races," for he had never heard of Gobineau. But he did not read. He summed the information of the day and dwelt on two significant items of knowledge which stood out of the general acquirement, as mountain peaks above a valley. One was the ivory that depicted the mouth of hell; the other a solitary word spoken in conversation by Nicholas Tremayne. The young man, in discussing Mildred Bewes, had described her father's end as "tragic."

With profound interest Ringrose fastened upon that adjective—"like a drowning man to a straw," as he told himself. People are apt to use the word "tragic" when often they mean "sudden" and no more; but for the detective these two syllables promised to possess no small significance until he learned particulars. Thus far he had done nothing beyond confirm convictions already established. The ivory had only served to illuminate a minor mystery, and did not advance his own enterprise by a hair's breadth, for he had as yet gained no ground of vantage from which his own attack might be delivered. Nor had such ground as much as risen above the horizon. To bring a man of Lord Brooke's caliber face to face with his crime, promised a task for which the detective felt no material at present existed. So far not a shadow of suspicion had been created in his lordship's mind against John himself; but he was well aware that the mentality of the man opposed to him might swiftly awaken into doubt; and how to take the needful preliminary steps without incurring that danger occupied the detective until he slept. But that the problem remained unsolved did not interfere with his repose. This was not the first time he had found it needful to build bricks without straw.

CHAPTER XII.

LORD BROOKE BUYS THE GOLDONI.

IN his letter to the owner of the Goldoni ivory, Ringrose impressed upon her the need for swift decision and the importance of answering by telegram. Mrs. Campbell would receive the communication at noon, and John intended catching an evening train for Bridport, that he might be in time to take the night mail from London to the North. In truth he was not returning to Edinburgh, but declared that to be his intention, for he claimed to dwell there.

He neither knew nor cared as to the fate of the treasure; but with morning there came a determination which promised to make considerable demands upon him. The challenge was massive; its difficulties had increased rather than diminished on better knowledge of Lord Brooke. He now felt deeply concerned to learn certain facts, yet knew they could only be won indirectly, if at all. A direct inquiry from any of those in a position to answer would be out of the question. But all three persons with whom he was for the moment in contact must know what he desired to know, and he suspected that from Tremayne he might most easily and safely glean the particulars. Had he, indeed, done so, it is possible that his own plans might have been modified; but from another—one more familiar with details than Tremayne—he finally acquired his information, and that in a manner unclouded by danger. For Mildred Bewes was his informant, and while chatting with her alone in the garden on the following day, she spoke of herself.

He had remarked that her uncle was devoted to the South, and she declared that she shared his love of it.

"I lived nearly all my life in Italy," she said. "My father had a villa on Lake Como, which he bought for mother, and though we used to come home every summer and go farther south in the winter, yet, for my mother's sake, he finally lived there nearly all the year round. She was happier there than anywhere. I went to school at Milan. Then my dear mother died and it nearly killed father. He had lived only for her through their married life, and when he died himself, two years after her, I should have broken my heart if I had not known he had gone back to her."

"Indeed you have had much to suffer, my dear."

"Yes, it made me rather old, Mr. Fordyce. I had much to suffer, as you say. Suffering does make you old, I think. I try to feel young, and Uncle Burgoyne does his best to make me. But—oh, so many cruel things have happened to me that I can't believe sometimes I'm only eighteen. I feel fifty. Life's ended, in a way."

"You mustn't say that, Miss Bewes. I'm very sure your dear parents would not like to think you felt the burden of life too heavy."

"I hope they don't know. I'm sure Heaven can't be a very happy place, Mr. Fordyce, if those who love living people know what's happening to them. My dear father died a terrible death. He was always on horseback, you know, after mother passed away. Riding soothed him more than anything. He loved to climb the hills to the upland pastures and had beautiful, strong horses that could carry him. And I rode with him often. And then death came to him high—high up under the great mountain between Como and Lugano. He and his horse fell over a precipice together."

"Terrible indeed; yet perhaps not so terrible for him as for you. Sudden death may not be bad for those who die. But we pray against it, I expect, for the sake of the living. Was nobody there who might have saved him?"

"Nobody. He was quite alone. He generally rode alone unless I went with him. He had taken his luncheon, as he often did, and we were not alarmed till nightfall. But the night came, and the morning, and no sign of him. Then men went into the hills and an alarm was raised. But not until another day and night had passed did three of the searchers find him and his horse dead together under a great cliff, called La Sporta dell' Aquila."

"None could have saved him?"

"Oh, no. He had fallen three hundred feet or more."

"You have my deepest, affectionate sympathy, Miss Bewes. It is indeed a sad story. I only hope you had good friends beside you to help you in those cruel hours."

She did not answer and he guessed why. Thoughts of what followed and her own loss in love naturally kept the girl silent, and he spoke again.

"Italy for you, then, is a land of grief, I fear. But do not shirk it, my dear. Face it again when the opportunity offers. You will very possibly find that the very scenes which brought such sorrow, may be the only ones to restore you to happiness in time to come. Nature has many mysteries of that sort hidden in her heart for men and women."

She smiled at his earnestness; but he knew that she was liking what he said and feeling his friendship genuine. Indeed his own kind heart went out to her.

"I go to Italy every year with my uncle; but not there," she answered. "I couldn't go there. Uncle Burgoyne has a house at Florence, and he loves Italy, and I am pretty happy, because there are pictures there I always go to see. There's a picture by Andrea—Andrea del Sarto—that puts me in mind of my mother; and another—a Fra Bartolomeo—a dead Christ, that always brings my precious father back to me—not sadly—not very sadly. We are going there in a month or six weeks. Somebody has died whom Uncle Burgoyne knew, and there will be a sale, and he must buy some things."

Ringrose led her away from the subject as they met Lord Brooke.

It was now the luncheon hour and presently his lordship speculated humorously on what Mrs. Campbell might be deciding about the Goldoni.

"Something tells me," he declared, "that the lady is adamant and will refuse my offer. I feel it in my bones."

He was right. An uncompromising telegram reached Mr. Ringrose, while the little party was drinking tea later in the afternoon, and they learned that the owner of the Goldoni declined Lord Brooke's offer.

He considered a while, but committed himself to no further proposal. Two hours would now determine the detective's visit to Brooke-Norton, and presently when his host had withdrawn—to reflect, as he said, upon the ivory—and Mildred Bewes and young Tremayne had passed into the garden, John availed himself of leisure and did not immediately prepare to depart. His bag would be packed for him and there was nothing calling for special thought until Lord Brooke returned. His lordship had asked for no more than twenty minutes' reflection. It was clear that he little liked losing the ivory.

And now the visitor repaired alone to the gallery, where a thousand treasures lay upon their velvet settings. He desired again to see the piece that had startled him on the occasion of his first inspection, and soon he found it and gazed at the hideous little monstrosity, which, in exaggerated shape and different surroundings, was already so familiar.

For the ivory showed him whence had come the inspiration for that instrument of torture responsible for a child's death. The

abomination, shrunk to the size of a marble, glared up at him, with an added venom that the drawing of Mrs. Bellairs had lacked and his own hideous puppet had scarcely achieved, although to these had been added size and color. The genius of some medieval workman, laboring in days when Satan was a more terrific personage than now, had put his dream of a fiend into the ivory. The repellent thing indicated with absolute certainty the inspiration that had destroyed young Ludovic Bewes.

Ringrose was quick to appreciate the value of such evidence. He regretted for a moment the fact that he had destroyed his own dummy; but knew that the drawing made by his friend at the Old Manor House remained safe, to testify if the time ever came when he needed it. But circumstances had opened a wider vista of late and suspicions of a great possibility haunted the detective's mind. They were not unreasonable, and what he certainly knew brought the larger and more tremendous hint well within the region of likelihood; but much remained to be done and a far wider inquiry instituted before Ringrose could find himself in any position to build upon these doubtful foundations. They promised, however, to be vital now; because, if time justified the new belief his own course of action must embrace a far wider scope and a more extended examination of the past than he had bargained for.

Nevertheless the new theory presented opportunities for action and John was before all else a man of action. Legally to prove the murder of Lord Brooke's nephew now promised an achievement of colossal difficulty, and his own failure with Arthur Bitton complicated the situation and decreased any chance of success. But if the new thing that Ringrose began to conceive as possible were true, then the case might be pursued on more fruitful lines. That, however, was only a remote chance and could not be said to offer much material for hope. He reflected somewhat after this fashion as he stood bending over the case of ivories; and then suddenly he received a shock, the significance of which increased in importance with the days that followed.

Somebody had entered the gallery on silent feet and was watching him; but absorbed in thought, the visitor knew it not until a voice spoke at his ear. He turned, stood upright and looked round into the face of Lord Brooke. The young man wore rubber-soled shoes and it seemed for a moment that he had stalked Ringrose; but he only laughed at the detective's surprise.

"I believe that vile thing has a horrid fascination for you, Fordyce," he said. "It is rather creepy. They believed in the devil in those days—eh? He was an inspiring force to good conduct and a joy to the artist. Alas! He's gone. You'd never find a sculptor to put all that passionate hideousness into the Prince of Darkness in our time. Spinello's 'Lucifer' in the altar piece at Arezzo is not more hideous, yet the Prince of Darkness himself called on the painter to protest at the libel! Barthel of Dresden is responsible for those ugly little monsters you are looking at. He excelled in animals and evidently believed in the Deuce. A hellish pair—eh?"

"They are—especially the right-hand one," declared John, indicating the fiend which did not interest him. It was malignant also and full of leering evil; but it lacked something of the demoniac abominations of the other.

Ringrose, not desiring to run the risk of meeting any old Bridport acquaintance, had asked if a motor car might convey him some few miles beyond the town to the main line, where the loop joined it. Thus he would enter the express from Weymouth direct for London. Now he reminded Lord Brooke of his request.

"That is arranged," answered the other. "I'm only sorry you should have had all this trouble for your pains. I'm much disappointed too."

But John detected a faint difference in his lordship's manner. He appeared serious for once, though whether, indeed, disappointment at the loss of the Goldoni, or some deeper cause inspired his change of tone he could not know. The cloud passed and Lord Brooke soon rattled on as usual; but a disturbing fact remained: he had seen the commercial traveler interested in a carving that, for the owner of it could not fail to possess tremendous significance.

"You're not going to buy Mrs. Campbell's ivory, my lord?"

"Even now I haven't quite decided. I want it rather badly; but it's a very stiff price."

"I wish I could pleasure you. It seems to me that you are generous; but the old lady evidently won't budge. I'm astonished

rather, for she's not well to do, though not actually needy."

"Well, my offer's open."

They talked of indifferent subjects and left the gallery, while Ringrose repeated his sense of obligation and his great appreciation of the hospitality and friendship he had received.

Then came the moment for departure and the big car destined to take him on his way drew up at the entrance. Bidding the chauffeur wait five minutes, Lord Brooke absented himself and left his niece and Nicholas Tremayne to chat with the departing guest. Then came a surprise, for his lordship presently returned bearing a piece of paper.

"Fork out, and be damned to Mrs. Campbell!" he said. Then he handed to Ringrose a check for one thousand pounds.

John, who carried the ivory in his breast pocket, laughed and instantly produced it; while a moment later his host shook him by the hand and bade him farewell.

They looked for a moment into each other's eyes, and behind the younger's cheerful expression and jesting words, there seemed to lie a question, a doubt, a challenge. John saw them and felt them.

"Good-by, Mr. Fordyce. Shall we meet again on this wide-wayed earth, I wonder?"

Lord Brooke put his question with a smile and Ringrose, thanking him once more for a greeting so amiable, ventured heartily to hope they might do so. Beneath the civilities of the parting he perceived that much was concealed; but its nature he could only surmise. He weighed the situation when, an hour later, he sat in the London train.

Two facts faced him, and he knew that one had arisen out of the other. The first occurred in the gallery, where he had been surprised examining the Barthel carving. From that moment the owner of the collection had subtly modified—not his agreeable manner—for he gave no sign; but the spirit behind it. Ringrose understood that his interest in the hideous ivory had created a deep impression on Lord Brooke's mind. From courteous indifference and frankness, combined with a shadow of patronage for a being out of another sphere than his own, the young man had indicated another emotion. It might have been unconscious, for it appeared in a mental gesture so shadowy that few would have observed it. Indeed John felt very sure Lord Brooke himself was unaware of the manifestation. He could not wittingly have revealed any such thing. But from that moment an interest—a doubt—an uncertainty hung over the personality of the amusing commercial traveler. John well knew that uneasiness had been created in Lord Brooke's understanding, and the young man could not conceal it from one who was so keenly alive to the possibility of having created it. For Ringrose appreciated what that Barthel ivory must mean to the owner. From this horrible thing he had been inspired to create a monster well fitted to destroy any immature intellect; and now—suddenly—after the passage of safe years—to find a stranger deeply studying the original model might well have made the criminal reflect, even though it did not make him fear.

Arthur Bitton was dead and Lord Brooke knew it. He knew, moreover, that his old valet had destroyed himself under peculiar circumstances, and Ringrose guessed that his old master had been both deeply interested and relieved by Bitton's end. The removal of his instrument could not fail to be a source of satisfaction; but the mystery attending his death must have awakened a strong desire to learn particulars concerning it. What more probable than that Lord Brooke had pursued his inquiries through an obvious source and endeavored to learn from Jane Bitton all that the widow could tell him?

And what could she tell him? She was a sane, well-balanced woman, and after her husband's death would be able to give a very coherent picture of his gradual demoralization, his descent from cheerfulness and contentment to misery, his dread of night, his manifold terrors. And the details must be very clearly cut in Jane's mind, for they were vivid and had happened in such sequence that she could but remember every circumstance. From those details and any succinct narrative, the name of Bitton's friend, Alec West, could by no means be excluded. Her husband's downfall and death synchronized with the coming of Mr. West; and after the valet perished by his own hand, the unknown "gentleman's gentleman" had himself suddenly departed. From Jane Bitton, Lord Brooke might learn what manner of man was Alec West, and he would certainly be informed how Bitton's first collapse occurred in the company of West, how his second shock was also in West's lodging,

and how his lonely death had happened on a night when his wife was absent from him. Lord Brooke would surely hear how the new friend had condoled with Jane and then disappeared, to be seen no more.

Now Ringrose, until the present, had not sufficiently considered these possibilities, and on his visit to Brooke-Norton, knowing that it must at least extend over many hours, had made no efforts at disguise. With some modifications he had been himself—an easy, genial man of the world prepared to be taken or left but conscious of his own power to make friends in any order of society. He had adapted himself to unfamiliar company and created the pleasant impression he was used to create. But if Lord Brooke had been at the trouble to ask Jane Bitton questions concerning the man so strangely identified with her husband's tribulations, then it was certain that Mrs. Bitton must have described one exceedingly easy to associate with "Mr. Norman Fordyce."

That Lord Brooke could associate him for a moment with Bitton's acquaintance was, of course, impossible until the incident of the ivory; but Ringrose now saw that in a mind so swift and observant—a mind, also, to which the carving must mean so much—his interest in the ivory might well have awakened a wonder, that strengthened into suspicion when linked with the circumstances of Bitton's death. But did any sure reason exist for suspecting such suspicion had been awakened? Could Ringrose honestly point to anything that followed the chance meeting in the gallery which indicated such a danger? He could; and in that conviction appeared the second very significant act on Lord Brooke's part before the motor car left Brooke-Norton. The collector had finally decided against paying the price demanded for Mrs. Campbell's Italian curio. It was quite clear that, while willing to meet the lady at any time if she changed her mind, his lordship had no present intention of paying a thousand pounds for the Goldoni. Yet, at the very last moment, he changed his mind and wrote the check.

There was, indeed, a possibility that he had held off in hope that he might be met; but a second thought shattered this chance, because Ringrose was not the owner and had possessed no power to bate the price. He asked himself why Lord Brooke had changed his mind, and believed he saw the reason.

By purchasing the ivory he had forever finished with Mr. Norman Fordyce. If all were straightforward, the commercial traveler must now vanish from Lord Brooke's sphere and never reënter it. By purchasing the ivory, all links with the go-between ended. Had he done otherwise, it might have lain in John's power to appear again, proceed with further bargaining and carry on the acquaintance. But that was not possible now; and if Norman Fordyce reappeared in Lord Brooke's life the latter would know that reasons existed for his so doing far deeper than those represented by Mrs. Campbell's treasure.

If such ideas had passed through the mind of the murderer then undoubtedly suspicion existed in it. Lord Brooke would be alert, and at the shadow of John's reappearance he must take instant alarm. Ringrose was a realist and knew that reality imposes very stern limits on those who follow his profession. To deceive as to his identity a man of such obvious cunning and intuition as the master of Brooke-Norton was quite beyond the detective's power. Only in romance may secret agents disguise themselves and reappear to their victim's confusion in a dozen transformations. He had seen and spoken with his opponent at close quarters, and he knew exceedingly well that when next they came to close quarters, disguise of a nature to delude Lord Brooke would be impossible. He must meet him once more as "Norman Fordyce," if he met him at all; but it remained to be seen whether any future meeting was necessary. At the bottom of his heart, however, John well knew that they would meet again; and probably do so long before he attained his object. But other matters needed first to be investigated, and upon these he now prepared to concentrate. Until a future time he was entirely concerned with the past, and suffered what should follow to occupy his thoughts no more.

His determination remained unchanged: to bring a very great villain to punishment; but though he had endangered ultimate success in one way, he believed that the business of the ivory and his introduction to the new owner of it were steps which might yet lead to his goal in the time to come.

To be continued in the next issue of THE POPULAR, *June 20th.*

Dragour, the Drugmaster

By Bertram Atkey

Author of "The Coward's Blow," "The Folly of Elaine Leahurst," Etc.

V.—"LITTLE BOY BLUE."

The timorous Kotman Dass is stampeded into another exhibition of sheer intellect, and the trail of the drugmaster grows hot under the intrepid feet of the impetuous Salaman Chayne.

MESSIEURS Salaman Chayne and Kotman Dass stood outside the shop of a denizen of the East End of London who, doubtless, would have described himself as a naturalist, if cross-examined, and studied with considerable interest an excessively gaudy macaw. Utterly regardless of the fact that its magenta tail failed conspicuously to harmonize with its yellow chest, or its apple-green head with its scarlet back, the bird returned their stare with an air of weary contempt.

"I'll admit, Dass, that you snatched my life clean from the clutches of Dragour two days ago—fully and freely I'll admit it," said the fierce-eyed little Mr. Chayne, stroking his dagger-pointed yellow beard. "And, therefore, as a man of the world and a sahib it is up to me to repay that service!"

"Oah, it is nothing—nothing at all, my dear Mister Chayne," nervously stated the colossal, dark-skinned Mr. Dass. "Quite small detail—matter of no importance whatso——"

"What the devil d'ye mean, Dass? Saving my life a matter of no importance, Dass? A detail, Dass?" snarled the fiery Salaman instantly.

Mr. Kotman Dass quailed and made foolish signs of sorrow.

"Oh, never mind the apologies! You saved my life and I'm going to give you a present. Dass, I'm going to stand you a thundering parrot, damn you! What d'ye think of this cockatoo for a parrot?"

"Veree perettee!" said the enormous one—shyly, for he was not accustomed to receiving presents.

"Hum! Striking bird—bit loud in its plumage, perhaps. Must be a female. Hey, proprietor, can the cockatoo talk?"

"This cockatoo's a macaw, sir, and it's got the finest flow of straight talk of any bird in the East End!" declared the proprietor of the creature shop. " 'Aven't you, Polly?"

"You go to——" suggested the macaw, surlily, and blinked a dirty-white shutter over its bright eye fast and frequently. "Lay aft the watch—ye all!" it added peremptorily.

An elderly passer-by of seafaring appearance halted abruptly.

"That's a good, plain-spoken bird, gents," he observed, uninvited. "I'd buy that bird if you was me. A good, home-y bird—brought up on good home-y windjammer, I'll lay."

Ignoring the advice of the nautical interloper Mr. Chayne turned to Kotman Dass.

"D'ye like her, Dass?"

"Oah, yess, veree nice, veree affable bird!" replied the fat man.

"Good! She's yours," snapped Salaman—and, after a fearful argument with the proprietor, it was indeed so.

Salaman led the way to regions where a taxi might be found.

"Now I've made some acknowledgment of the great service you did me, Dass. I don't say I've squared the debt for I flatter myself that my life is worth something better than a rainbow bird with a vocabulary consisting mainly of oaths. But I've made a—um—graceful acknowledgment. Hey, Dass, damn you?"

"Oah, it is veree graceful and jollee well generous, my dear mister," hastily admitted Mr. Dass, in his agitation swinging the cage so violently that the macaw emitted a burst of protest so profane that even Mr. Chayne blinked slightly.

"Better not swing that bird about in public more than you can help, Dass. No sense in our getting arrested."

"Noa, indeed—veree true, dear mister," agreed Kotman, moderating his gestures to the vanishing point.

"And now, Dass," said Mr. Chayne when, a few moments later, they were in a taxi homeward bound, "now, having made a graceful acknowledgment of your past services, I want to arrange about future ones. For example, this Dragour business," he continued, scowling. "He's getting on my nerves—Dragour—and I shouldn't be surprised if I am getting more or less on his. And you, too. Yes, you also—you're in as grave danger from him as I am—perhaps even graver, for that was a shrewd blow you struck at him over that Regent's Park drug-home affair. And he knows it—though fortunately he may not yet know what a courageless danger dodger you are."

He nodded, and lit a cigar, carefully ignoring the increasing symptoms of rising agitation on his partner's face. Mr. Chayne had come to the conclusion that the only truly satisfactory way of getting the best results out of his fat partner's brains was to frighten them out. It was with this benign object in view that he had lured Mr. Dass out, ostensibly to the bird shop, but really to get his mind well diverted from its customary tense concentration on the affrighting task of writing the history of thought from the dim and distant period when the first thought occurred to the first man—probably the great thought that he was hungry—or thirsty.

Salaman, cheered by the apparent success of his device, was about to proceed to utter a series of truly bloodcurdling prophecies concerning his and his partner's probable fate at the hand of Dragour when Kotman Dass spoke in a rather reedy but nevertheless determined voice—determined for him, that is to say.

"If you please, dear mister, do not frighten and alarm more," he asked. "For I beg to state to you that I perfectly understand object you have in view—namely that I concentrate whole of my colossal mental power on problem of extinguishing, of blotting out, thee evil scoundrel Dragour. But, if you are agreeable, dear Mister Chayne, thatt is no longer necessary strategee. I have sworn private oath to self personally that I shall effect theoretical total abolition of scoundrel in question—thus leaving onlee for you to accomplish thee practical execution of blotting out referred to."

Salaman Chayne turned to stare at the fat man.

"You mean to say that you're honestly going to put your intellect into the thing, hey?"

"Oah, yess, that is undoubtedleee soa," agreed Kotman, adding anxiously: "Theoretically—strategicallee."

"Quite so, Dass. I understand that not a single hair of your extraordinary head must be put in any danger," said Salaman dryly. "Well, I am perfectly prepared to take the physical risks of the tactical department. And now, that being agreed, perhaps you'll be kind enough to wake your ideas up a little and inform me what your brains have churned out of the mass of material they've had thrust into them the last few days. I've told you everything I know right up to date about Dragour. What have you squeezed out of it—if anything?"

Kotman Dass nodded his head ponderously.

"Let us—with your kind permission, mister—recapitulate facts of matter," he be-

gan slowly. "For example, thee police have searched recent haunt of Dragour, Shone Park, carefully, and have ascertained nothing except that they are too late because the drugmaster has abandoned that place."

Salaman agreed.

"Yes, you can take it that Dragour and his folk have left Shone Park forever."

The huge head of the mountainous Mr. Dass nodded massively.

"Veree good. Let us cast eyes elsewhere. What have the police ascertained from interrogation off the patients—the drug victims—discovered in the drug home at Regent's Park?"

Mr. Chayne shook his head.

"Nothing at all. None of the creatures of Dragour who conducted the home have said anything to incriminate any one—and of the five victims there is not one will utter a word unless they are first given a supply of the drug with which Dragour provided them. They are sulky—and ill—through the deprivation. They are in hospital—under police supervision—but their one desire is to get out, back to their homes, anywhere, any place, where they may possibly get into secret touch with Dragour again. The police and the doctors are trying to save them from themselves—but they don't want to be saved. They want to be left alone, and they seem to have come to a sort of arrangement between themselves to say nothing—if they know anything, which is doubtful."

Kotman Dass nodded.

"Their friends have been seen?"

"Certainly—more than seen. They've been very carefully interrogated, but they know nothing."

Kotman Dass reflected, his eyes absently on the gaudy macaw.

"If you please tell me, dear Mister Chayne, have any other patients of that drug home been mentioned—by any of them—at any period?" he inquired presently.

Salaman thought—then nodded.

"One name has, yes. Gregory Kiss told me that two of the patients have demanded to be let out from hospital—on the ground that they are in much better health than the last patient discharged by Dragour from the Regent's Park place."

"Yess! That is veree interesting, I think. What is thee name of that patient who was soa veree kindlee discharged—from home secretlee controlled by Dragour himself?"

"Lord Sloden of Sloden Hall—a place in the New Forest, I believe. He left the Regent's Park man trap about a week before the police pounced on it. But you'll get no information out of him, Dass. Gregory Kiss has already been down to the Forest and interviewed him. He's a poor specimen—one of these effeminate, languid, lazy sprigs of the aristocracy. His only hobby is amateur acting—at least it was until he got himself so loaded up with Dragour's drug that he isn't much use for anything except to lie on a sofa and moon and smile at all comers."

But Kotman Dass did not appear discouraged.

"I have queer notion that this man possiblee may lead us to trail off Dragour. It is odd thing that Dragour should have released him from home at all. For secret drug has this effect that it makes victims happee and contented while they are well supplied. Highlee probable that Lord Sloden was well supplied at the home, and not probable therefore that he wished veree seriouslee to leave by own desire."

The heavy brows over the dark eyes of the fat man knitted slightly.

"Dragour had the Lord Sloden under his heel, in his own man trap—and let him go away wholly of own accord," he muttered.

Presently he turned to Salaman.

"If you please, mister, tell me if thee Lord Sloden is wealthy man?"

Salaman knew the answer to that.

"Kiss says he hasn't a cent—he's as poor as a crow. Lives in a semiruined old barn of a place in Sloden Woods in the New Forest with hardly a servant and precious little furniture in the place. Ruined, you may say, body and soul, house and home, lock, stock, and barrel. Ruined, and as long as he gets his ration of drug from Dragour he still feels as rich as a rajah, Kiss says."

The eyes of Mr. Dass gleamed a little.

"That is veree interesting, dear mister. If onlee I had courage to do it I would be veree deeply gratified to interview the Lord Sloden," said Kotman Dass absently—and unguardedly.

The fierce-eyed little Mr. Chayne snapped at that swiftly.

"Right, Dass! You shall. Leave that to me—I'll guarantee the safety of your hide. It would be a thousand pities if anything happened to that."

For the life of him Salaman could not resist his customary sardonic comment—for

the white feather was to Mr. Chayne what a red rag is said to be to a bull.

"Yes, I guarantee your safety, and I'll go armed to the teeth in case Lord Sloden gets infuriated with you and tries to give you quite a hard smack on the wrist. Bah!" he volunteered sourly. Then he shrugged.

"You make me ill, Dass. It's always the same. Just when my opinion of you begins to improve your miserable cowardice crops up and ruins all, damn you!"

"And damn you, you flat-flooted, cock-eyed, sogerin' hound!" yelled a voice in prompt response.

Salaman's beard bristled for a second. Then, realizing that the somewhat coarse and rasping repartee had come not from Kotman Dass but from the macaw, which had evidently recognized the profanity and, as evidently, had learned how to take care of itself in a slanging match, Mr. Chayne relapsed again, smiling acidly at the kaleidoscopic-plumaged ruffian in the cage. He loved birds—but he did not appear to rank the macaw as one of such. Evidently the gigantic Mr. Dass had found a defender, for the macaw eyed Salaman sternly, almost truculently for a moment, then muttering something about "taking no slack from any blanked wharf rat that ever done a pier-head jump aboard *my* hooker!" the uncanny fowl hunched up its shoulders, gave an acid chuckle, described itself as "pretty Polly," heartily bedamned Salaman Chayne for a scrimshanking sea lawyer, and, observing that it was eight bells and a darned dirty night, appeared to doze off into a little sleep.

The mild eyes of Mr. Kotman Dass rested very affectionately on the bird as the taxi rattled on to No. 10 Green Square.

"Veree intelligent birds, dear mister," he said nervously, once.

"Oh, very; at least as intellectual as any wooden cuckoo in a clock. You'll be teaching that one to play chess before long, huh?" snarled Salaman crushingly as they pulled up at their door.

II.

Mr. Chayne allowed his partner very little time for shedding his half-expressed desire to interview the unhappy Lord Sloden. Although to the hot-eyed, swift-tempered Salaman it seemed somewhat improbable that Kotman Dass could extract from this ruined victim of Dragour, so contentedly wasting himself with drugs in his ruined home among the oaks of Sloden Wood, anything more than that astute and practiced detective, Mr. Gregory Kiss, had gleaned. Nevertheless the first thing he did was to telephone Mr. Kiss—and hold with that gentleman quite an animated conversation while Mr. Dass was upstairs in the bird room, presumably introducing pretty Polly to the other birds—and, doubtless, warning his talking starling against copying the vocal novelties of the flamboyant though foul-mouthed scoundrel in parrot's clothes, duly pointing out that although fine feathers possibly make fine birds, dazzling plumage does not always imply a refined vocabulary.

Mr. Chayne was smiling as he hung up the receiver of the telephone—smiling like a man who is proud of himself. He had reason to be. For he had thought of a good idea. He conceived it, rightly, his duty to procure for Kotman Dass the interview with Lord Sloden, but he knew that it would require superhuman argument to get that remarkable coward started on his way. So, with the aid of the wily Mr. Kiss, he had contrived a little tour de force of diplomacy. It was quite simple but, he hoped and believed and told Mr. Kiss, that it would "prove effective in shifting Dass from No. 10 Green Square as easily as a good ferret shifts an intelligent rabbit from its hole. And that wants doing, Kiss—for Dass is not an easy man to shift, anyway."

So it befell that when an hour later Mr. Gregory Kiss arrived, anxious-eyed, excited and seriously alarmed, announcing untruthfully but "according to plan" that he had called to warn the partners that Dragour himself and several of his men were about to form, as it were, a ring of watchers round No. 10 Green Square with the avowed intention of "getting" both Kotman Dass and Salaman Chayne, the unfortunate Mr. Dass, as usual, succumbed so instantly and utterly to his terrors that he was as clay in the hands of the potter.

With an instant for reflection Kotman's brain would have found a hundred flaws in the story, but his physical qualms, as always, were peremptory.

He allowed himself to be bundled into the taxicab which Mr. Kiss had brought and was being whirled away into what Salaman Chayne and Kiss described as "a place of tranquil safety" before he began seriously to think connectedly.

Not until he stepped out onto the platform of Salisbury railway station eighty miles out, did he ask a question. And that was merely an inquiry if his companions thought it safe to leave the train while still so near London.

They assured him that it was, and so, together, went off to the hotel from which next day Salaman purposed motoring into the New Forest to call upon Lord Sloden.

It was not without considerable difficulty that the little expedition of two volunteers and one pressed man found the ruined mansion which was all that remained of the ancient glories of Sloden Hall. For the place was set deep in the heart of the big wood and the roadway which led to it had become, through long disuse and neglect, little more than a track, just passable for motor traffic.

It was not until the hired car conveying the trio was slowing to a standstill in the weed-choked space before the dilapidated main entrance of what once must have been a noble house that Kotman Dass realized precisely the strategem which had been used by his partner.

Staring with extreme unease at the house, he opened his mouth to speak—but Salaman Chayne gave him no time to protest or object.

"Now then, Dass, tumble out. By a lucky chance you've got the opportunity of a lifetime. You can have your little talk with Lord Sloden in perfect confidence, knowing, as you do, that Dragour and his picked scoundrels are watching No. 10 Green Square! Ha-ha! Neat trick to turn, that, eh, Dass? You'll be as safe in this house chatting to Sloden, as if you were tucked up in your little feather bed at home—safer, in fact."

The colossal Mr. Dass slowly got out of the car—it was evident that he wished very much to believe his partner but nevertheless was intensely conscious of the fact that he was not quite so safe as Mr. Chayne airily claimed.

"I am veree highlee strung and sensitive this morning, dear mister," he said, his eyes roving about. "I should be happier to be going away now from this gloomy place."

"Well, so you shall, after the chat with Lord Sloden," Salaman assured him breezily. "Damn you, man, it was your own wish to talk with him—your own suggestion! And if what Kiss tells us about him is true, why, even you couldn't be afraid of Lord Sloden if you tried. Why, the man's as fragile as glass—and as weak as a—a—moth! Pull yourself together, can't you?"

And thus volubly reassuring his "highlee strung" partner, Salaman flustered him to the tumble-down entrance of Sloden Hall, where Mr. Kiss was already talking with the old, old witchlike woman who had opened the door to Kiss' knocking. Any one with knowledge of the Forest folk would have known that this ancient soul was a survivor of the dwindling gypsy bands from which once the New Forest was never free. Probably she had been glad to give such poor services as she could to the last Lord Sloden in return for shelter and food. She appeared to be the only servant in the big house.

She seized eagerly at the silver coin proffered by Mr. Kiss and hobbled away across the great damp carpetless hall, furnished with no more than a few old sets of antlers, some rotting fox masks and a decrepit table and bench. Once it had been paneled, but the paneling had been taken away and the stained walls were naked.

"What a tomb of a place!" said Salaman Chayne, scowling around. "Yet, once upon a time, it must have been a fine place, this—a splendid——"

But here the crone returned, chuckling.

Lord Sloden was quite willing to see Mr. Kiss, she announced, and led them to a small room, only slightly less uncomfortable than the hall. On a huge couch, worn and rickety almost to the point of worthlessness, was lying the man they had come so far to see—Lord Sloden.

He rose slowly as they entered, surveying them with faded, rather vacant blue eyes, smiling dreamily at them.

But for his extreme, pearllike pallor, and his startlingly lean and haggard face, he might have been rather an attractive person in his fragile and effeminate style. But, as he stood now, there was nothing attractive about him. He looked almost completely bloodless—dying—smiling a queer, dazed smile as though perfectly careless of, or wholly content with, his condition.

"Good morning—or should it be 'afternoon,' gentlemen?" he said. "Please make yourselves comfortable—if there are enough chairs."

He sat down rather suddenly himself.

"Pardon me. I am not in good health—

not quite so strong as I should be. How can I serve you?" His colorless lips never relaxed from that strange smile of bland contentment which, oddly, served only to emphasize the ravages that the drug of Dragour had stamped forever on his thin, delicately chiseled, wax-white face. He was panting slightly as though the simple act of rising had tried his strength and the pallid hand which he waved toward a few decrepit chairs was hardly larger than a child's.

Salaman Chayne was a trifle paler than usual and his hot, yellowish eyes were dilated as he stared, half horrified, at the man. It seemed to him, he confessed afterward, that this visit was less like an actual experience than an enterprise carried out in some nightmare-haunted sleep.

All three of them had seen victims of the drug of Dragour before—but never one who had advanced so terribly far along the fatal path which all who persisted in their slavery must travel.

The distaste of Mr. Gregory Kiss, experienced though he was in strange sights, was plain.

But with that remarkable coward Kotman Dass it was otherwise.

From the instant he had entered that hopeless room his eyes had been glued on the smiling specter who had greeted them and every symptom of fear or uneasiness had vanished utterly from his face. Truly, as Salaman had said, there was nothing to fear from the man on the couch, for a child could have seen that he was utterly without strength. And it was very apparent that the uneasiness that had been in the fat man's eyes was now replaced by an intense interest.

Then, even as Mr. Kiss opened his lips to begin an explanation of their intrusion, Kotman Dass surprised both the detective and Mr. Chayne.

"If you please, do me great favor of quitting apartment, dear misters. For space of few moments onlee. I have private question to put to the Lord Sloden!" he said abruptly.

Salaman and Mr. Kiss exchanged glances, nodded, and went out without words.

For a moment longer Kotman Dass scrutinized the white face of Lord Sloden intently, without speaking.

And Lord Sloden sat smiling—and smiling—and smiling, like a waxwork figure.

Then Kotman Dass crossed the room, his eyes full of a great pity, clumsily knelt by the couch—he dared not intrust his vast bulk to any chair—and, with extraordinary tenderness, closed his enormous hand on the tiny, shrunken hand of the victim.

"Tell me, if you please, have you forgotten that happee, perettee one called 'Little Boy Blue?'" he said in a voice so soft that it was no more than a whisper. "Thee little toys—thee little friends—in the little sorrowful song: 'They Are Waiting for Little Boy Blue?' Aie——" He shook his great head very sadly and recited softly from the poem of Eugene Field.

Slowly the smile on the pallid lips of Lord Sloden died out and the faded blue eyes widened—till they seemed enormous, set in that pinched and haggard face.

"'Little Boy Blue!'"

It was like a whisper of pain wrung from the very heart.

"Oh, my God! 'Little Boy Blue!'" said Lord Sloden in a voice of anguish.

Kotman Dass saw the lackluster eyes suddenly brim with a liquid brightness—a brightness that overflowed.

Two great tears formed and fell slowly down the waxen face—no more. It was as though these two painful tears were all of tears that this one could ever know or ever weep—the last of many—and that henceforth he must go as tearless as bloodless to the grave so close at hand.

It was Kotman Dass who smiled now.

"Aha, it is visiblee evident that you have not forgotten—and soa, you see, all will be well. I, Kotman Dass, say it. If you had forgotten completely thee poor 'Little Boy Blue,' then that would have been proof veree conclusive that you were lost utterlee! That your mind had gone out like blown candle. But now, because you have not forgotten, I shall be able to accomplish rescue—rescue from the drugs and rescue also from the millstone at neck—oah, yess, the millstone of being lord when you are lady! It was soa lucky for all that I am man with magnificent memory—thee man who forgets never anything that he has once seen or known. It is peretty good job that I was member of audience that witnessed the play called 'Little Boy Blue' soa long ago—seven years ten months six days—on thee notable occasion that you acted thee part, and sang thee song of 'Little Boy Blue. Noa, noa, if you please, do not distress—there is not need to confess *any*thing, for I

know. You are not Lord Sloden any more from this hour, but you shall be again what you were before thee scoundrel Dragour seized your life in his vulture claw—you shall be again Miss Mollee O'Mourne, thee actress of promise. And you shall be safe from Dragour—oah, not by me, I am onlee miserable coward with wonderful memory—but by fierce, hot, angree, very courageous and bold man, Mister Salaman Chayne—and slow, still, veree indomitablee tenacious and brave man, Mister Geregory Kiss! Soa, all will be well!"

"It is all true!" The woman on the couch spoke drearily. "All true. I have been destroyed!"

Kotman Dass chuckled.

"You shall be restored—like phœnix that arises from flames. That is—oah, quite definite promise, by me. You must be onlee obedient—that is sole condition. Now, if you please, rest quietly and I will consider problem."

He moved to the window, staring out at the gloomy depth of the wood so ancient that its mossy glades had once echoed to the horns of the huntsmen of Norman kings.

All that he had said was true.

Within five seconds of setting his dark, mild eyes on the unhappy soul on the couch he had remembered not only where he had seen her before, but, without effort, had recalled her stage name, her voice, the day on which he had seen her, the part she had played, a song she had sung. Yet he had only seen her once—and then she had been in stage make-up—and since then he had seen myriads upon myriads of faces, the swarming millions of London, of New York, of Indian and Chinese towns, packed to suffocation. Yet he remembered—remembered so easily that the prodigious feat of memory meant nothing more to him than an occasion for a slightly amused chuckle.

Presently in a low and quivering voice she broke in on his reflections to tell her story—a story full of halts and hesitations and gaps, for her memory had been all but destroyed by the Lethean effects of the drug of Dragour.

He listened patiently, though even before she began to speak he had divined most of what she told him.

Salaman Chayne and Mr. Kiss came in just as she finished. She groped for a small box on a shelf near the couch, glancing furtively at Kotman Dass as she did so.

"Oah, yess, take your accustomed portion of drug," said the fat man gravely. "It will be long time—and painful—before the drug of Dragour means nothing more to you than grains of sand under thee heel. To refrain suddenlee at this stage will kill quicklee as bite of poisonous reptile!"

She swallowed several of the tablets—and presently the terrible smile of dreamy content began to reëstablish itself on her pale lips. Then Kotman Dass turned to his friends.

"Let us take little walk together if you please, dear misters!" he said, and led the way out to the open air.

III.

"I have arrived at conclusion that possiblee from material afforded by this veree sad affair a trap may be constructed—a trap for the vampire Dragour," stated Kotman Dass at once. "Let me speak, iff you please, without interruption."

Walking slowly to and fro about the weedy waste before the house which once had been garden, Kotman Dass told them the story of the actress Mollie O'Mourne.

"Lord Sloden is not Lord Sloden but a lady who once was young, perettee actress of veree considerable promise att period of about eight years ago," he said. "I had pleasure of witnessing performance carried out by her in production entitled 'Little Boy Blue.' I recognized lady when I entered room recently and soa proceeded to lead her mind back to occasion of thee 'Little Boy Blue'——" He broke off, staring intently at a broken fragment of stained terra-cotta tile at his feet.

"Pardon me, if you please, mister," he said, stooped laboriously and picked up the shard, which he studied absently for a moment or two. Then he turned, beaming, to the others, offering the bit of tile.

"Veree interesting relic, which has given further excellent idea for most alluring trap for the vampire Dragour, oah yess."

He proffered it to Mr. Chayne, who declined abruptly.

"Oh, throw it at the cat!" he snapped acidly.

He glared upon his mountainous partner.

"Either tell a straight story or cut it out and get into the taxi and go home, will you, Dass? If you want to play with bits of tile—hey, hopscotch, ain't it?—I'll drop you at some brickyard on the way home and you

can play hopscotch with all the bits of tile in sight. But, while you're here, talk straight understandable stuff or be dumb, damn you!"

Kotman Dass blinked nervously at his fiery partner.

"Oah, ten thousand apologies, sir, mister," he babbled. "That is merely just fragment of old Roman tile—there were many Roman villas on this part off globe formerly."

"No doubt! And now there aren't any. That's *that*. Now get on with your story, will you!"

"Veree willing, most certainly," agreed Mr. Dass, and did so.

Ten minutes later he had enlightened his partner and the silent Mr. Kiss.

It was not a pretty story which he told them.

The real Lord Sloden, the bloodless and effeminate survivor of a long line of Slodens, had been an early victim of the perilous drug of Dragour, and his reputation, spreading even in that lonely spot—though less lonely than it would seem to a town dweller—had alienated most of his friends and relatives. Toward the end he had been living the life of a hermit—lost in his drugged dreams, in the heart of the New Forest—careless, content. Presently he had gone to one of the man traps which Dragour controlled and which ostensibly were drug homes for victims.

And in one of these he had died—probably before he could yield up or bequeath to Dragour his possessions—a considerable amount of money and the splendid antiques with which Sloden Hall was largely furnished.

It was in order to secure these things that Dragour had kept secret the death and enlisting or compelling the services of another victim of his, the unhappy young actress, Miss Mollie O'Mourne, had trained her and sent her to Sloden Hall to impersonate the dead peer. It was a simple task for, apart from a curious resemblance to Sloden which probably had given Dragour the idea, the girl had no visitors to hoodwink. Lord Sloden himself had long ago been shunned—and his impersonator was equally shunned by those living in the Forest zone. So she had continued in that dreadful slavery for some years, never free from the abundantly supplied drug she had long learned to crave for and to dread being without—and in those few years, blindly obedient to the orders of Dragour, she had gradually made over, given, to him the whole of the money which as Lord Sloden she controlled, and all the treasures of Sloden Hall. Dragour had, through her, taken everything—money, everything. She had been accepted as, and had been trained to sign herself as, Lord Sloden—and so all that belonged to Lord Sloden had gone to Dragour. On the day that Mr. Dass and his friends had entered Sloden Hall she had been literally and absolutely penniless, almost foodless and, lost in her drug dreams, she had been wholly content. For Dragour had been generous in one bitterly ironic respect only—he had given her enough of the drug to last her for as long as she was likely to need it.

"That is to say, mister, Dragour has given the little poor soul enough to kill her! Oah, this is awful and terrifying thing that we have laid bare!" said Kotman Dass, his voice shrill. "In one month that poor one who sung so perettilee, who was once 'Little Boy Blue,' would have been dead—dead—lying all still and quietlee and at rest in this dark and gloomy wood. Oah, she was so sweet eight years ago—she sang like a happee bird—'Thee little toy friends are true. They are waiting for 'Little Boy Blue'—and now she is—just as you have seen her, dear misters—wrecked, ruined, doomed to die." His great hands gripped and tears started in his dark eyes. "Doomed to die! But yet she shall be saved—oah, yess—saved, by that miserable man, that veree shocking cowardly hound, by that poor comic fat bloke, by *me,* Kotman Dass! *Ahaa!*"

Wildly excited he shook the bit of tile at the astonished Messrs. Chayne and Kiss.

"I dread Dragour like hamadryad itself—like the awful king cobra that fears not man nor any beast save onlee thee lord, thee king of thee jungles, the elephant. But yet I shall have him, ensnare him, thee killer, thee vampire. *Look!*"

He tapped the shard.

"Thatt is fragment off Roman tile, and veree antique. Fifteen hundreds of years ago—Mister Chayne, what is it that Dragour loves, seeks ever, strives for, kills for? Thee rare things—thee antique things. Soa we must make a trap. Thee 'Little Boy Blue' shall send this fragment to thee one from whom her drugs come, saying, 'There has been found by thee ancient woman who

serves me here certain old buried things very ancient, of which this earthenware piece is thee least thing'—and Dragour will come like steel to magnet. *He* will recognize Roman tile and he will believe they have found site of Roman villa and he will come swiftly—thrusting his head into thee jaws—of Misters Salaman Chayne and Gregory Kiss!"

He stared at them anxiously.

"Thatt is veree good proposal for trap to catch vampire, I think?" he said.

The others glanced at each other and agreed instantly.

"Couldn't be better, Dass—for once you really have got your brains focused on the situation," said Salaman. "It's quite a good kind of scheme, hey, Kiss?"

Tersely the laconic Mr. Kiss agreed.

The enthusiasm in the eyes of Kotman Dass died away and was replaced by a look of profound relief.

"And soa, now that thee matter is placed into highlee competent hands of you both practical and courageous gentlemen, there is obviouslee no need for either the little ill one, Miss O'Mourne, or for me, Kotman Dass, to remain in dangerous neighborhood longer. Soa, iff you are agreeable, we shall have little talk with lady and arrange for her to write letter to Dragour. I will goa away then, taking her with me to London, trusting you will be highlee successful with trap."

Salaman scowled a little, but Mr. Kiss hastily checked the outburst of angry scorn from the fiery little man which plainly was impending. The detective perceived clearly that Kotman Dass had rendered the sole contribution to the capture of Dragour which, in view of his peculiarities, could reasonably be expected of him—and indeed, it had been a contribution of great, even vital importance. He realized that the rest was for or, as he put it, "up to," Mr. Chayne and himself.

"Mr. Dass is a mental fighter of such wonderful brilliance that we can't reasonably expect him to be a champion on the muscular side of things as well, Mr. Chayne," he observed. "I agree that it would be better for him to go with Miss O'Mourne to a safe place while we come into action."

He was eying Kotman carefully.

"Yes, a safe place where, at the end of a telegraph or telephone wire, we can still keep in touch with his brains."

"Yess, yess," said Kotman most eagerly. "That is wholly admirable notion—oah yess, indeed! Brains wholly at your kind disposal other end of long telegraph wire!"

Mr. Chayne shrugged.

"So be it, damn it!" he said crisply, his nose wrinkling a little.

Kotman Dass wheeled and began to lumber toward the house.

"It is advisable to lose no time in such business as present affair," he stated enthusiastically. "Soa, if you please, let us arrange matters now with the little lady who has soa suffered. Then I will goa with her to friend of mine who will pro tem shelter us and at same time begin long careful process of curing her off drug passion."

"What friend?" snapped Mr. Chayne sharply, with an odd acrid jealousy in his voice. "I'm your best friend, Dass."

"Oah, certainlee that is highlee soa, dear mister. Thee friend referred is onlee cousin to me. He is doctor with practice in less fashionable quarter of London, veree clever, kind man who will oblige readilee. He is Doctor Babbaji Chunder Ghote—veree clever, with gereat career awaiting him at future period."

Again Messrs. Chayne and Kiss glanced at each other. The taciturn detective spared the ghost of a wink and Salaman understood.

"Very well, Dass, let it be so," he said. "I shall be glad to make the acquaintance of Doctor Goat in due course. Don't much like the sound of him. Meantime, make your arrangements as soon as you can and then clear out to the safe place while we set the trap."

"Oah, thank you veree much," said Kotman Dass gratefully—and lost no time in doing as he was told.

Another story of Kotman Dass and his friend Salaman Chayne in the next number.

Outlawed With Honors

By Calvin Johnston

Author of "Switch Lights," "The Man the Cook Made," Etc

A railroad man's story—with a whole creed and philosophy of life locked in the magic of a few inspired pages.

THE engine foreman was finally triumphant in the nightly discussion which shook the switch shanty to its center. A proud man of the division had been brought low, and Denny, the old switchman, attempting to defend him, had been defeated by the foreman's inspired answer: "Sure, it is pride which goes before destruction."

Though old Denny undoubtedly had lost this particular dispute, he was not willing to let the quotation pass on undisputed generality, and so leave a victor's weapon for future use in the foreman's hand.

" 'Pride goes before destruction,' " he repeated. "A wise saying it is when wisely used. And yet it does not apply to cats."

The astonishment in the switch shanty was profound. "Is it proverbs the holy men should be making about cats?" demanded the foreman, and was answered severely:

"Who are we to be saying what the holy men should have written? And if they left out cats in the meaning of that proverb, 'twas all the more sign of their wisdom, as was proven by 'Cinder Dick' of the old P. D. High-line Division. An honest cat he was till a false prosecution made an outlaw and desperado of him; a proper cat too, washing his whiskers after every meal with a pur that drowned the telygraph sounders; but pride he had with reason, for he entered service in the dispatcher's office and hung up a record while the mewing gossoons of his own age were playing with spools. And 'tis this point I wish to make plain, foreman —'twas by pride he escaped destruction himself and saved from destruction a man whom he afterward had appointed division superintendent."

The foreman started so violently that his stool slipped and he sat on the floor answering with his face between his knees. "A cat appoint a superintendent! I defy ye to tell the straight of it." He believed that he had the crafty debater trapped, but Denny told the story with a straightforwardness which paralyzed incredulity.

You can trace the causes of every event back to the beginning of time, but 'tis enough to trace the appointment of Cinder Dick as mouser in the train master's office at Barlow no farther back than General Manager Moffet. On a winter afternoon at headquarters the clock struck three and old Moffet, who never drew a sober breath after a two-hour lunch with his cronies, tilted uneasily in his swivel chair and opened one eye. As if the memory of him had been jarred, he repeated: " 'The clock struck one, the mouse ran down——' "

"The mice," repeated the chief clerk of the passenger department, who had been there ten minutes speaking of the condition of the ticket stock. "The mice have been eating the face off of them." The tickets of the department, y'understand, had burst some of the pasteboard boxes in which they were stored, with this result. But old Moffet, having been in a doze during the first part of the chief clerk's harangue, heard only those dreadful words which might have described the sufferings of passengers in P. D. waiting rooms or trains.

"The mice eating the face off them!" he repeated with a shiver. "We must save them. Cats," he said, "will do it," and dictated a bulletin that every office and station employ one, which the clerk issued in due form for the protection of records.

Now, 'tis not unlikely that an animal with the talents of Cinder Dick would have made a career for himself in other professions, but the job created by the bulletin being still open on his arrival by blind baggage at Barlow, he was seized by the neck and pitched into it. After all, this is the way most railroaders make known their choice of a profession, and Dick suffered no loss of respect from his fellow employees; humbly he would have gone about his job had it not been for the train master's dog Barney, who, being English bull on one side and Irish terrier on the other, had little peace of mind except when warring on a foreign enemy.

A very proud dog was this Barney, as an Englishman would naturally be who had an Irish ancestor—and was encouraged to bite by Train Master Burly, himself the most prideful of men and a notorious tyrant.

Now, Dick, coming fast on his job the first morning, discovered a mousehole in a corner and crouching down appeared to be napping, after the manner of strategists, while sharpening his claws; and Barney, from under his master's chair, ordered him outside with a wheezy growl, and on second thought came over personally to assist in his departure.

Enough proverbs there be to guide all mankind with safety through any event, but there is nothing so hard to remember in emergency. It remained for Cinder Dick to set the example and reflect at this serious moment of his career that if pride goes before destruction, 'tis certain that nothing at all comes after it. So he at once resolved to test the proverb and see whether pride goes or not, and how far. Taking his stand before the mousehole he put up his back and spit into the air as royalty might do, with indifference that a bulldog's face got in the way.

"Sick him, y' Sassenach," said Burly, who could not endure that his dog's authority should be questioned by other animals, and Barney, with a snarl, closed in, only to be pushed back by the boot of a man who had been studying the train chart at the dispatcher's table.

"That is my dog," said Burly.

"But you are sicking him on a friend of mine," answered the other, who was Dugan, passenger engineer on the High-line. "Only yesterday I had the pleasure of deadheading him into Barlow for service. The top of the morning to ye, Cinder Dick," he said and shook hands with kitty, who purred like the exhaust of the switch engine. Gaunt as famine was Cinder Dick, with a rough gray coat scorched by sparks; his head was big and bony and scarred and the sunken eyes of him like danger lamps in a fog.

It has been said that Barney felt happy only when the ancestors mixed in joined forces against a foreign enemy, and if ever there was a foreigner to his own land of plenty, it was this hungry brigand of a cat. He had before ordered him off as a mere local trespasser but now with new understanding of the invader yelped joyfully and rushed again. Again he was turned back by Dugan's boot and this time growled at the man himself.

"It serves you right if he bit you," said Burly, who had risen to his feet, and the two measured each other, upstanding fearless men whose old dislike needed only a reasonable excuse to end in battle. For if Burly was the tyrant you find on every railroad, Dugan was the man you find near every tyrant, ready to uphold his own rights

and lend the weight of his shoulder to any who rebelled against abuses.

"Sure, Burly will have me in bad if I start a quarrel and am not justified by the regulations," thought Dugan and kept a hold on his temper.

"Why would I be served right if the dog bit me?" he asked.

Burly's black brows were bent in rage on the employee who braved his authority in his own office; but like Dugan he held his temper, hoping his enemy would put himself beyond the pale of the regulations by an act of insubordination. "Because you interfere between Barney and his enemy," he answered with cunning, "in a quarrel which is not yours by nature."

"Suppose it is my nature to interfere and protect the weak against the strong."

"If you would take up a cat's quarrel with a dog for the sake of fairness," said Burly, " 'tis only fair you should fight the dog with his own weapons. When he bites you, bite him back."

"The scoundrel has me on the run," reflected Dugan, but said: "Or with a cat's weapons."

"Sure; 'twould be in the rules to claw the dog too," agreed Burly, and the dispatcher sat by open mouthed at the skillful logic of them.

But Dugan, his eye seeking Cinder Dick reproachfully because he took so little interest in the controversy, was impressed that he had returned to duty at the mousehole. "Sure, the cat has a weapon stronger than claws," he reflected.

" 'Tis not myself, Mr. Train Master," he said, "who should have to call to your attention the clauses in the regulations covering the safeguarding of employees."

"Did you hear it?" said Burly to the dispatcher. "After demanding everything else, the engineers now expect to be safeguarded when engaging in dog fights."

"Safeguarded on duty," continued Dugan, gritting his teeth. "I do not refer to the engineers, but to the cats; to Cinder Dick deadheaded in for service and now engaged under the general manager's bulletin in guarding mouseholes for the protection of records."

The discussion was interrupted as by a thunderbolt. Never did two upstanding men startle so to a squeak as when the deadly claw of Cinder Dick closed over his mouse which in a moment went to upholster his gaunt insides. And answering the late reproach of Dugan with a significant wink of the fog-lamp eyes, he shampooed his whiskers with a graceful paw, and yawned in the face of Barney, who yelped. And then yelped again at the kick of the train master, who turned away with a curse.

"Sure, anything more I might say would be used against him," thought Dugan, and, giving the furry death's-head a stroke, sauntered out with the rusty pur in his ears.

I remember Burly at that time of life, in his early thirties; so easy success came to him that he felt chosen by nature to lord it over other men and even dressed the part of a nobleman in tailored suits, y'understand, with a necktie of silk and a cigar holder. His black eyes were clear, and face unlined as a boy's except for the wrinkle of willfulness and pride—a mark of the Beast which appeared sacrilegiously in the form of the cross. For days after his Waterloo in the Cinder Dick controversy this cross seemed chiseled on his forehead as he planned vengeance when the humiliating joke on him was told. But Dugan kept still about it and a truce was understood so long as Cinder Dick was not injured by Barney.

After a time Dugan began to wonder that the cat should remain the specter of poverty when he had shelter and safety and the call boy to feed him. " 'Tis in monstrous contrast to the fat lazy beast of the train master," he thought. "Perhaps brooding on the dark days of the past keeps him down. I will appeal to the humor of him."

Dugan having no kin of his own took all the more concern for the cat, and on his next run in went to observe a tabby family which the fireman's wife kept in the woodshed, and tried out various forms of entertainment. At last his choice narrowed to two, the swinging spool and the crockery marble.

" 'Twill be the latter," he decided at last. "Dick has lived a rover's life and mouse hunting affords fewer pleasures of the chase than a rolling marble."

Now it never occurred to Dugan that the truce which guaranteed the safety of Dick might be observed in letter and not in spirit. Barney, though warned by his master's blows that the cat was not to be killed, was encouraged in his habit of stalking Cinder Dick, and yelping as if on a blood trail. Awake and asleep, Dick was in torment from

these persecutions and could no more put on weight than a jailbird taking the third degree; not once, however, did he weaken or neglect his duty and the pride of him being of the stiff-necked sort, whether from choice or watching at drafty mouseholes, 'twas a constant challenge to the train master.

When Dugan came in and was putting forward arrangements to raise Cinder Dick from low spirits, the train master looked on from the corners of his eyes. He smiled under his mustache, anticipating no difficulty in thwarting a cat at a game of crockery even if the latter had spirit enough left to play at all.

Now, the crockery was on the floor, Dugan pushing it along, and Dick standing by, his big paws planted wide apart; but divil a move he made to keep the marble rolling, and the train master laughed, but only once. For Cinder Dick fixed the fog lamps on him and gave a caterwaul as bitter as a witch at a seller of charms against magic. 'Twas observed by the dispatcher—who was inside all these events but not of them except to the extent of fighting two or three times—that the train master's grin froze on his lips and he scratched his ear as if casting doubt on its veracity, so unusual was the significance of the caterwaul. But whether or not it had a double meaning, or the train master interpreted according to a guilty conscience, the fact is Dugan understood what Cinder Dick said as something entirely different from threats of witchcraft.

"By the mother of Moses," thought Dugan, "the cat is explaining the illiteracy of him in the matter of rolling marbles." 'Tis a pathetic thing indeed, to discover a human child who is not educated in A B Cs, but consider the singular misfortune of a cat, as Dugan did, who had missed the advantages of romping when a kitten.

"No wonder he looks like the year of the great famine," reflected Dugan, "and starved for fun, which is the food of the spirit as much as mice, bad cess to them, are food for the body."

So, filled with sympathy, he rolled the marble back and forth to show how it was done, the train master pretending to be occupied with affairs; for it is one thing to persecute a victim who suffers in silence and quite another to have him turn with a caterwaul which makes the blood run like snow water.

Untaught, Cinder Dick might have been, that a marble would roll, but now the natural intelligence of him was at work, and after watching Dugan's demonstration he sniffed the crockery lying before him. Presently he sharpened his long talons on the floor and setting himself for the effort gave the marble a right swing which sent it from end to end of the room and against the wall. The train master started and gritted his teeth as Cinder Dick recovered his marble with the scamper of a lion, and drove again. Barney escaped from under his master's foot to protest the game and 'tis likely the grudges of masters and pets would have been fought out there and then had not Superintendent Regan, then inspecting along the division, come in.

Now, Regan was at that time not far from the general superintendency and was sizing up his chief men for one to succeed him in the division, and that is not the least of the story. But 'tis well to say in passing, y'understand, that the game of crockery which he interrupted was resumed from time to time with a slam-bang and scramble like a lion hunt in a shooting gallery, and 'twas the turn of Barney and his master to suffer torment. For as though the caterwaul had indeed been a witch's warning, the cat began to grow so monstrously in Burly's affairs from that hour that he dared not so much as hide the marble; and superstition the man had none, y'understand, but conducted all his relations with Cinder Dick on a rational basis even when the latter had turned outlaw with his claw raised against the world and a devil for a follower who once came on Burly and bit him. But for the present, it is enough to make plain how the cat grew to such size in Burly's affairs.

'Tis well known that certain officials talk in confidence to the old engineers who have gained a reputation for straightforwardness because of the habits of locomotives, which cannot travel any other way. 'Twas according to form for Regan to stop Dugan in the yard on that same day of the interrupted crockery game, and question him.

"Twelve or fifteen years you have been on my division, Dugan," he said, "and it is not for nothing you have been raised from roundhouse wiper to engineer. Reliability has done it, and truthfulness."

Dugan grinned, being obliged to the superintendent for the compliment, but did not like the last word at all, which was in the nature of a joker. "I have been reli-

able," he admitted; "and as truthful as might be, but whist, superintendent, it is because I had nothing to conceal. I would not, if I were you, bet money on what I would say if a lie would serve my purpose."

Regan waved the warning aside as of no consequence. "What I have to ask you is this," he said. "How is Train Master Burly getting along with the men?"

"Now, there y'are," answered Dugan. "I do not like Burly, and 'twould serve my purpose to say the others do not."

Regan, who was no man to quibble with, gave him a hard look. "I am slated for general superintendent the first of November," he said with bluntness, "and that being only three months off, am looking for my successor on this division. The choice would fall on Burly, a real railroader, but I suspect that lordly manner of his to be more than pride in his good looks and ability. If it comes of a belief that he is a superior being, y'understand, who can kick men about, I want to know it. I have heard a grumble or two, and now you say you don't like him. Is it because you men have a prejudice against a harmless personal vanity or because he hands you rough stuff as train master?"

" 'Tis a fine distinction," began Dugan.

"Answer," commanded Regan—a man of just but sudden wrath he was.

"That I will not at this minute," said Dugan, his blue eye lighting. "Ye have so stirred up the honesty of me that divil a lie will I risk at all. A prejudice I have carried along against Burly, but I'll not make an answer which may ruin him till I straighten myself out on the cause of it."

Regan, who never had any doubt why he disliked a man, studied the other with sarcasm. "As I thought," he told himself. "Burly is unpopular because he flags envy with a silk scarf."

It takes all kinds of men to make a world, but only one kind to lead it. "You will straighten yourself out on the cause of your dislike and report at my car this evening," said Regan.

"I will consult Burly immediately," said Dugan, and hurried off.

Regan looked after, reflecting with sarcasm: "No doubt Mr. Burly will easily explain why you dislike him, Mr. Dugan," and waited the result with uneasiness.

At the train master's office Dugan lost no time in arriving at an understanding. "I have been conning over the reason for our dislike," he said, "and think maybe it is my mistake; if so, I'll acknowledge it and make peace." He stared at the train master, who stared back, reflecting:

"Here he is again trying to get me to start a fight—and with Regan in town. I will not do it."

"Aside from the reprimand you gave me for running a yard signal—which I deny—you have not rawhided me," resumed Dugan. "The matter of Cinder Dick was settled fairly. It must be," said Dugan, "something in your personal appearance, which I have no right to criticize at all—the stiff hat and gloves, and cane you carry on Sunday! 'Tis your privilege to wear what you will and because you are different I have been disliking you. Divil take me," admitted Dugan, growing sore at himself, "if even the blue necktie you have on does not annoy me."

"Blue," exclaimed Burly, trembling with rage. "Is it myself would wear a blue necktie with a blue suit?"

"Why not?" asked Dugan, surprised. "And, train master, I am here to make peace between us, but I can't be bulldozed into agreeing that black is white."

"You are going too far in telling me that gray is blue."

"There is no holding your temper with such a man," thought Dugan, but he did so long enough to refer the decision to the dispatcher, who sat by listening.

The man muttered, shook his head, stealing a look of sympathy at Dugan.

"Tell him," commanded Burly, a peculiar note of triumph in his voice.

"Gray," grumbled the dispatcher.

Dugan passed his hand over his eyes, looked again. "I believe it is," he admitted.

That Dugan had come there to make peace even by humbling himself a bit, was plain to Burly; but the train master, having disliked him a long time, was not willing to forgo the revenge which the situation turned up unexpectedly. "If there is nothing else in my appearance you care to pass on, Dugan," he said, "I will ask your attention to a company regulation which seems to be falling into neglect. First I will have your personal record file." He called a clerk from the inner office to bring the file, and glanced at Dugan's original application, and transfer from shop to road service. The road record ran for five years without a

demerit, then it was charged with twenty marks for running a signal. "After that comes leave of absence for sixty days, renewed for sixty more," said Burly; "then a certificate from the optical surgeon. You had been taking treatment from him during those four months' absence. Was it for color blindness?"

"It was," answered Dugan; "but the trouble was only temporary, the surgeon said. Rest and treatment cured it entirely."

"What about the signal you mistook recently?"

"I deny that. The wrong signal was displayed."

"What about the color of this necktie?"

"You were standing with your back to the light; 'twas no fair test."

"You will have a fair test, all right," said Burly, and wrote an order relieving him of duty until he had passed examination by the surgeon.

"But I had rather lay off than be relieved," protested Dugan. "A sixty-day rest and treatment will relieve the trouble, if it has in fact come again. The eyes may be strained, but they are good."

Burly shook his head slowly. "Of right, you ought to be discharged on the spot," he answered, as hard as nails. "When you ran that last signal you had cause to believe your old trouble had struck again, and that was the time to lay off and report to the surgeon. But you hung on to your run, endangering property and life."

"I didn't suspect it, and I don't believe it now," declared the engineer. But he took up the order with the foreboding that he would never run another locomotive on the P. D. On his way out he paused to pat the head of Cinder Dick, who purred hoarsely, and Regan, who had been fearing trouble between the two men, sauntered in.

"I am laid off," Dugan told him, "and there is no charge against me."

Burly answered this quietly by giving an account of the affair. The superintendent looked at the record file; he did not believe that Dugan was aware his eyes were going back on him again, and yet he had laid himself open to charges by running an engine when they were. Regan could not reverse the train master, and yet he listened frowning, and thinking:

"Here is an old employee losing out through no fault of his own; he has been a friend of the company, but does this train master acting for the company sympathize with his affliction? Instead," thought Regan, "he uses his official position as if to satisfy a personal spite. He is not one to inspire loyal service, he is not the chief for me on this division." Because of the train master's hard indifference, Regan crossed over to shake hands with the engineer:

"We'll hope for the best, Dugan," he said. "See the surgeon at once and let me know how the examination turns out."

So the superintendent shook the hand of his old engineer and wished he would come back; yet in that grasp was farewell. Dugan paused at the door, looking around and marveling that all things should seem changing, for so it is with the scene of a job which a man has lost. All in it that has been familiar and friendly becomes strange and forbidding, as if he has betrayed them; 'tis a fact as any wizard will tell ye, that of all the ghosts which have returned to old haunts not one has had the courage to return to the job he was fired from. The clang of cars and an engine bell, the whole tone of the place warned him for trespass. And when the waif he had deadheaded in suddenly slammed the crockery and romped after, clawing and spitting like a devil with joy of his misfortune, he said: "You too, Cinder Dick!" and went out, a broken man entirely.

Now, I have never interested myself in the affairs of cats who have themselves to blame for moving in a social set along of witches and attracting the blackguarding of all Christian chroniclers. But I must say for Cinder Dick that I believe Dugan did him injustice. And though there were afterward queer reports about him because of a wailing banshee whom he kept along for entertainment, I believe he would have set talons in a witch as quickly as into a mouse. 'Tis not to be denied that he dabbled in private magic of his own, y'understand, and his slamming the crockery was one way of declaring a curse on the train master's office. Never did he slam it so hard with spit and yowl as on the afternoon Dugan lost out, with Burly muttering threats under his breath till Regan had gone.

"Now, y'beast of the Dugan, scat to hell after him," said the train master, and, opening the door: "Eat him up, Barney; eat him alive," he said. And with a glare out

of his fog-lamp eyes, the big cat glided out, the dog stalking instead of rushing his enemy, in spite of the train master's sicking him on. And so they passed down the yard and under the cars out of the lives of all who had known them.

Now, little difference it made to Cinder Dick where he was. Having long ago learned that he was treated as badly in one place as in another he marched out into the country of strangers like a veteran, keeping an eye to both sides and an ear cocked for the padding footfall three lengths in his rear. But Barney, discovering danger in the absence of his master, knew no way of passing suspicious strangers except by a warning growl.

Up the lane of cars Dick passed a man whittling a handle to a club which he would use in twisting brakes on the road. The man looked at him and at the dog, who showed all his teeth. " 'Tis the damned train master's cur," said the man, and giving a quick look up and down took a step with the club concealed behind him. The cat looked over his shoulder, at the growl; saw the dog leap and fall under the club. Cinder Dick yawned and washed his whiskers, and then, the sunshine being pleasant, tucked his paws under him for a one-eyed nap within two paces of his old enemy swimming in blood. Once Barney whined and the other glanced from the corner of his eye; again, the dog moved, scuffling with a growl that became a yell. Cinder Dick did not look this time, but, listened, his head raised and lashing his tail as the thin horrid yelling of the wounded broke into all the curses and threats that brutes have raised against murdering mankind since creation. Then still lashing and never looking behind, the cat moved down into the weeds along the track; several times he paused to reconnoiter and the yard being at the edge of the little town of Barlow, he saw a bit of pasture with a little house, and woods beyond. A ground squirrel ran from the weeds but he did not pursue; instead he crouched on his paws, snarling softly and studying the woods, a peaceful settlement of rabbits and birds. Cinder Dick, with many wrongs of his own to avenge against the world and the dog's outcry of murder still in his ears, prowled past the house to carry death and wounds into the woods.

'Twas a Sunday morning, perhaps two months after all this, that Superintendent Regan arrived in Barlow and had a visitor in Dugan. "I have been watching for you and heard you would be in this morning," said Dugan. "Have you picked out a superintendent to succeed you?"

"I am about to name a man—but not the man I wanted," answered Regan. "Only one fault beat Burly out of his chances; but that fault is a fatal one in a chief—you know that it is; your own case showed him up. But forget Burly. How are your eyes?" He looked with sympathy at the engineer who had been turned down by the surgeon and seemed to have gone to seed even in two months. He was one of those who when retired on a doctor's warning accept it as a death warrant.

"I was warned that I would never run again," said Dugan, "and to live outdoors. So I put in what savings I had in a little house below town which I used to look for at the end of a run. I wear smoked goggles and dig in a garden and can hear the train whistles. I am all right. But 'tis lonesome. Or was, till Burly came to see me."

Regan repeated the words to make sure he heard right. "And what ax did the train master have to grind?"

"He was looking for his dog," explained Dugan. "It had been missing about a month, having chased a cat of mine out of the office. Burly had seen them start out of the yards in the direction of my house, and had been tracing. He did not know I lived where I do and at first was not friendly and went on. But later in the day —'twas a Sunday afternoon—he came back. 'I believe the dog is lost for good,' he said, "and 'twas an astonishing thing to hear the voice of such a man of pride break when he spoke the name 'Barney.' 'He is lost,' said Burly, 'and a heap I thought of him. But my walk down here is not wasted. I see you need some things which I will send down.' 'Twas true enough, superintendent, for I hadn't much left after buying and a man who may go blind must save what he has.

"But I had pride enough of my own not to wish anything from Burly and said so.

" 'Dugan,' says he, 'ye are making a grave mistake. When my own pride is broken, why should yours hold out to keep me from making amends? Now, let it go at that,' he says, 'I wish to make amends and you should aid me.'

"Never was a man so changed in such a short walk, as if some terrible revelation

had been made, or an omen of his end had appeared. So I let it go at that, and he keeps bringing things to make me comfortable—an easy-chair and magazines, a music box and a carpet. He visits a while and then will walk over the country, returning to visit again. Sometimes he drives down early of an evening, sometimes of Sunday, saying very little but showing by every move there has been something awakened in him which we did not suspect was there. You might have had him right, at the time, but Mr. Regan, 'tis not justice to pass him over in the appointment till you see him as I do now."

"Are any of the saints on earth to-day to work such a miracle?" asked Regan, laughing to conceal the strange impression made on him by the tale.

"Saints I have not seen," answered Dugan in like humor, "but whist, superintendent, he may have been subject to witchcraft, for I have sometimes thought I saw a cat leading him across the pasture. A cat that has come close to the house, and seen through the goggles is not unlike the one which bewitched the dog Barney and whisked him away."

"Miracle or witchcraft, I will look to it," said Regan, "and perhaps save a great railroad man to the P. D."

As it was now the custom of Burly to call at Dugan's on Sunday, the superintendent promised to be on hand and about four he arrived at the house full of curiosity.

"Burly has been here and is now on his walk around the country," Dugan told him. "But I have an idea we can find him over in the woods."

In a small glade in the woods they came across Burly talking to a farmer who had a number of sheep on Dugan's land. And the glance he shot at Regan was not at all that of a man who had been transformed into a good Samaritan by miracle.

Although Regan was engaged in following a man into his private affairs, he was not one to be taken aback by a cold reception. "I've been hearing some news of you which interests me, Burly," he said without beating about the bush. "I wish to learn for myself how much trust to put in it."

"The devil take you for a meddler, sir," said Burly. "I know you have a superintendency in your pocket, but I would not advise you to appoint me on the strength of your news. As for you Dugan, is it honorable to talk outside of the confessions one man sometimes makes for conscience's sake to another?"

He looked a very fiend for pride, his body held up to its last inch, and face black with wrath, but Dugan also stood his ground intrepidly.

" 'Tis honorable," he answered, "to tell the good of a man. And why? Because it is dishonorable to the world to conceal the good and let wickedness claim a majority."

"Faith, Dugan has him there," thought Regan, and in truth Burly looked bewildered.

Said Dugan: "You have been honorable with your conscience before me; why not before the world? There is all the more glory to your conscience. Tell you have changed—tell it all!" The seedy old engineer shook his fist in his earnestness and he trembled with anxiety. "I had rather lose your friendship, which means more than you know, than keep the good in you a secret. If you have felt a miracle, say so—here, now, everywhere."

His old enemy heard him, studied him; Burly's face paled, there was visible an effort throughout his body and in his very mind as he broke down the last of his pride. "This is the miracle," he said.

On that first Sunday he had come to Dugan's house tracing his dog, Burly had passed on well satisfied to see his enemy brought so low. And on the edge of the garden beyant the house he had come on a beast with bony head and a bush of tawny hair. "Is it you, y'devil?" said Burly, but he was shocked nevertheless and commanded "Scat!" in a faint voice.

Cinder Dick glared at him with green eyes and rubbed his whisker with such contempt that the other was aroused and stooped for a stick or stone. But when he looked up there was only a swaying in the weeds which Dugan cultivated in his garden; but the weeds swayed in two spots and he caught a glimpse of something keeping pace behind the big cat.

"What is that—is it a cat to have a familiar?" meditated Burly and threw his stick, and a yell came back at him like the curses of a thousand witches.

"Mother of all—'tis Barney!" gasped the man and ran after, calling. And the cat stopped and the dog turned on Burly and would have bitten the leg off him. Then the

three started on again, Cinder Dick leading into the woods. There in a sunny glade he tucked his paws under him and looked on with interest while Burly argued and pled with his old pet, who made short rushes, gnashing his fangs. So that Cinder Dick might not be intruded upon.

"Sure, it made me sweat blood as cold as ice to see the way they behaved," said Burly, telling the tale to the three men. "And at last I pretended to go away, but circled back down wind, and after a while saw the two at a distance. And they were feasting, with never a snarl at each other, on a slaughtered rabbit. Faith, I afterward saw the cat kill one as big as himself with a single blow and crunch; for he was the hunter, y'understand. Only twice when the bulldog pulled down this farmer's sheep, must Cinder Dick have accompanied to guide him to the prey and back home—for, y'understand Regan, the poor dog had been made insane by a blow which had scarred his head and he had no eyes at all, at all." Burly drew his hand across his own eyes as though sharing the terrible affliction with his dog.

"And you watched them that Sunday afternoon," said Regan. "And then—what happened?" A queer little awe was in the superintendent's voice, as though asking for secrets which by their nature should not quite be told.

"Then," said Burly; "what happened? What could happen to a man who after exulting over a half-blind defeated enemy saw his own blind dog befriended by a brute who is its enemy by nature? The brute had beaten me to it, Regan, but I fell in line—so there is your miracle." Actually the hard-boiled train master sighed with relief on telling it and grinned at them. " 'Tis all the story as far as concerns myself. The farmer and I have been taking means to care for the animals."

The farmer shook his head with doubt. "They're welcome to my sheep at the price Mr. Burly pays," he said, "but they've turned varmint and won't take up with man-folk again."

The four walked through the woods to the mouth of a tunnel under a ledge where the varmints lived. Everywhere feathers and bits of fur and wool marked the ravages of these terrible outlaws.

'Tis always a problem how best to invite outlaws out into the open, they being great homebodies, y'understand, but these were either due to come out anyway, or Dick was influenced by Dugan, who called, "Kitty, Kitty!" at the top of his voice.

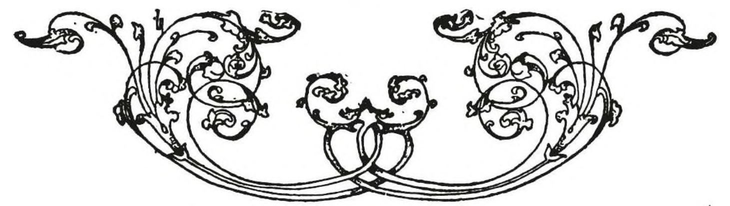
Dick came out and looked at the man with meditation; that he had a puzzled remembrance of Dugan was proven by his visiting the house. But he drew back to keep from being stroked, which is an indignity to an outlaw, and a growl in the tunnel warned Dugan not to risk his hand till the chief had made up his mind.

Still he studied Dugan, who said "Kitty, Kitty!" and rolled a walnut along the ground as he had formerly rolled the crockery, and the cat raised a paw and cocked his head to one side. 'Tis not unlikely he would have yielded to the temptation of the crockery game and returned to an honest life, had not his follower, more and more angered at the scent, raised again the vengeful cry of the wild against man the murderer. And the hair stiffened along the cat's spine and he moved away with a lash of tail and glare of green eyes, the dog in his footsteps. Scarred and gaunt and blind was the fat Barney of the train master's office, but as Dugan, the roundhouse foreman, told me afterward in confidence:

"Who is Superintendent Burly to say the dog was insane to follow such a chief!"

That Sunday afternoon the four men watched the free companions take the trail of the woods toward new and wilder hunting grounds beyant a ridge; once Dick paused to sharpen his claws, then, never looking back, passed out of view, out of the world of men, outlawed—with honors.

Another of Mr. Johnston's stories in the next issue.



The Riders from Texas

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "The Scalp Lock," "From Bitter Creek," etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Fighting Indians, herding cattle, keeping open house, after the custom of his Castilian forbears for generations back, Lorenzo de Vega, called "The Magnificent," lived spaciously, in almost feudal splendor, at Su Casa, by Indian Lake. Fighting, herding, drinking—always magnificently—he had grown to manhood, married, reared a brood as fierce and as proud as himself, always in happiness. The dry prairies of New Mexico were his demesne, Su Casa, with its loopholed battlements, his stronghold, and the loyalty of a battle-hardened band of veterans his strength and his delight. The unfenced West, and the fullness thereof, was his. It was true that Montemayor, the sheep king of Socorro, sometimes waved a mortgage over his head. But De Vega only laughed. Montemayor foreclose! On Lorenzo the Magnificent? And drive out the country's sole protection against the Navajos? De Vega only laughed—and borrowed more. Montemayor would not dare! Su Casa maintained its splendid munificence—Lorenzo remained The Magnificent—generous, fierce, ignorant, and happy. Then suddenly the face of creation changed for him. The riders from Texas pushed westward. Ike Monk came with his Iron M cows and won Dark Cañon from him on a wager. Jason Coles, the horse wrangler, came and stole the heart of Angelita, Lorenzo's daughter, and the loyalty of Jaime, his youngest son. After Ike Monk came the herds of the Battles brothers and stole the ranges to the north. And finally came Bill Stupes and his gang of rustlers and stole all but the strays of the Cross L brand—the cattle of De Vega—his fortune. And with that Lorenzo forgot that he had ever been happy or magnificent. Bankrupted by the thieving Texans, flouted by his own flesh and blood, threatened by the low-born Montemayor, that despised herder of sheep, his cup of bitterness brimmed and slopped over. His daughter Angelita he hid away from her Texan lover in the convent at Socorro. His case against the thieves who had stolen his cattle he placed in the hands of Pero Lugo, Montemayor's hired shyster. But how to hold Su Casa against his creditors, and his pride against adversity, were problems he must leave Providence to resolve.

(*A Four-Part Story—Part III.*)

CHAPTER XIII.

A RING AROUND THE MOON.

SWIFT and relentless, De Vega rode through the night, taking his daughter to the convent at Socorro; and when he came back he spoke a word in Porfirio's ear that made him start and turn pale. Doña Rosa summoned her servants and admonished them sternly but the story of the *pantalones* got out; how, nobody knew, but in whispers it sped and spread, beginning always with the story of the Texana. She had come riding from the Pecos by the side of a tall Texan, her golden hair hidden inside her hat; and, accoutered like a man, she had spurred her horse up to Su Casa where he had wheeled and kicked at the door with both feet.

The Texans had laughed and Don Lo-

renzo, quite taken in, had invited her into his house; but Doña Rosa, being shrewder, had penetrated the disguise and plucked off the Texana's big hat. Then her golden hair had fallen and the deception was exposed! But the mischief was done, for Angelita had seen her and the rest was a matter of course. The wicked woman had bewitched her and she too ran away with a young Texan who came with Monk; and now she was shut up in the convent at Socorro while the presumptuous Texan had been stabbed by the gallant Don Estevan.

Now the engagement was broken, Don Estevan had gone away and his parents had denied the betrothal; and now Don Lorenzo, having lost all his cattle, was threatened with the loss of Su Casa. Montemayor held a paper, which Pero Lugo had drawn up and Don Lorenzo had signed in his cups, and unless the price of the lost cattle was speedily recovered he was destined to lose his home. But he had sworn, if he did so, to move to old Mexico with all his retainers, where he would nevermore see the face of a Texan; and Montemayor, needing his services in the coming struggle against the Texans, had assured him the paper would not be used.

So the story grew and spread until many a humble paisano rode past to pay his respects to Don Lorenzo; but their love brought him nothing, though it helped to salve his pride, and each day plunged him deeper in debt. The winter set in early, with cold winds and spits of snow, and while he gloomed in his watch tower the despised Montemayor drove his sheep up and occupied his old range. Every herder was supplied with an old carbine or escopette and the camp movers as well were armed; but De Vega, the only man who could protect them, was sulking in his castle, for he and Montemayor had quarreled.

Not for nothing, declared De Vega, would he defend the helpless shepherds against the violence and greed of the Texans; but if Montemayor would return his paper and cancel the debts he owed him he would go against the Texans, and that gladly. Nothing would please him more than to summon his valient *gente* and drive every Texan from New Mexico; but now, having nothing, he would no longer rake out the chestnuts while Montemayor sat back and ate them. They had quarreled, and parleyed, and quarreled again; until at last Montemayor, knowing that the Battles brothers were in Texas, had taken the bull by the horns.

With the sheriff to go with him and give him the sanction of the law he had set out from the Rio Grande at the first fall of snow, for now his sheep could live anywhere. All summer the Texans had kept him away from his upper range, where he had pastured his sheep for a lifetime; but now the ewes and wethers could eat the snow in place of drinking and the time had come for revenge. If, by the American land laws, the Battles brothers could preëmpt his water holes and fence in the streams for their cows, those same laws made the open land the property of every one, and the sheep could eat off the grass.

The summer had been dry—there was no feed along the river, where the sheep had been held to get water—and now, though it was winter, it was necessary to move them to the high and distant uplands. Already the snow had come and the sheep, in that cold weather, would need no more water until spring; and when they left for the lambing the country would be stripped and the Texans could move on or starve. Winter or summer their cattle needed water every day, for they partook of the nature of the buffalo; but the sheep, having the nature and habits of the antelope, could eat snow and live on the plains. Only one thing was lacking, and over that Montemayor still haggled—the protection of Lorenzo de Vega.

All that was needed was a word from Montemayor—and the note which gave him a mortgage on Su Casa—but that he was loath to give up, for, for many years he had had his eye on Indian Lake. With that for his own, and Su Casa for his headquarters, he could drive out the petty ranchers in the mountains and stock the country with sheep—yes, he could make himself a veritable king. King he was now, in name, but with Su Casa in his power he could control the whole San Augustine Plains. With a fence about the lake and hired fighters to guard it he could shut out the Texas cattle until they died; but De Vega, like a child, though he had no cattle left, still left the lake open to them all. He was a fool, fit only to fight the battles of others who had forethought and could change with the times; yet if he gave him back his note and the title to Su Casa, he might hold out against him for years. Montemayor was determined and, though he needed his pro-

tection, he held out—until at last it was too late. Early in December the Battles boys came home.

They went rollicking through Socorro on the heels of a mighty herd that would stock their range to the full, but when they crossed the divide and caught the reek of sheep the Texans began to curse and ride. The tracks of sheep were everywhere, except around the water holes which the Battles and their cowboys had taken up; and soon, far out on the North Plains and among the cedar brakes by Quemado, they found them, herd after herd. Every herder was armed, and his camp helper was armed, so the scouts rode by without stopping; until at last by a hidden water hole that had escaped their attention they discovered the headquarters camp.

A barbed-wire fence, like their own, inclosed the big spring and made a pasture for the burros and stock; men were busy on a stone house and jacales of cedar sticks to shelter the Mexican herders; and from the timbered ridges a string of burros was packing in firewood, enough to last all winter. The Mexicans had come to stay. Nor did they seem more than mildly concerned over the fact that their hiding place had been found. Every man was fully armed, there were loopholes in the stone house; and after a long look the Texans rode away and reported their discovery to Si Battles.

But Si Battles and his men were in no position to march against them for they had a huge herd of cattle to get located before the storms, and winter already was upon them. On the north sides of the hills and along the cut banks of the draws the snow was drifted deep; feed was short around the water and their cattle, in ranging further, had many of them drifted away. There were a thousand things to do and all-too-little time to do them, so the sheep-herders were left in peace. Hard-eyed cowboys rode past them and looked them over grimly, camp movers were refused water at the springs, but the sheep were unmolested.

A month passed and Montemayor, after haggling hard with Don Lorenzo, suddenly took heart and changed his mind. Why should he shoulder the expense of feeding forty lusty fighters when the Texans were doing him no harm? Why should he, above all, lose his grip on Indian Lake when he had no need for De Vega? In six months' time the mortgage would be due, and Don Lorenzo was unable to pay. He had lost all his cattle except a few hundred head which had drifted back to the lake. It was even said that he was killing Texas cattle to feed the hungry mouths of his *gente*. They swarmed about him like flies, each clamoring for something—a sack of corn, a shoulder of beef, a handful of *panoches*—and Don Lorenzo, regardless of his poverty, gave freely of what he had while he waited. When Montemayor should yield and come to his terms, then they would need these bold retainers, but Montemayor waited too long.

For three nights a huge ring had appeared around the moon, the southeast wind blew up strong; and then, instead of the storm, the Texans swooped down and scattered the sheep to the winds. Each herd as it lay sheltered against the side of some hill was attacked at the peep of dawn, and while one body of raiders drove the sheep to the west, the Mexicans were herded east. Then a fire was made of their pack boxes and *aparejos*, their tents and blankets were piled on top; and when everything was destroyed the sheep were scattered by rifle shots and the herders were driven back toward their camp.

Cursing and lashing them with ropes' ends the cowboys gave them no rest until they were back at the headquarters, and when all were assembled Si Battles himself set fire to their house and jacales. Their pack outfits and supplies were thrown up on the huge woodpile along with their captured guns, and to the roar of flames and the explosion of hundreds of cartridges the Mexicans were hurried eastward across the plains.

Like sheep when snarling dogs dash in and snap at their heels, they huddled into a bunch and ran; and behind them, whooping and laughing and popping their ropes' ends, the Texans followed on their horses. The herders grew numb with terror, and stumbled along like sheep to the shambles. Already on their backs they could feel the bite of the whips and death itself seemed not far away. For nothing short of death would be the reward of any who lagged, or tried to escape through that line of armed men. So, in times not long past, the savage Apaches had driven men before them until they tottered and fell to the ground; and then with barbaric tortures they had mutilated them beyond recognition, leaving their bodies along the trails.

But as they staggered up the road that led to the pass the long-delayed storm burst upon them. First in tiny spits of rain and then in flakes of snow the leaden skies gave down their burden of moisture and as they entered the long pass that led down to the plains the wind suddenly met them with a rush. Like a pall the sullen darkness had settled about them as if night, stealing a march, had crept upon them; and, letting their prisoners rest, the Texans drew together, looking up at the sky, talking excitedly. In huge clots that clung and clustered the snowflakes floated down and melted on the sweating backs of the Mexicans; and after a last word Cub Battles rode closer and motioned with his quirt down the road.

"Vamose!" he commanded, "and don't you come back or, by grab, we'll kill the last one of ye! Git, now, you dad-burned greasers!"

He raised his quirt again but the Mexicans stood petrified, fearing a shot in the back if they fled. Since time immemorial that had been the custom in old Mexico, until it had become the *ley fuga*, the law of flight.

"Git!" cursed Battles, suddenly whipping out his pistol, and like rabbits they took to the brush. Shots rattled behind them as the Texans emptied the six-shooters to give them a good start toward town; and the scurrying Mexicans, expecting each moment a stop a bullet, cried out to all the saints as they fled. But when, far down on the plains, they finally came together the foreman found them all unhurt. Each man had a tale of bullets flying past his ears, knocking his hat off and ripping through his clothes; but by the grace of the Holy Virgin they had all been spared, and as one man they turned their faces toward Su Casa.

Late at night—when the snow, falling silently, had carpeted the outer world with white—Don Lorenzo was aroused by a knocking at his door and by voices that shouted his name. Leaping up he seized his gun and looked down from the balcony on the huddle of men before his gate.

"Who is it?" he challenged and with doleful voices they answered him, each giving his own name and beginning the story.

"We are the herders of Montemayor," spoke up the foreman above the confusion. "The Texans have driven us out."

"Yes, and killed all our sheep!" cried another. "We are fortunate to escape with our lives."

"Open the gates!" ordered De Vega, "and let them come in! Ah, a curse on this usurer, Montemayor! Rather than give me back my note he has let this thing happen, when a word would have sent me to your aid. But come in, my friends, and we will make you some coffee and give each a warm place by the fire. And then, in the morning, I will take you to Socorro—— But Montemayor must pay. All my life I have protected his herders for nothing, saving his sheep a hundred times; but now he is so rapacious that he thinks of nothing but how to cheat me out of my lake. *Madre de Dios!* but I will stick him when he asks me to summon my men and ride against these thieving Texans. He has waited too long, the shoe is on the other foot—but come in, my friends, come in!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BIG SNOW.

WITH glistening eyes, and many a promise to avenge their wrongs, De Vega listened to the tale of the fugitives; but in the morning when he looked out the snow was still falling and the plains were a sheet of white. By the lake, whose deep waters appeared black against the snow, the cattle stood in huddles as they drank; and a long line of horses, coming down from the mountains, broke a trail through ten inches of snow.

"We will wait," said Don Lorenzo and the herders were nothing loath, for they had no desire to face their master. After a day and night of travel, of agonies and the fear of death, it was good to sit in the great dining hall of the De Vegas and eat their food from a plate. It was pleasant, after the harrying and cursing of the Texans, to gaze on that lion of their people, Don Lorenzo de Vega—a man never defeated in forty years of war. They listened to his story of the perfidy of Montemayor with a shrug and a guarded smile; for Don Federico was still their *amo*, the master to whom they were peoned, the man who could break them if he wished. They were his men and they feared to speak out. But when De Vega cursed him, meanwhile pouring out the wine, they smiled and sighed contentedly.

What a pity, they muttered, that Don Lorenzo was not their master—then never

would they know the meaning of fear. But Montemayor was always scheming and now he had overreached himself, for the snow would kill all his sheep. In hushed voices they pictured the scene on those bleak plains they had abandoned—sheep wandering to and fro, seeking shelter, fleeing the wolves, piling up among the snowdrifts and smothering. And all for the lack of a shepherd's hand to guide them, an armed man to protect them from the wolves. It was a pity, a great shame, yet Montemayor could not blame them—they had begged him to send for Don Lorenzo. Ah, what a different story they would now have to tell if De Vega and his *gente* had been there; a tale of fighting and death perhaps, but not of the loss of sheep, and their hearts became heavy at the thought. Forty thousand beautiful sheep that they had cared for like children, lost and wandering on the high, barren plains; and the Texans, it might be, still shooting at them with their rifles, driving them hither and yon for the wolves.

In the spring there would be no sheep to shear by the river; the lambing pens would be empty and silent; Montemayor himself was reduced to the same condition as the man he had laughed at—Don Lorenzo. For Montemayor had said that De Vega was a fool and that he had allowed the treacherous Texans to hoodwink him; but for every cow that De Vega had lost Montemayor had lost ten sheep. He had lost all he had except a few bands along the river and the rest of his holdings in the north; and if something was not done the Texans, becoming bolder, might drive the New Mexicans from their homes. They might, a little later, round them up family by family as they had the herds of sheep, and then, firing their houses, drive them south down the river and across the line into old Mexico.

Many a fear came upon them as they lay safe at Su Casa, awaiting their return to Socorro; but all day and all night the snow fell as never before and they gazed at each other, wild eyed. What hope could they give their master of ever recovering his lost sheep if this snow kept on forever? He would blame them, they knew that, and curse them for cowards, because they had not stayed with their herds. No matter what happened it was a crime with Montemayor for a herder to abandon his sheep; and if he were driven off, whether by Indians or Texans, it was his duty to return to his charge. As long as he drew breath and remained loyal to his master the herdsman should think only of his sheep; and woe to the man who, from weakness or lack of courage, came back to Montemayor without his flock.

"Ah, well," sighed the foreman, "we will start out to-morrow." But in the morning the snow still came down. Never in the two hundred years that their people had inhabited the country had the Mexicans ever heard of such a snow. It lay hip deep on the level, as fine and fluffy as drifted feathers, as dry and powdery as sugar; and without pause or surcease it continued all day, and on again into the night. In the morning it lay three feet deep on the level and they crossed themselves and muttered, for no one could stir abroad in such a storm. Cattle, horses and sheep would be hemmed in and perish; nothing that lived out of doors could escape; the flat roof of a storehouse caved in before their eyes, broken down by the weight of snow.

That day was one of terror, women running to and fro, men sweeping off the roofs of Su Casa; and as night came on they wailed in despair and set candles before the image of the Virgin. God had forgotten the world, the snow had started and would never stop; all would be shut in, covered over, suffocated! But in the morning, when they looked out, the sun was shining clear after four days and nights of snow. It lay banked up so high in front of the broad gateway that the doors could hardly be forced open, and when they swung back it was to reveal a lost world, dead and buried beneath a winding sheet of white. In the deathly silence they could hear the crash of great trees as the snow broke down their limbs, up on the mountain; and not a horse or cow stood on the shores of the lake or broke the white expanse of the snow. All had perished.

With shovels and hoes the men attacked the snow, beating it down, flinging it away from their door; while the women, blue with cold, swept out paths across the patio and huddled about the stove for warmth. There was no wood for their mud fireplaces, stuck in the corners of the rooms like swallows' nests turned upside down, and gathering up their children they retreated to the kitchen where the cooks grumbled and scolded half-heartedly.

Many perils had these women seen since Don Lorenzo had moved west and taken his household with him. Some there were who had been his slaves, captured by him and his men from the Navajos, who stole their own women in return. They were his servants now, free to go if they wished but won over by kindness and long use. The white man's ways were theirs and rather than return to their hogans they stayed on and wove blankets for Don Lorenzo. Of the Mexicans there were some whose husbands had been killed in the raids and counterraids of Indian days; and others who, as orphans, had sought his shelter and bounty, growing up to be his maidservants or dependents. But never before had the hand of death seemed nearer than now, when they were blanketed in snow.

As the sun rose higher and began to melt the snow the north wind came sweeping down, bringing a cloud of drift before it that stretched across the plains like a veil. Mountain range after mountain range that had stood out clear as crystal, and white as new-sawn ivory against the sky, was wiped out and obscured in the onrush—and then the wind was upon them. Harsh and furious as a blizzard it sought out every crack, sifting its powdery spray into the rooms; but in the morning the cracks were closed for the snow had drifted up until Su Casa was covered to the roof.

Once more with shovels and hoes the shivering Mexicans dug out and forced the ponderous gates open; but there was nothing to do now but wait for the wind to cease, for no one could see across the road. All the snow on the great plains seemed pouring in upon them as if it would bury them alive, but the next blast that came tore the snow heaps away and sent them whirling through the air like smoke. Three days and three nights the north wind held them at its mercy and then, in the morning, all was calm. Again the cold sun glistened from the surface of the wind-packed snow; the mountains, whiter than ever, etched the sky; and when the horse herd, long storm bound, came down from Dark Cañon, De Vega and his men set up a cheer.

First only their heads and ears appeared as they wallowed through snowdrifts, plunging high as they beat down a trail; until at last, out in the open, they trotted down to the lake, their hoofs throwing up balls of hard-packed snow. But as they drank the men ran out and cut off their retreat and herded them into the corral. Then, with gay shouts of laughter, each man roped out a mount and rode out to view the land. All day, from narrow cañons and from pockets in the hills, the gaunt cows came toiling down to water; and as the vaqueros rounded them up they cut out two big steers, for a Mexican cannot live without beef. Nor, having it, can he long be discouraged and unhappy—and these were Battles steers. The war had begun and, since their own cows were few, it was better to spoil the Texanos'.

That day the snow melted and in the long, chill night it froze again, forming a crust that would bear up a man.

"*Vamos a Socorro!*" shouted De Vega to the herders and they started on their long walk to the river. Only De Vega rode with them, for his men had work to do, and Montemayor could wait. He had waited too long already, and the Texans had destroyed his herds—so why should De Vega make haste? His own cattle had been stolen, but they had been shipped out and sold and Pero Lugo might still regain their price; but Montemayor's sheep were killed, they were buried in the snow, and the Texans would never pay a cent. Yet they might be spoiled in turn, even driven from the country, provided Montemayor would pay the price. All De Vega asked was the *papel,* the mortgage on his lake, and the remission of all that he owed; otherwise Montemayor could fight his own battles or wait till the Texans ate him up.

De Vega laughed as he pictured Montemayor's helpless rage, and his chagrin when he learned of his great loss; but the time had come when he had him on the hip and Don Lorenzo put all pity from his heart. Here was a man so besotted, so wedded to his wealth, that he clung to every dollar that he won; and rather than pay to have his sheep and men protected he had left them to the mercy of the Texans. How Montemayor would curse and knash his fat chops when he heard of his terrible loss! He would run wild down the streets calling on Pero Lugo to help him, but the Texans were beyond the law. They would laugh at the sheriff and defy his Mexican deputies, and no one would dare to raise a hand—that is, no one but De Vega.

Toiling along in single file over the wind-whipped, banked-up snow the tired herders

broke a trail to Magdalena; and the next day at noon, with De Vega riding at their head, they walked down the trail into Socorro. The snow had melted at that level, three thousand feet below the plains, and the landscape looked fresh and smiling; but news of the heavy snow had reached town before them and Montemayor came running. His pendulous chin was trembling, his face was pale as death, and at sight of all his herders he stopped dead.

"What is this?" he quavered. "Why are you here? Where are your sheep?" But the herders only stared at the ground.

"The Texans attacked them and drove off all the sheep," spoke up De Vega, after a pause. "It was a week ago, to-day."

"A week ago!" repeated Montemayor, and then he found his voice. Cursing and bellowing, waving his arms and stamping his feet, he poured out questions, imprecations and threats; but as no one answered he paused and mopped his forehead, turning his troubled eyes to De Vega. "Speak up!" he implored. "Where are my sheep?"

"They are all dead!" answered De Vega brutally.

"Dead!" echoed Montemayor and as he stood with a stony stare Prospero Lugo stepped out beside him.

"How do you know they are dead?" he asked. "Have you seen them, Señor de Vega?"

"No, Señor Lugo," returned De Vega with biting scorn, "I have not seen one sheep."

"Then why do you say they are dead?"

"Because these *pastores* here, who have spent their lives with sheep, assure me that none could live. The storm never stopped for a week."

"Ah, señores!" cried the foreman who had been in charge of all the herds, "no sheep could live in that snow. It fell four days and nights, and then for three days more the north wind blew it in drifts. Even Su Casa, where we took shelter, was buried to the roof, and the trees on the mountains broke down. The sheep are all dead—that is certain."

"Son of a goat!—why are you here, then?" shouted Montemayor in a terrible voice. "Have you run off and left all my sheep? May God curse me if I do not flay the hide from your fat back! Go back and look for them—pronto!"

"Ah, señor!" exclaimed the foreman, with a deprecating shrug, "you do not know all the story. On the morning before the storm the Texans rode to every herd, capturing the herders and scattering the sheep; and at the headquarters camp they burned everything we had and drove us out of the country with whips. Then at the mouth of Datil Pass, when a snow began to fall, they halted and prepared to kill us; but we fled through a storm of bullets and walked to Su Casa, where Don Lorenzo took us in."

"You were very welcome," said De Vega kindly; and instantly Montemayor whirled upon him.

"Ah, thou traitorous friend!" he cried, "and did you advise them to return to Socorro while my sheep were dying on the plains? I will make you pay for this!"

"Panzon!" spat back De Vega, "and do you think, you fat pig, that I fear you, one way or the other? I have saved your men from death but, since your sheep are lost, I get nothing but curses and abuse. Know you not that at Su Casa the snow is drifted to my roof top and that no one could live through that storm? Then how could your poor men, without even their blankets, turn back and go to Quemado? Their very guns were burned and the Texans have warned them not to return on pain of death."

"They said that?" demanded Montemayor, turning eagerly to the herders. "They drove you away from your sheep? Then where is Pero Lugo, who is always prating about the law? *Oiga*, Pero Lugo, is there no law in this land to punish these men for such acts?"

"Assuredly!" responded Lugo, "and Mexican law to boot. I can answer for the judge and jury, and recover damages in full."

"Then, thou thieving shyster!" burst out De Vega with great heat, "where is the money you were to get for my lost cows? For they were only stolen, and the ownership could be traced, but these sheep are lost and dead!"

"Caraí, thou madman!" scoffed Pero Lugo, "will you instruct me in matters of the law? Then let me inform you that the Señor Montemayor has a case very easy to prosecute, for the men who have robbed him and destroyed all his sheep are residents of the Territory of New Mexico. They have property of their own, both cattle and real estate, which can be seized to satisfy a judgment; and, last but not least, Don Rico

had the sense to turn his case over to me at once. I will guarantee big damages, Señor Montemayor."

"Make no mistake about that," returned the sheep king, smiling ominously, "or I will guarantee to thrust you into prison."

"You shall see," bowed Pero Lugo. "How many sheep did you have and how much was their value, in full?"

"Forty thousand," declared Montemayor, "and their value was two dollars and a half apiece. But in the spring the ewes would lamb, say eighty per cent more; and added to that was the wool."

"Say one hundred and fifty thousand dollars—and costs, of course. I will begin the suit at once."

"Hold!" cried Montemayor, "since so many sheep have died in this terrible snow the price of those that live must go up. Nay, sue the Battles brothers for two hundred thousand; and if the scoundrels cannot pay I will get back my lands, and seize all their cattle to boot. Go at once, good Pero Lugo, and begin the suit."

"But no!" mocked De Vega, "why stop at two hundred thousand when this talk money is flying through the air? It falls thick as the snow that now covers your dead sheep, spewed out by Pero Lugo's lying lips. Will you depend on this base rogue, as full as a leech of poor men's blood, when I and my *gente* stand waiting? Give me back my *papel* and my title to Su Casa and by San Iago I will ride against these Texans and harry them out of the land. I will seize their cattle now, and their watering places as well, and at the same time save the honor of our people. But if you falter and go to law the Texans will become bold and drive you out of the country."

"Save your breath!" scoffed Montemayor. "When have I sought your advice, thou son of an ignorant adventurer? But Pero Lugo has reason, he is learned in the law—and as for my sheep, they are dead. What care I now for you and your *gente?* The time has gone by when I could use you. So return to Su Casa—which will soon be Mi Casa—and let us hear no more about war."

"But the Texans!" gasped De Vega. "Will you let this go unavenged? Then I will ride over alone and avenge my own wrong."

"Do as you will," said Montemayor, "but remember, if you attack them, you will serve no interest of mine. Nay, you will work me a detriment, because now I wish them to prosper since all they have will soon be mine. Leave them alone and Pero Lugo will show them, through the law, who it is that is ruling this land!"

"And who is that? " inquired De Vega.

"The Mexican people," answered the sheep king.

"You talk with two tongues, like a snake!" railed Don Lorenzo. "What you mean is that *you* rule this land."

"If I rule it," observed Montemayor, "it is because I have brains. But go you with God—I am busy."

"And you will not fight the Texans?" pleaded De Vega.

"Seguramente—no!" cried Montemayor in a fury. "And if you fight them I will take away your lake. Go back to your home —ponder well on what you have done—and next time leave my herders alone."

"Madre de Dios! Would you have me leave them to die? Could I do less than give them shelter from the storm? But do not wag your head at me, great arrogant tub of suet, because I tell you to your teeth you are no man!"

"I will show you," replied Montemayor, "which of us is the better man. And remember—I hold the *papel.*"

"Yes, and I hold this knife!" cried De Vega in a passion. But Montemayor had left him.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SHEEP BUSINESS.

WITH a last drink of aguardiente, Don Lorenzo rode out of Socorro, rising often in his stirrups to hurl back curses and revilings at Montemayor and his henchmen. How it had all come about he did not know but all his great plans had fallen to the ground. The cowardly Montemayor, instead of hiring him to chastise the Texans, had turned to Pero Lugo—who had failed in the matter of his cattle—and instructed him to sue for the dead sheep. Had the times so changed that a lawyer like Pero Lugo was preferred to him and his fighting men? Then the times were out of joint and Othello's occupation was gone—there was now no call for war.

Up the steep trail he toiled, until Socorro and the Rio Grande became a green spot by a ribbon of silver, and as he mounted the high table-land and rode into Magdalena the snow appeared by the wayside. The air was

nipping cold and a wind, keen as a knife blade, struck through his fine serape and sent a chill of fear to his heart. In the lowlands the storm was past and the danger sped, but this blanket of snow covered the grass two feet deep and his cattle could not paw through the crust. Even the few hundred he had left might perish of starvation if the good God did not send a thaw.

But *Dios santo* no longer heard their prayers or else they were under a curse. Not since the first Texan had come into the country had Don Lorenzo known happiness or peace; yet in the terrible years before, when the Indians were everywhere, he had prospered and held the good will of all men. But now Pero Lugo and fat Rico Montemayor made mock of him on the streets of Socorro, and the herders he had rescued crept off to their hovels without a single word of thanks for his kindness. Who would pay for all the food that they had eaten from his scanty store during the week he had given them shelter? Not Montemayor, and yet they were his men, who would otherwise have perished in the storm. No, he would not even lend him the money to buy a few fanegas of corn—and through it all he still clung to the mortgage.

The curses leaped anew from De Vega's twisted lips as at last he came in sight of Su Casa. So deep was the snow that the poor antelopes on the plains were starving on every side; and yet there by his lake were the cattle of the Texans, whom Montemayor had forbidden him to harry. They came to drink at his lake and then, following his horses, they went up into the cañons to feed; but he, who owned it all, could not call this country his own nor shoot down these stray steers for beef. Then why live in a land where he was no longer a free man—where he was enslaved to a usurer like Montemayor? Was not old Mexico still unsettled, with plains as wide or wider, and never a Texano to intrude?

By all the saints, he swore again, he would summon his *gente* and move before he would bend his neck to Montemayor. Then, when he was gone and the Texans came against them, they would think more kindly of Lorenzo de Vega. In Chihuahua and Sonora there were still battles to be fought, for the Apaches and Yaquis raided continually; and up in the Sierra Madres lived many outlaws and bandits who might yet learn the terror of his name. But here in this country, where he had protected them for a lifetime, even the dogs of peons sniffed at him. So that was settled—yet he would wait. Montemayor was like a weather vane, turning and trimming to every wind; and after his lawyer had failed he might still come to Su Casa with the *papel* held out for peace.

A week went by and bony antelope, as tame as sheep, came to Indian Lake in search of food. But only up in the hills where, under the heavy trees, the tall pine grass waved in thin whisps, was there feed for the starving cows; and as the long, cold days dragged by without melting the snow the antelope lay down and died. Cattle died, horses died, and still the pale sun only thawed the southern slopes of the hills. A month went by and the west slopes showed some grass, which was gnawed to the roots by the stock; and as the second month passed with no thaw to clear the ground the Mexicans threw up their hands. It was the curse of God, laid on all the land to drive out the barbarous Texans, for never before had there been such a snow or such a long period of cold.

Christmas passed and the new year opened chill and cold, with rude winds that whipped across the snow; and still, like gaunt skeletons, the cattle descended to the lake and toiled back up frozen trails to the hills. In Dark Cañon and at Punta de Agua the willows and cottonwoods were broken down and gnawed until they showed only the stubs; every bush on the bare plains that exposed its tip above the snow was pawed down to and stripped of its twigs; and as the hopeless days dragged by and the range gave no support the cattle of the Texans began to drift. As in the summer, during the drought, they had come to the lake for water, so now they came in search of food; but the grass, which was short, was now buried beneath the crust, and they drifted on to the south. Somewhere, their instinct told them, there was grass and water and warmth; but in this new, strange land there was nothing but slow death and they tottered on, lowing as they went.

"Mother of God!" cried De Vega after the third month had passed and his cattle were dropping by the trail, "will it never melt and go—this snow? Must our cattle and horses die, along with these Texas cows, and leave this cursed country uninhabited? Then I will pack my poor things and go!"

But he stayed on day by day and, as spring approached, the south slopes of the mountains became bare. Water trickled down the washes and froze to ice overnight, only to thaw again during the day; and then, with a rush, the melted snow swept down the draws and the weak, bleached-out grass was exposed. The flats were awash with the sudden floods from the mountains, muddy water was running everywhere. In a day, the buried earth came to light—in a week there was green on the hills. The "Big Snow" was over, after a hundred and fourteen days, and as spring came on apace the Texas cattlemen rode abroad to gather up their waifs and strays. But none came to Su Casa until Ike Monk himself rode down from his ranch in Dark Cañon.

Not since the escapade of the autumn before had Don Lorenzo seen Monk or Jason Coles and, glimpsing Monk from afar, he muttered beneath his breath and sighed at the memory of Angelita. She had always been his darling, the one child who never feared him and could help overcome his black moods; and but for this Texan with his broken leg and sly ways, she would still be at home in Su Casa. There would be laughter in the patio, swift footsteps on the stairs, a scramble and chatter everywhere. But so it was; the Texans had spared nothing, and Angelita was at the convent in disgrace. And now Señor Monk was coming down—perhaps this Texano still wished to be friends.

"Howdy!" greeted Monk as he rode up to the gate, and Don Lorenzo gazed out at him grimly.

"Good morning, sir," he said. "Come in."

"No, thanks," responded Monk. "Jest riding into town—thought I'd ask if there's anything you want."

"No, thank you, my friend," answered De Vega. "I want everything—and yet I want nothing."

"Did you lose many cattle?" inquired Monk. "Well, we all did I reckon; but you've got lots of water, so they didn't get up and drift. I let 'em come up through my gate."

"You have no business to have a gate—but I thank you, all the same. How many did you lose, Mr. Monk?"

"None at all, hardly," returned Monk, "only weak cows and calves, and stuff that couldn't rustle for browse—mebbe ten per cent altogether. I never thought to ask you if it snowed here."

"Yes, it snows," mocked De Vega, "and then it freezes, and then it blows—and sometimes for two years it never rains. I told you that, my friend, long ago when you first came here; but I never saw it snow like this. Never in all my life, and my people before me—no one ever saw such a snow. God has put a curse on this country and all its people—I believe I will sell out and go. Ever since you Texans came, there has been a curse on all this land. I think it is to punish you for your badness."

"Mebby so," grumbled Monk; "something's wrong."

"Did you hear what has happened to the Battles brothers, up north? Over half of their cattle are dead. And the rest have drifted everywhere, even to the Mexican line—I drove them away from my lake. Now their range is stripped bare and the Texans have nothing—God has punished them for stealing my cows."

"Think so?" grinned Monk. "I thought it was for killing those sheep. Well, anyway, they're rich—they can stand it."

"But Montemayor has sued them for two hundred thousand dollars for destroying all his sheep. Do you think they can pay that much? No, my friend, God will punish them yet."

"All right," smiled Monk, "they're no friends of mine. Did you say you were going to sell out?"

"Well, why not?" argued De Vega. "I have only a few cows left and all the cattle in this country use my lake. Why shouldn't I sell out and go down to old Mexico, where I will never see a Texan again?"

"You could fence your lake in—run a drift fence across that gap and cut off this stuff from the north. Or I might buy you out, myse'f."

He smiled the same slow smile that Don Lorenzo remembered so well—so honest and yet so shrewd—but De Vega only stared at him fixedly. It was something he had never thought of, but Ike Monk was a Texan, and he had sold him enough, already. Each time he made a trade he regretted it.

"No, I do not wish to sell," he said.

"All right," answered Monk, "you're a mighty good neighbor and I certainly don't want to lose you; but if you do think of selling, jest come up and see me and maybe

we can make a trade. I collected a little money, back in Texas."

"I will not sell to a damned Texan!" snapped De Vega.

"Well, that's all right, too—can't blame you," admitted Monk. "I reckon I'll be going—good day."

He waved his hand and went jogging off down the road and De Vega stared after him curiously. Try as he would he could not hate this Texano; there was something about him—he was honest.

"Why not?" he muttered at last. "He is better than Montemayor. But no, I will not sell to a Texan."

Yet the knowledge that he had a buyer, ready at hand in case of need, stiffened his back and made De Vega more bold; and when, early in March, Montemayor and his son drove up, he met them at the gate with a smile.

"Good morning," he greeted. "My poor house is yours. To what do I owe this great honor—a visit from *el rico,* Montemayor?"

"You flatter me," returned Montemayor, dropping heavily to the ground and advancing with a placating smile, "but shake hands, Don Lorenzo—I am your friend. And if, as seems likely, the supreme court upholds our decision, I may yet be a *rico,* in truth. Have you not heard the news? Pero Lugo won my case. The lower court awarded me damages for one hundred thousand dollars, which was all that the sheep were worth."

"You don't tell me!" cried Don Lorenzo in amazement. "And has Lugo heard from my cows? They were worth only forty thousand dollars."

"No, he has not heard," responded Montemayor, "but it will be soon, I have no doubt, for he has no peer as an advocate. The Battles brothers came in laughing when they were summoned for the trial, but they went out gnashing their teeth. To be sure they have appealed, as the judgment will ruin them, but their money is thrown away. Let them go as far as they will, to the supreme court of the United States; the facts cannot be controverted that they drove my herders away, and that the sheep all died in the storm. If they had waited a few days the sheep would have died anyway—they would have piled up and smothered in the snow. But they did not wait; and so, thanks to their kindness, I am saved the full value of my herds."

He walked pompously into the house, followed by Amado his son whose eyes sought hopefully for Angelita; and as Don Lorenzo pondered the news his heart leaped with exulting, for now Pero Lugo would find his cows. He would recover the full price of them, as he had for Montemayor's sheep, and with the money he could buy more cattle and, fencing his lake on the north, settle down to the old, easy life. There would be wine in his storeroom and good things to eat as before, and every one who came would feel honored to be his guest and to call him Lorenzo Magnifico. For Lorenzo the Magnificent he had been in the old days, never accepting the least payment for many kindnesses; and in one month his major-domo had served three thousand meals to strangers within his gates. It was the old manner of living, which had always been followed by his people.

"Pancha!" he called, "bring in coffee and frijoles for my friend, Señor Montemayor. Seat yourself, Don Rico—please have a chair, Don Amado—it is long since you have honored my home. Wait but a moment and I will see if, somewhere in this cupboard, there is not a last bottle of wine. It is here, *gracias a Dios,* and we will drink to this great victory. So Pero Lugo won your damages in full?"

"Damages in full—and all costs," responded Montemayor with ponderous dignity. "As I look at it, it was the hand of God. For never before was there such a snow in all this country, and they raided me on the eve of the storm. Only a single day and my sheep would have been snowed in, they would have piled up and smothered in the drifts; but the good God looked down and, in judgment for their barbarity, he caused these Texans to drive off my men. But the law is the law and they cannot squirm out of it now by showing that they lost half their cows. What happened after the crime has nothing to do with the case—the question is, did they seize my sheep? Did they burn my supplies and drive away my herders and leave my sheep to the mercy of the storm? If they did, it makes no difference, they must pay the full cost, and damages for the loss of wool and lambs. No, thank you; I will not drink."

"What? Not drink this sweet wine?" cried Don Lorenzo in amazement. "It is the best—made by Armijo, in Albuquerque."

"Don Lorenzo," accused Montemayor,

"you drink too much wine. It is stealing away your wits."

"Que hablas—what is this?" exclaimed De Vega in hot anger, "have you come here to preach me a sermon? Cannot a man in his own house offer wine to a guest without laying himself open to insult?"

"Drink if you will," answered Montemayor, "but I have come here to talk business and much prefer to have you sober. Yet, to kill this last bottle and deprive you of that much, Amado and I will drink."

"You will not drink!" declared De Vega, dashing the wine to the floor. "I am sober, now what is your business?"

"Nay, good Don Lorenzo, it was only for your good that I declined your most excellent wine. Please excuse me if I seemed rude but I have come here with a proposal which needs your best mind and judgment. 'What is it?'—you say. Well, without beating about the bush, I want you to enter the sheep business. I will give you the sheep on shares."

"Ah, you will make me a peon—I will be one of your *pastores,* for you to curse when the herd suffers a cut? I will wear sheepskin *teguas* and count my herd between two sticks while the master, Señor Montemayor, stands by and watches? Many thanks Don Rico—I decline."

"Drunk or sober, you are the same," exclaimed Montemayor in deep disgust. "You are a fool and nothing can save you. How will you pay me what you owe—and this monstrous debt for keeping your house—if you sit by and do nothing, month by month? Your cattle are all gone except a miserable two or three hundred; the Texans get the use of your lake; and yet you sit idle, doing nothing to mend your fortunes, feeding every man that passes your door. Will you never come to see that this hospitality is senseless, that it brings every loafer in the country? Then stop, before they eat you out of house and home and leave you a beggar on the street. You have a good heart, Don Lorenzo, but your mind is like a child's and you forget that old saying of our people: 'A good heart needs a tight hand, a tired mule needs a double hobble, a loose pack needs a watchful muleteer.' You must change with the times or the gringos will eat you up—and have I not made money with sheep?"

"Ya, basta—enough," admitted De Vega.

"There is a fortune in sheep," went on Montemayor boastfully, "if only you handle them as I do. Do you want me to tell you why—and why there is nothing in cows? In the first place, a sheep bears enough wool on its back to pay for its care for the year. All the rest is clear profit, and the lambs alone will double your money in six months. A lamb is dropped in March, or April, or May, and six months later, if the feed has been good, he is worth as much as his mother. Perhaps he weighs forty pounds and he will sell, at the least, for two dollars in cash. Now look at your calf, which you must keep three years before he becomes a marketable steer; and then, in this country, he is worth only twenty-five dollars—or thirty, at the most.

Every year my ewes have lambs, maybe twins, so that my herd increases eighty per cent, say; and the next year again it increases eighty or ninety, depending upon the weather and care. The male lambs I fatten and ship in the fall, the females I keep to breed; and all the time the money piles up quick, because they get their full growth in one year. If there comes a great drought and kills half your cattle it takes you three years to breed up, does it not? But sheep recover in a year, and the money keeps coming in—for wool, for lambs, for old ewes. For after a ewe has served her time and her teeth become broken and old I can sell her to farmers for a dollar or so, and meanwhile I have had all her wool. That brings me in a dollar a year—and the wool, as I said, will pay everything.

"I need not go farther to show you, my friend, that nowhere can you make money like with sheep. They are easy to take care of and, with a good foreman, you could go into business at once. I have lost many of my sheep but in order to get you started I will give you ten thousand head, after the lambing. Any losses that you have will come out of your share, for that is the rule in this country; but at the end of the year I will give you half the increase—and the next year, and the next, the same. In three years, Don Lorenzo, you will be a rich man—richer by far than you ever dreamed of—and to show my good will I will teach you all I know and show you the shearing and lambing. I am your friend, after all, and I certainly wish you well. Now what is your answer—yes or no?"

"My answer is 'No,'" replied De Vega.

"Ah! Que tonto!" burst out Monte-

mayor. "What a fool you are! Did you listen to what I said? Can you not see the great profits that go with this business? And what have you made with cows? At the end of ten years you have three hundred head—the Texans have taken all the rest; and what will keep them from doing so again, if you ever build up your herd?"

"I will kill them," answered De Vega confidently.

"Ah, son of a burro!" cried Montemayor in despair, "can nothing be driven into your thick head? Must you always be a fool, a burro, a jackass? Then listen while I talk to you plainly. You owe me money, and the interest is unpaid. Do you think I will wait forever? How can you pay me, I say, when you raise nothing, produce nothing, and feed every beggar in the land? I ask you—how can you pay?"

"When I am paid for my stolen cows, I will pay you."

"Nay, do not count too much on those cows," warned Montemayor. "Your case is far different from mine. For the men who stole your cows are fugitives from justice and the farmers who now have them cannot be found; whereas the Battles brothers, while they are rascals, have land and cattle back in Texas, besides all they have taken up here. Wait if you wish, but I warn you—when this *papel* here becomes due I will take away your home and your lake. But if you act like a reasonable creature and go in with me in the sheep business, I will wait, for I know you are good. Now what do you say, my friend?"

"I say nothing," responded De Vega sullenly.

"Very well," sighed Montemayor, rising up from his chair and slapping the *papel* against his hand, "do not say that I did not warn you. I have given you the chance to become a rich man, like myself, but mountains could be moved easier than you. Here you are with six sons and a host of dependents who are devouring your substance in idleness. If these men were put to work, herding our sheep across the plains, what a fortune would come to your hand! But no, you will learn nothing that will work to your advantage, and forget nothing of that grudge you still hold; for I know, though you will not speak, what is behind all this—you are envious of my success!

"Because I have succeeded, you stir up men against me and denounce me as a hard master and a usurer. You are poisoned with your own spleen, but I leave you to think it over, and this is what I will do. In one week I will come back and take you down to my lambing camp in the mountains near San Marcial. There in a few days you will learn more about sheep and the sheep business than some men have learned in a lifetime, for I will be there and instruct you myself. That is the harvest time of our industry and if the lambing is well attended to the rest is a matter of course. You can hire experienced herders and send them out with your sheep and sit back like a gentleman, if you wish. All the rest can be done by others, but only the eye of the owner can make the lambing a success. You must know what should be done, for the men will not tell you—it makes too much work for them. So now for the last time I ask you, Don Lorenzo, will you come to the lambing—yes or no?"

"Save your breath," shrugged De Vega. "I will come."

CHAPTER XVI.

DON LORENZO BUYS A DOG.

IN order to get rid of the importunate sheep king, Don Lorenzo had agreed to visit his lambing camp; but not until Montemayor was far down the road did he divine the hidden motive for his visit. For no matter how much he talked, or how much information he gave out, there was always something hidden, something that would work to his own advantage, and De Vega had learned to look for it. Montemayor had been too generous in his offer of sheep not to have some ulterior purpose behind it and, though De Vega had no intention of even considering his proposal, he was by nature very curious.

He liked to know what went on in men's minds, especially when they were plotting against him, and it came to him at last that once more he was to be the cat's-paw and rake out the chestnuts for his enemy. He, De Vega, was to take the ten thousand sheep and pasture them around his lake; and when the Texans came down to drive them off the range he was to fight them and make the country safe. Then Montemayor would come in and occupy it—after foreclosing the mortgage on Su Casa.

Having satisfied his mind as to Montemayor's intent, Don Lorenzo went still

farther, seeking some way to turn a profit at the expense of his ancient enemy. What Montemayor had said about the profits of the sheep business had fallen on shallow ground at the time; but as Don Lorenzo, from his watch tower, looked out over the broad plains he put that with something else. Don Esquipulo, his father, had quoted the saying a thousand times that cattle and the buffalo are kin, that the sheep are like antelope, needing little if any water, and able to live far out on the plains. Why not cut the Gordian knot—get rid of his lake with its curse of Texas cattle, his house with its horde of dependents—and move out on the plains, where he would have peace? Then, if he wished, he could get sheep from somebody else and be rid of the blustering Montemayor.

All along the western hills, though the plains were dry and desolate, there were springs, hidden from every one by the Indians. Only De Vega and his men knew the location of these water holes, which the Apaches and Navajos had rocked up and stopped tight so that no one could find them but themselves. Yet the springs were there, some on the tops of low hills where the broken formation gave them vent; and some in tanks, huge holes scooped out by torrents and filled with water covered with sand. Even the coyotes did not know where to dig for this water, and yet it would suffice for sheep. And De Vega had always thought that, where the big washes emptied into the plain, there must be water not far below. The whole plains were a huge sink, called *bolson* or pocket by the Spanish, where the flood waters of the mountains were caught. Only a well was needed to tap it all—but could he, a De Vega, herd sheep?

That was the question which Don Lorenzo asked himself a thousand times as he pondered the situation into which he had fallen —all his cattle driven away, the envious Texans all about him and Montemayor clamoring for his money. Unless he moved swiftly he would be eaten up by his debts, and yet he could not bear to herd sheep. With the cattle every task was fit work for a caballero, which in Spanish means both horseman and gentleman—the roping, the riding, cutting the herd, driving the remuda; a gentleman could revel in it all. Nowhere in New Mexico were there better horses than in his *caballada*, nor better vaqueros than his sons; they took a pride in their splendid horsemanship and in all the feats of skill that were celebrated at the annual rodeo. Could he ask Gregorio, or Jaime, or Rafael, to give up all this and be sheep-herders; to plod along after burros, to spend months tending the sheep, to become as slow and patient as their charges? But no, he could not endure it himself! Better by far to gather his cattle, his beautiful horses, his faithful *gente* and move with all his possessions to old Mexico.

There the Apaches still raided the villages, every hacienda was a fort and the services of a fighter were not disprized. Had not General Terrazas been given half of Chihuahua for killing Victorio and his warriors—and made a governor to boot? But what had he, De Vega, received? Had the government rewarded him, had it even paid his claims for the cattle that were stolen in his absence? No, only in complimentary orders by the war department, where his conspicuous services were mentioned, had he received the slightest recognition; and though for ten years he had paid a lawyer to present his case his Indian Depredations claims remained unpaid. So much for the gringos and their government, which owed him thirty thousand dollars in gold. Perhaps his children might live to see it paid.

It was with such sad and gloomy thoughts that Don Lorenzo looked about him and contemplated the wreck of all his hopes, for Su Casa was very dear to him. It had been his home and stronghold for over twenty years when he could truthfully say that he was king. His word had been law, but now all was changed and Montemayor ruled in his stead. He ordered him to his lambing and like a weakling he consented, lest for lack of a few dollars the sheriff should take away his home. It was nothing but lawyers, and officers of the law, and papers which robbed poor men of their rights—and now he must go to the lambing.

Very early one morning De Vega called for his best horse and loped off through the mountains toward San Marcial but, seeing those familiar cañons up which he had chased Apaches, the color of his thoughts was changed. Once more he was the warrior, the protector of these base Mexicans who lived along the river for safety; and when at last he found the camp, hidden away in a sheltered cañon, he rode in with his head high. The trappings on his horse

gleamed and glinted in the sun, a gorgeous serape was draped across his saddle; and, thrust into his red sash, were the two heavy pistols without which he never rode forth. He was a gentleman, *muy caballero,* and all eyes except Montemayor's turned to gaze with respect and admiration.

Montemayor was in the lambing pens, small corrals made out of panels which could be taken down and hauled away, and his voice rose in a singsong of cursing.

"Dogs and sons of dogs," he howled, "have you no thought for these poor lambs, every one of which is worth two or three dollars? Andreas! Catch that ewe! No, the one with the black lamb. *Caramba!* You have lost her again. Ah, do not rush in after her—you will frighten all the others. Use your sheep hook, fool, and catch her by the leg, and drag her out very carefully."

He took off his hat and wiped the sweat from his bald head before he looked up and nodded to De Vega.

"Ah, what fools these men are," he said.

"You are working very hard," observed Don Lorenzo with an easy courtesy which quite failed to cover up his scorn. *"Pero hombre,* what are all these men for?"

"To eat my food—to sleep at night, and let their lanterns go out, while my ewes are groaning untended! Ah, what a task it is to drive these loafers to their duties, while my lambs are dying everywhere! But so a man must work I assure you, Don Lorenzo, or his losses will be enormous. Look at that little lamb there with the dirt on its head—its mother has refused to own it. So it runs from ewe to ewe, trying to steal a little milk, but they fight it away and befoul it. I will give you your first lesson—do you see how thin it is, and how fat are these others that have mothers? That bad mother must be caught and shut up in this little pen, and held until she gives her lamb milk.

"Now here is another lamb whose mother has died—I will show you what to do with him. Here you see another ewe whose lamb is dead—we must skin it and stretch the pelt over this orphan. For the first three days a ewe recognizes her lamb by smell, after that she has learned to know its voice, so when the mother smells the lambskin which we have tied on this orphan's back she will take it and give it milk. But if these lazy hombres should have their way not one of these things would be done—the lambs would starve, the mothers suffer. So I say it is necessary, no matter how rich you are, to attend to this lambing yourself. Not for a thousand dollars a day can you hire a man to do it—the boss himself must be there. Come over here and I will show you the work."

He strode over to the small pens which lined the side of the corral, each containing a single sheep, and De Vega followed reluctantly.

"In each corral," explained Montemayor, "we put fifty or sixty ewes. Later, each ewe is shut up in a little pen, where nothing will injure her and her little one will not get lost; and when she learns to know her own lamb and has given it milk she is taken out and put in the lamb herd. But if she will not own her lamb, and many will not, then she is branded with a number on her back and the little one is branded the same. After that we shall always know which one is her lamb, and we will hold her until she consents to feed it. And sometimes, when one has twins and another plenty of milk, we take one from the weak mother and give it to the strong. But all of this takes time.

"Then if a storm comes up or the wind turns cold at night, fires must be lighted or the lambs will die. In the dead of night every man must be routed out to carry them back and forth to the fires. It is then, Don Lorenzo, that the boss must be present to drive these lazy fellows to their work; otherwise a year's profits will be lost in a single night, for the lambing is our harvest, you understand. I am glad you have ridden over to see how it is done and any questions that you ask I will answer; but if you take sheep from me you must agree to one thing, and that is to work them yourself. If you do as I direct you will be on the road to a great fortune, but you must get down in the dirt and work!"

"So I see," replied De Vega with a smile.

Montemayor's face was grimed with dirt, his hands were stained with mud and his clothes were filthy and torn; the lowest peon in his employ was not more smeared and sweaty. And now as he regarded De Vega in his fine clothes and clean linen a look of scorn, almost of hate, lighted Montemayor's eyes; but he contented himself with grunting and wiping his hands on his soiled breeches as he led the way to the house. This was a square adobe on the edge of a grove of trees that clustered about the

spring, and as De Vega approached it he saw a man tied to a post, who lay sprawling as if he were dead.

"What is this?" he asked as Montemayor strode coldly by, and at his voice the man raised his head.

"Leave him alone!" cried Montemayor harshly.

"Seguro," responded De Vega and followed after his host, but as he passed he looked down at the man. He was broad shouldered and brawny, with a curly black beard; and yet, though he was strong and his hands were free, he remained tied by the neck with a rope. Like a dumb, unreasoning brute, like a dog that has been punished, he lay fawning in the dust—and as he looked up Don Lorenzo knew him! It was Juan Ochoa, that same foreman who had been driven from Quemado by the Texans.

"Caraï!" muttered De Vega, "what a business!"

"Pay no attention to that base creature!" bawled Montemayor from the house, and came striding out with a black snake. "I will give him a lesson," he added.

He raised the whip and brought it down on the *caporal's* back as he knelt before him, writhing.

"Did I not tell you?" he demanded, "under no circumstances to leave your sheep? And yet I caught you halfway to Socorro!" He raised his whip again and De Vega watched him grimly as he lashed the man with all his strength. But when the beating was over and they started for the house Don Lorenzo thrust out his lip.

"That is very sad," he said as they entered the adobe and Montemayor sank down in a chair; "he seems like a very good man."

"He is my boss herder," replied Montemayor, "but I am making an example of him, so that none of the others will quit. Not a man in those pens but has a hundred excuses to leave me in the lurch with my lambs. If I would listen to their pleadings, every man would throw down his crook and hurry into town to get drunk. One comes running with the news that his mother is dying, another is expecting a child; but I tell them all, and without any exception, that no man can leave my camp. This man left, and you have witnessed his punishment. Let him lie there and moan and howl, the dog and worse than a dog! I will teach him that my will is the law."

"You find that is necessary?" questioned De Vega.

"Absolutely!" cried Montemayor, "and when you go into the sheep business you must start your own men the same way. First of all go to Pero Lugo and get these form contracts, which I compel every herder to sign; otherwise your men will quit at the time when you need them most and all the profits will be lost. If I have succeeded in the sheep business it is because of two things: First, because I work myself; and, second, because of this contract. I gave Pero Lugo a thousand dollars to draw up that little *papel.* Did you notice that my boss herder had a rope around his neck? Why does he not untie that rope? Would he lie there like a dog and let me flog him with this black snake without a very good reason? That reason is this little *papel.*

"When I hired Juan Ochoa I gave him one hundred dollars which, being but lately married, he was glad to receive; and in return for the money he acknowledged the receipt of it and agreed to go to work, so and so—at a certain place and for a certain time, all of which was written down in the contract. And furthermore he confessed that, if he quit before he agreed to, he was obtaining the advance money under false pretenses. That is a felony, you understand, and, having already confessed it, he has pleaded guilty and can be sentenced at once; and the judge at Socorro, who often eats from my hand, stands ready to send him to prison. That is the reason why Juan Ochoa, though he has two strong hands, lies there in the dirt like a dog; and every time I go by I lash him with this whip, that the others may hear his groaning and be afraid. Have you decided whom you will hire to handle your sheep?"

"No, really, I have not," replied De Vega with great politeness. "I thought I would consult with you first. But all you have told me has been very interesting, though I fear I could not do it, myself. My *gente* are too wild and lawless to submit to such treatment as you have given to Juan Ochoa and——"

"Make them submit!" cried Montemayor. "Do as I do."

"With your permission," said De Vega, "I will wait a little longer before I make up my mind. But please, when you go back, do not whip this man again; because after all, he is one of our people."

"That son of a dog?" roared Montemayor, bounding up from his chair and seizing his black snake again, "do you think I care for his groans? Come with me and I will show you how I treat even a *caporal* when he runs off and abandons his sheep."

He strode out to the whipping post and, swinging his black snake in the air, he laid it across the back of the boss herder.

"Enough!" he said to De Vega. "Now come down to the pens and I will tell you some more about the sheep."

"In a moment," replied De Vega, "as soon as I get my hat. And may I take a spare copy of your *papel?*"

"Yes indeed!" agreed Montemayor. "But excuse me, I must go. *Caramba!* See those devils running my sheep!"

He went flying down the path and as he plunged into the corral De Vega returned to the prostrate herder.

"Have you no pride," he demanded, "that you lie there like a dog? Get up, and take that rope from your neck!"

"Ah, señor, you do not understand," protested the foreman, tremulously. "If I do that he will send me to prison. My wife has borne me a son and she is sick of a fever which, God forbid, may bring about her death; but it is better for me to stay here than to go down to see her, and then to be shut up for years."

"You are a coward!" cried Don Lorenzo. "Stand up like a man! What, will you lie there in the dirt, tied by a string? Then come along with me, for I need a dog myself. You will come handy, to herd my sheep!"

He stooped and untied the rope from the ring on the post and Juan Ochoa rose up, staring.

"I owe him a hundred dollars," he said.

"Shut your mouth!" shouted De Vega. "You are my dog and have nothing to do with it. I have taken you away from your master."

"What is this?" demanded Montemayor, coming running as he saw them, "are you taking away my herder?"

"He is no herder, but a dog," answered De Vega scornfully. "I am leading him by this string to town."

He swung up on his horse and shook out the rope behind him and Montemayor stood agape.

"But he is my peon," he protested. "He owes me a hundred dollars."

"Then take that," replied Don Lorenzo, flinging the gold pieces in the dirt, "but I need him to herd my sheep."

"Ah, señor!" cried Juan Ochoa, rushing to kiss his stirrup, "I will serve you for nothing, all my life. Only take me away from this man."

"I will take you to your wife," said Don Lorenzo and Montemayor's eyes suddenly blazed. Now at last he understood.

"Go with God," he replied, using the phrase by which Spaniards dismiss beggars, "but remember—when the time comes, you shall pay."

"Quite so," shrugged De Vega. "Who ever did less, when Montemayor held his note? As for the rest, I have bought a dog —for one hundred dollars." And he led Juan Ochoa away.

CHAPTER XVII.

"THE TIMES HAVE CHANGED——"

IT was dark when Don Lorenzo rode into Socorro, still followed by the dog he had bought. And when he had released him he found time for a few drinks before the cantinas were closed. As for Juan Ochoa, he ran home to his wife and De Vega dismissed him from his mind.

But in the morning, after a few *copitas* to clear the cobwebs from his brain, he bethought himself of Pero Lugo. For nearly six months, on one pretext or another, the lawyer had put him off about his cows; but he determined to brush aside all subterfuge and pretense and find out where he stood with his claims. If the cattle were lost and his case was hopeless he would put the matter out of his thoughts; but if Pero Lugo had discovered them, and collected the price, it was time he was made to pay.

He found the wily advocate in his little, denlike office, next door to Montemayor's store. And, hitching up his sash in which the two pistols were thrust, he demanded his money, at once.

"You have nothing," replied Pero Lugo, stroking his lip.

"In truth, no," glowered De Vega, "but perhaps, Señor Shyster, the reason is that you have it all. You have had a long time to collect my money, if you could; or to find out it is lost, if you could not; so now, without any more Latin or sayings from 'Don Quixote,' kindly tell me where I stand on your books."

"Very well," answered Pero Lugo affably, and took down a little yellow book. For some minutes he made figures on a sheet of foolscap paper while De Vega regarded him expectantly, and then he wrote the total at the end.

"You owe me three thousand four hundred and seventy-two dollars," he said, and handed Don Lorenzo the sheet.

"I owe *you!*" repeated De Vega, starting back.

"Exactly," nodded Lugo. "There is the bill."

For a moment Don Lorenzo stood swaying before him and then he clutched at his knife. "How much do you owe *me?*" he asked.

"Nothing at all," replied Pero Lugo. "You came too late. If you had reported the theft at once, before the cattle inspector had left the country and the station agent at Alamo had destroyed his records, I undoubtedly could have recovered every cent. But now the cattle are scattered and I have no way of tracing them, so to close the case I am giving you your bill."

"And do you expect me to pay it?" demanded De Vega.

"Undoubtedly," smiled Pero Lugo. "Otherwise I will obtain a judgment and seize all your property for the debt."

"*Que ladron*—what a robber!" exclaimed De Vega.

"Not at all!" protested Lugo. "Do you think I work for nothing? The servant is worthy of his hire. I am always your humble and obedient servant, but my services are not given gratis. Look at the money I have spent in going to and fro, in hiring detectives and searching through the records. Would you expect me to donate that? And is my time any less valuable when I work on a case and lose than it is when I fortunately win? No, there is the bill, and you must pay."

He leaned back in his chair and brought his slim fingers together while he regarded De Vega over his glasses.

"I have no money," said Don Lorenzo at last and the lawyer thrust up his lip. It was a way he had when amused.

"Go get some money," he said.

"Yes, but where?" cried De Vega in despair.

"Like the rest of us," observed Lugo, "you must either beg, borrow or steal it. I know of no other way—except to work. But only yesterday, so I hear, you were throwing gold pieces in the dirt, so I cannot believe you are bankrupt."

"Ah, but what is a hundred dollars when there is this huge bill to pay—and all that I owe Montemayor? A man must live, and no gentleman goes abroad without a few dollars in his pocket."

"Do not excuse yourself to me," bowed Lugo with mock politeness, "a gentleman, as you say, must live. But remember, when the time comes, Montemayor will foreclose his mortgage unless you put the money in his hand. So, whether you beg, borrow or steal, or sell your rancho to get the money, get it you must or the sheriff will come."

"But who would buy my place?" demanded De Vega helplessly, and Pero Lugo smiled and showed his hand.

"Montemayor," he said. "He will buy."

"Hijos del diablo!" burst out Don Lorenzo in a fury; "now I see the devil's cloven hoof! You never tried to win my case—Montemayor ordered you not to—and now you are waiting to foreclose. Very well, Pero Lugo, if I do not produce the money take Su Casa and I will go to old Mexico."

He strode out the door and, leaping up on his horse, went spurring out of town like a madman; but as he breasted the steep trail and his horse slowed to a walk, a man rose up before him. It was Juan Ochoa and he stood waiting, hat in hand, beside the boulder behind which he had been hiding.

"A thousand thanks, señor," he said, "for your kindness of yesterday—my wife is now well and happy. It was her first child, for she is young, and in the fever that followed she cried for me day and night; but last night, when I came, she forgot all her fears and went to sleep in my arms. I am ready to work for you, now."

"Nay, go back to your wife," cried De Vega harshly, "I have no work to do. Go and find another master, who will treat you more kindly, and never sign another *papel*. Mother of God! what have we done that this curse is put upon us and we are enslaved to Montemayor? For I have signed papers myself and fallen into his power and in a month I shall be without a home. But I will not sell to him, for I am still a free man—I will sell to the Texans to spite him!"

"Ah, how unfortunate," murmured the *caporal* sadly. "I had sworn by all the saints, always to serve you to repay you for this kindness. And now you will not have

any sheep? I am a good herder, Don Lorenzo—there is no better in New Mexico—and I know where to hire the best men. They will be glad to work for nothing if you will but pay off Montemayor and release them from their lifelong slavery. Only try us and we will make you rich. Do you want sheep on shares? I know Luna and Otero and other sheepmen, all greater than Montemayor; and if they know I am your *caporal* they will trust you with many herds, because I have worked for them all. But for the love of God do not throw me aside and force me to work for that pig!"

"Hah! Pig he is," smiled De Vega, suddenly regaining his spirits, "but put on your hat and we will talk. Do you think, my friend, that I could get men for the lambing if I hired them without a *papel?* Could I depend upon their labor or would they all leave me and allow my lambs to perish? I ask you, because Montemayor says no."

"He says no to everything!" exclaimed the boss herder vindictively, "except what will yield the greatest profit. His men work for nothing, since they are always in his debt, and every man has signed the *papel*. But with you, Don Lorenzo, who have always protected us and are known to be kindly and generous, it will be easy to get the best men. Some herders are lazy, or stupid, or careless, and those we will not employ; but the ten best men that are peoned to Montemayor will come if you say the word. Only pay off their debts and protect them from his anger and leave the rest to me."

"You speak well," said Don Lorenzo. "I like you, Juan Ochoa. You are different from that man that lay tied by the neck to be whipped and cursed like a dog. But tell me truly, my friend, will sheep live in this high country with its cold and wind and snow? For I had made up my mind to move to old Mexico——"

"Ah, no, no!" broke in the *caporal* earnestly. "Believe me, Don Lorenzo, the sheep will do well here, if you keep them in the shelter of the hills. Warm valleys they must have and green grass for the lambing; but at San Mateo, where I come from, the country is still higher and yet the sheep are renowned. And to prove it beyond a doubt, Montemayor has often told me that Su Casa is a paradise for sheep."

"Ah, that great pig!" cried De Vega exultantly, "now by the saints I will make him squeal. I will get sheep, Juanito, and you shall have charge of them, and we will steal the best of his men. I will sell Su Casa for what I can get and put the money into sheep, and then we will take more on shares; and when Montemayor comes cursing I will laugh in his face, for the Texans will own Indian Lake."

"And where will you go then?" inquired Ochoa.

"I will move with all my people to the west side of the plains where no one will come by to plague us; and there I will dig wells and establish myself again, but my new house shall not be called Su Casa. The times have changed and I must change with them—my new home shall be called Mi Casa."

"Sí, señor," said the herder respectfully.

"It shall be my house," cried De Vega, "and nobody else's. All but my friends shall pay for their meals. And there at last I shall be rid of these thieving Texans, and black Mexicans like Montemayor. The times change and we must change with them. But what was I saying, my friend?"

"You were telling about the sheep," answered Ochoa.

"True enough," smiled Don Lorenzo. "I am to come to sheep at last. Very well, I will be a sheep king. Go back to Otero, to Luna and the rest, and ask them for sheep on shares; then come back with their answer and I will have the wells dug and money to provide for everything."

"Very well, sir," bowed the boss herder. "Is that all?"

"No. Go back to the lambing camp and pick the ten best herders and find out what they owe to Montemayor."

"Sí, señor," grinned the *caporal,* "I will do that gladly."

"And then go to your wife," said Don Lorenzo with a smile, "and give her this little present—for your son." He reached into his pocket but his hand came out empty.

"Estoy arrancado," he laughed, "I am broke."

"You are too generous," murmured the herder politely.

"Nay, give her these buttons, then," exclaimed De Vega impulsively; and, whipping out his knife he cut the conchas from his jacket and handed them over to the herder.

"A thousand thanks, señor," stammered the man, turning the silver buttons over

in his hand; and then with a shout he went dashing off down the trail while De Vega looked after him ruefully.

"*Madre de Dios!*" he said, "here is that *papel,* still in my pocket, and the buttons on my jacket are gone. The times have changed and we must change with them. When he comes back I will ask him to sign."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MI CASA.

A MONTH passed like a day over desolate Su Casa and then a strange procession filed away—squeaking carretas loaded with furniture, horses and mules packed with bedding, women and children plodding along behind. For Su Casa had been sold to Ike Monk, the Texan; the storerooms had been emptied of their hoard; and now with his people Don Lorenzo was moving into the silence of the Western plains. Mounted on horses and piled into wagons were his family and his dependents; his sons, his sons-in-law and their children; the orphans he had adopted, the widows he had taken in, his cooks and servants and the Navajo squaws. All his *gente* who remained faithful now moved when he moved, and they traveled across the plains to the northwest.

There at the mouth of a wide draw a well had been dug and cedar poles dragged down to build stick houses, and by the dobe hole out on the flat an army of men were mixing mud and shoveling it into molds to make bricks. Already the broad foundations of Mi Casa had been laid and the first course of adobes set upon them, and as the bricks on the drying field were turned and piled on edge, eager workers gathered them up and lugged them in. Doors and windows were being framed and the mud walls built against them, brush and timbers were being hauled for the roof; and, as the long procession approached, the men who had gone before looked up and muttered under their breath.

What a change—and in one day! Who would have thought to see Lorenzo de Vega breaking his back to mix mud for adobes? Yet there he was, and while he worked they too must work or he would curse like Montemayor. In one day, señores, he had changed from a caballero to a madman who thought only of work; and without ceasing he warned them that whoever stayed with him now must expect nothing but hard fare and hard work. His fine clothes were packed away and with them his fine manners, his gracious smile and his generous ways. He had changed in a day to a sheepman. The good old days were gone forever!

By the well, dug by hand down through the gravel of the wash, long troughs were being hollowed from cottonwood logs; another well was being dug, and a tank scooped out below it and puddled with impervious clay. Strings of burros, loaded with wood, hustled down from the near-by hills, where the fragrant cedars were being chopped for posts; and up the wash the tall cottonwoods were being felled and stripped of branches to uphold the mud and brush of the flat roofs. Everywhere men were toiling and sweating in the sun, and all because of Montemayor. He it was who had told the patron of the huge profits in the sheep business and invited him over to his camp; and from that day some devil had entered into Don Lorenzo and made him like a sheepman—like Montemayor.

So murmured the weary men who had once followed him on the war trail or looked down from Su Casa on the Texans; but Don Lorenzo gave no heed, telling them brusquely to work or leave, and with a sigh they returned to their labors. One by one the squat adobes were walled up and roofed over and the women moved in out of the wind; day by day corrals were built and a blindfolded mule pumped up water with a primitive hoist. Then at last, drifting across the plains, the first herd of sheep appeared and the workers laid down their tools to look. They came toddling in long rows, sheep following behind sheep, making trails through the chamisal as they passed; and behind them followed a man with a curly black beard, lifting his hands to direct his dogs. At the smell of the water the sheep came running with loud bleatings, three thousand fat ewes with their lambs, and as they drank delicately at the series of troughs the foreman came up to report.

"*Buenos dias, señor,*" he said, taking off his hat as he addressed his patron; "here are the sheep that I bought of Otero. He wishes you success and will send ten thousand on shares as soon as you have the water."

"Then go and get them," ordered De Vega, "for at the mouth of this next draw I have dug two more good wells. My houses

are nearly finished and when this work is done I shall dig wells all over the plains. Get sheep and get herders and before the year is ended I will take all this country for my own."

"Very well, sir," saluted Juan Ochoa and there was pride in his eyes as he gazed out across the plains. There for miles and miles, untrodden by cattle or sheep, the yellow grass waved in the wind; a range without a peer in all New Mexico if water could be found for the herds. Here was an empire of bunch grass, and sturdy chamiso bushes to give them browse when the feed was dry; and his sheep should be the first to graze over this paradise which his master, Don Lorenzo, had reclaimed. Before he had entered it all this sea of curly grama grass had been left to the jack rabbits and antelope, and now Don Lorenzo was moving swiftly to occupy the best of it before Montemayor heard the news. For there was a feud between them now and Montemayor had sworn to break him for selling Su Casa to a Texan.

The summer came, almost unnoticed, as they dug well after well, throwing a circle around the west end of the plains; and then, with a driller, Don Lorenzo moved far out and began a well in the heart of the grassland. Day by day the southwest wind rose with the sun and blew up rain clouds, for the time for the first summer rains had come; but always the dry west wind whipped in over the mountains and blew the rain away. Like a thousand tufts of wool the puffy clouds floated across the sky, cutting off the scorching sun; but at evening, like passing vapors, they suddenly vanished into nothingness. Don Lorenzo knew the signs but he gave the drought no heed for he had struck water in the middle of the plains.

It was deep, but it was there, and always at the same level—a great bowl of impounded water, a submerged lake beneath the plains where only the antelope had lived. At that first strike a fever of energy had come over him that transformed Don Lorenzo to a madman; he raged, he cursed, he drove his men from morning till night, and always he brought in more sheep. He took them on shares, and as the season was dry the sheepmen along the river supplied them gladly. Every year, wet or dry, they had moved their sheep to the uplands where the cold nights would make them feed more and grow fat; but the Texans had now occupied all the high country there was, until De Vega had opened this new range.

Where his windmills flecked the plain the Texas cattle had never been and, not being there, they never would be; for on the heels of the Big Snow a new specter haunted the land. The Big Drought was coming—it had come. Not since the snow had melted and brought up the spring grass had a drop of moisture fallen. The water holes were drying up again, the springs were sinking lower, the mountain streams were retreating toward their sources. Cattle were wandering from place to place, seeking water with restless insistence, drifting on, they knew not where; and the Texans, after starting their round-up, were suddenly leaving their calves unbranded while they gathered every steer that would ship. This new failure had daunted them, after the dry summer of the year before and the losses that attended the Big Snow, and since the price of cattle was high they took time by the forelock and shipped before fresh disaster befell them. Only Monk held his own, and he fenced.

A long stretch of wire, extending from point to point and cutting off the lake from the northern range, was his dead line against the cattle that drifted in; and though they piled up against his gate he dared not open it, for already his grass was getting short. Water he had, and Su Casa, and Dark Cañon and the mountains behind; but when he shut out the northern cattle he fenced off his own feed, for the broad plains waved with grass like a yellow sea. It was the price that he paid for protection against his neighbors. But their cattle had learned the way and they came. In twos and threes and little bands they drifted in across the plains, leaving mud holes where the springs had gone dry; and day and night their plaintive lowing came to Monk and his cowboys as they sat gloomily in deserted Su Casa. Walking up and down the fence, where the skeletons lay thick, the cows kept up a melancholy bawling; until, weakened by their thirst, they sank down and died and still other moving skeletons took their place.

At first the northern ranchers had sent stray men to ride the drift fence and drive their half-crazed cattle away but as the surface water dried up and there was no place for the cows to go they rode off and left them to their fate. Those that could travel they drove in and shipped, but the Journey of Death claimed its grim toll and bleaching

bones marked the long trail across the plains. Quarrels and bickerings sprang up as Si Battles and his brothers came down to drive their starvelings away; and more than once pistols were drawn as, with wire cutters in hand, they undertook to breach Monk's fence. But the water was his and he stood by his rights, though he watered all their strays before they left; and as one loss follower another the fighting Battles came no longer, for they were shipping by the trainload to Kansas.

A year and a half before they had led the van of a mighty army, pouring into the promised land; and now, broken and thwarted by the hostile forces of nature, they were retreating with the remnant of their herds. But the range which they had taken they held against all comers, maintaining a dead line against Montemayor and his sheep; and though they shipped out thousands of steers they left their breeding stock behind, for any day might bring the rains. Almost every morning, as the summer merged into fall, the storm clouds blew in from the east. Showers fell on the high plains, there was rain on the peaks, but with the cold it vanished like a mist. Only the wind blew, day and night, singing a dirge to all their hopes, and when winter came it brought no snow.

Don Lorenzo still worked on his wells, which he sunk deeper and deeper as the drainage from the mountains grew less, and, though he was anxious, he could not but take a grim pleasure in the disasters which had overtaken the Texans. God had punished them, after all, for their arrogance and pride and their disregard for the rights of the Mexicans. The curses of his people had fallen upon their heads, though they too must suffer from the drought. But the knowledge of two hundred years, handed down from father to son, was being vindicated in this last stroke of Providence; for the Mexicans as a people were engaged in the sheep business, whereas the Texans to a man owned cows.

Don Lorenzo himself had been in that same business until by trickery they had robbed him of his herds; and now that seeming misfortune appeared in its true light, for it had saved him from the ruin all about him. A kindly hand, reaching down and shaping his affairs, while it seemed at the time only to buffet, had forced him out of the cattle business and into the sheep business, just in time to escape the drought. The aggressions of the Texans, the chicanery of Montemayor, the Heaven-blessed moment when he had bought Juan Ochoa, all these had served to lay the foundations of a sure fortune, for his sheep were prospering wonderfully. He had discovered a virgin range, never touched by cattle or sheep, and now he controlled it with his wells; while the Texans, after taking the country, had seen it dry up under their eyes—and Montemayor, with his lawsuit, was laughingstock.

Only once since the day when he had stolen Montemayor's boss herder and led him off at the end of a rope had De Vega met the man who, more than any one else, was responsible for his entry into the sheep business. It was in Magdalena—where, with Juan Ochoa at his side, he was attending to the shipment of his lambs—that he had encountered Montemayor, face to face. And what lambs they were, big and fat and full of life! And what a shipment—it had paid all he owed! But Montemayor was smiling, or he pretended to smile, for he had won his lawsuit again. The supreme court of New Mexico had upheld the lower court in its decision against the Battles brothers, but De Vega laughed in Montemayor's face. For already it was known that the Battles, through their attorneys, had appealed to the supreme court of the United States; and by the time Pero Lugo had won his case again there would be nothing on which to collect.

Already the Battles brothers had shipped the bulk of their steers away, and they still held their range against his sheep; and yet this huge tub, this mountain of arrogance and conceit, babbled on about the victory he had won. His sheep were gone, his profits were lost; and meanwhile in one season, with Montemayor's stolen herders, De Vega had made a small fortune. So he had laughed and passed on while Montemayor gazed after him, his huge frame trembling with rage. Even yet Don Lorenzo could laugh at the thought of him, though his old-time gayety was gone. He was a sheepman now, a driver of men, a common laborer himself. The old life was gone forever!

Now and again, from a distance, he gazed back at Su Casa, that great house on its hill by the lake; and despite his success and the misfortunes of the Texans he almost wished he were back in that place. In that

house he had been a king and men over their wine often called him Lorenzo Magnífico; but now he was a laborer, smelling always of tallow and wool, thinking always of windmills and money. He worked harder than his herders, harder than Juan Ochoa himself, and he was one man in a thousand; but though he had lifted the great burden of debts from his shoulders the freedom gave no pleasure to his heart. What gentleman had ever lived without a few debts and clamoring creditors; and after all what good was his success? For, now that he was paid up, he had no use for his money except to buy more windmills, more sheep.

Mi Casa was far off the road and no caballeros came and went, to be welcomed with coffee and cakes and sweet wine; and with Angelita shut up in the convent at Socorro his new home seemed all the more desolate. Yet the Texan, Jason Coles, still stayed on with Ike Monk, and Angelita still protested her love; so for all his stark loneliness he must keep her with the Sisters, who were teaching her the humility she lacked. But the curse of God had been laid upon the land, to punish the Texans for their arrogance; and soon Ike Monk would go the way of the rest and take this Jason Coles with him. For the drought had hit them all —and no cattle could live on the plains, since the buffalo had never lived there before them. They were fighting against nature, against God Himself, and in the end they would be punished and lose everything. And when at last they should leave Su Casa, Don Lorenzo would move back and take up his life where he had left it. Until then, he could only wait.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHERE A FROG CAN LEARN TO SWIM.

THE winter after the Big Snow was as warm and dry as if snow had never fallen before, as if all the mighty burden of two years' storms had been dumped in a single week. Cattle that a storm would have killed tottered on till spring before they fell in some sand wash and died, but those that came through and shed their winter coats revealed rack-o'-bone skeletons underneath. Only their bellies were big, from eating acrid bushes and the coarse, dead *sacaton* of the flats; but the Iron M cows still kept up their strength, for they had water to dilute their bitter food. Every day in long procession they filed down and drank their fill and went back to the hills for more browse.

On the plains it was reversed, for the cattle there had grass; but one by one the trampled water holes dried up and caked with mud and the cows, turned adrift, wandered away. They wandered until they died or until they came to other water, and when that dried up they moved again. It was a dreary procession as they came lowing across the prairie, following the water smell that led to Indian Lake; and, pacing up and down the fence, they filled the night with their high bawling and the day with that stark picture of living death.

Sometimes out of pity Monk would throw open his gate and let them crowd in to the lake; but once they tasted its waters they would never leave the fence, nor could they be driven away. They lingered about and died and as he watched their drawn-out suffering Monk shook his grizzled head and sighed. Only two years before, when he had first come to Indian Lake, it had seemed a cowman's paradise. The cattle were fat, there was grass and water everywhere, and a hundred big herds were behind him. He had staked five hundred steers for the right to water at this lake, and now that he owned it all he would gladly trade it back for the two years he had wasted in New Mexico. Just for the herd he had then and the privilege of moving on, out of this hell hole where it never would rain; but now it was too late and, unless the drought broke, he must follow the rest back to Texas.

One by one the bold Texans who had followed in his wake were abandoning their ranches around the plains; their cattle were being shipped out, or turned over to their creditors, or left untended to pile up against his fence. They came drifting in like tumble weeds before the first north wind, following the scent of his water for miles; and though they died by hundreds there were always more behind, to bawl and moan through the long, sleepless nights. It was not so much that they died but that in dying they lowed and pleaded and reproached Monk for denying them water; and when at last they perished their twisted heads were set in anguish and they stared at him with sightless eyes. He was a cowman and it wrung his heart to see them.

Yet of all the Texans who had come into

this new country Monk was most favored to withstand the long drought. Except for his neighbors' cows, which came crowding against his drift fence, he would be satisfied to await the end. But if he threw open his gate, as more than once he had done, and let the poor sufferers come in, they simply added their numbers to the thousands of hungry cattle who were feeding his range down to the rocks. All through March, with its rough winds, and through April and May, he looked hopefully for some sign of rain; but, though the storm clouds blew up they seemed to evaporate over the parched plains, which radiated heat like a brickyard. June came, with its blinding heat and rushing, ceaseless winds that buried the whole landscape in dust clouds; and as his creditors began to press him Monk laid off the last of his men, for something told him he was doomed to lose.

On the first day that he had come there, Lorenzo de Vega had warned him that the country was dry. He had told him in so many words that sometimes for several years it did not rain at all, that the buffalo had never lived there on account of the droughts and that cattle could not live there now; but the long grass had deceived him, the lake had tempted him to stay, and now he could see the end. His own feed was getting short and on the day that he opened his gate the outside cattle would rush in. If his were the only cows he could tear down his fence and let them graze far out on the plains; but there seemed no end to the gaunt procession of steers and cows that came drifting in from the north.

They were the last of the huge herds that had been driven into this new country, big of bone and endowed with strength above the rest; but their strength was their curse for it only prolonged the painful agonies and postponed a merciful death. Monk watched them, day by day, until at last his stern heart relented and he went down and threw open the gate.

"Come in!" he grumbled; "and stop that danged bawling! I'm plumb wore out, jest listening to you. To hell with a country where a frog can't learn to swim! I'm going back to Texas—right soon!"

He turned his haggard eyes to young Jason Coles, the horse wrangler, and broke the silence of days.

"Kid," he said, "you certainly made a mistake when you didn't draw your time with the rest. Now I'm broke, and worse than broke, and you've got two years' pay owing to you—but I'll pay you as soon as I can."

"I don't need the money," replied the wrangler indifferently. "I'd just spend it for clothes or lose it in some poker game. But you wait, dad—it's fixing to rain right soon."

"Rain!" scoffed Monk. "I've forgot what rain looks like. What put that idee in your head?"

"Oh—something," answered Jason. "I just feel it in my bones. You wait and you'll win out, yet."

"I'm waiting," returned Monk, "but not for the rain. I've got a note that's overdue with that Mexican bank at Albuquerque, and I'm looking for the sheriff, any time. The price of cattle has gone to nothing and it'll shore give 'em pleasure to come out and foreclose on a 'Teehanno.' "

"What? Take the whole works?" cried Jason.

"Jest the cows," shrugged Monk, "but if anybody wants a ranch I've got one that I'll sell, dirt cheap. I'm burned out on this country—that's the truth."

"Yes, but one good rain would make you worth a million dollars. Look at this lake here, and all the rest of it!"

"What good is a lake if it's the only one in the country and you have to fence it off from the grass? There's where I fell down, son, when I bought out De Vega—I never figured on these dad-burned cows!"

He glanced wearily at the outside cattle that were crowding in through his gate, and Jason Coles said no more. That indeed was the big drawback to owning Su Casa and the only lake for forty miles—every cow in the country was attracted to the water and, coming there, they ate off the grass. For so many months that it seemed years he had been driving away strays and dragging stinking carcasses from the water front; dead or alive they were a nuisance, a detriment to the business, a damage to the value of Indian Lake. And now, worn out at last by the sight of their misery, Monk had thrown open his gate to those that lived. After all they were but proving what had been proved too often before—that Don Lorenzo and his people were right. He had told them from the start that the plains were not a cow country, but they had seen in his solicitude only a desire to get rid of

them, a covert effort to make them move on to Arizona.

As the days came and went Monk climbed up into the tower and watched as De Vega had watched for his enemies; but the Texan's bloodshot eyes sought only for the rain, though they wandered from time to time up the road. Down that trail, if he came, the sheriff would ride in, to put an end to the long agony of waiting. What Monk owed was not much but the banks were failing everywhere and the days of grace had passed for the cowman. All over the Southwest cattle were being shoved onto the market and knocked down to the highest bidder at sheriffs' sales; feed was short and water was shorter, and unless it rained soon the Iron Ms would die, with the rest. The whole country was one vast desert, so dry and wind swept that the hope of rain seemed a fantasy, a dream.

"It can't rain!" cried Monk as he watched the whirling dust devils, yet the time for the rains was at hand. The rain wind was blowing, as it had now for a week, rushing the dust down from the passes in dense streamers; but earth and air were so dry that the puffy clouds shrank and vanished, and, while he watched, Monk saw what he had feared from the first. Down the long Journey of Death a troop of horsemen was approaching. It was the sheriff, coming to take away his cattle!

"Well, come on, dang your hearts!" he cursed between his teeth. "Come and git 'em, before they all die. To hell with such a country and the passel of Mexicans that run it. I'm going back to Texas, where it rains!"

"But what about the ranch?" asked Jason Coles as he watched the posse.

"Leave it hyer for the danged greasers! Leave it to dry up and blow away! My God, kid, you don't think I'm going to *stay!*"

"Sure," nodded Jason. "If you don't, I will. This place is going to be valuable some day."

"Huh! You're thinking about that gal!" grumbled Monk, and stood looking down the road at the dust. "Now hyer, son," he said at last, "I've got no money to pay you, so you might as well tag along. He'p me drive back the horses and when I git a start in Texas I'll pay you what I owe, and more. You'll never see that gal again, nohow."

"Yes I will!" answered Jason confidently, "and I'll marry her, too. It takes more than a bunch of Mexicans to beat me out of my girl. I promised her I'd wait, and I'll do it."

"Well—all right," said Monk, smiling dubiously. "But the old man will kill you—he said so."

"Aw, that was just a bluff," laughed Jason. "What do you want for your ranch, and six horses?"

"You want to take it over?" demanded Monk. "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, and glad to do it. You give me your note for ten thousand dollars and I'll turn the whole works over, right now. If you come out winner I know your note is good, and if you don't—well, it won't make much difference."

"I'll go you," spoke up Jason eagerly. "Will you give me a bill of sale for the brand?"

"Right now," said Monk grimly and scribbled it out while he waited.

"Now there's one thing more," he said, "and that's your back pay. I don't want to euchre you out of that. We'll jest let that go as a deposit on this sale. You earned it, twice over, tailing up cows."

"All right, dad," nodded the wrangler. "And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll go out and fan them cows into the hills."

"Make them Mexicans earn their money, eh?" grinned Monk.

"Sure thing," declared Jason. "They've got no right to grab everything. And some day those cows will be valuable."

"If it rains—yes!" rumbled Monk.

"Well, it's going to!" maintained Jason. "Liable to cut loose any time. I know it! I can feel it in my bones."

"All right, son," agreed Monk with a fatherly smile. "I sure hope it does, for your sake. But I'm going back to Texas, where a frog can learn to swim. I'm burned out on this country—it's too dry."

To be concluded in the next issue of THE POPULAR, *June 20th.*

A Change in the Contract

By J. Paul Suter

Denham was an excellent accountant, but he had to learn that the highest common factor of all business multiples is the human factor.

THE grilling which old Benzert was giving Denham had nothing loud or violent in it. He was picking his expressions deliberately, making them bite more by his manner than by anything in the words themselves. His faded blue eyes snapped occasionally as he pointed across Lem Johnson's desk, but he did not raise his voice throughout—it was unnecessary. For Denham, sitting at the other side of the big, square desk, at Johnson's right, had been rendered speechless as it was. His mind seemed shell shocked by the unexpected outburst of the old auditor. From time to time he lifted his hand, as if to ward off Benzert's words; but the hand merely stroked his own silky little mustache or fumbled nervously with the black ribbon dangling from one side of his nose glasses. It was distinctly a one-man show; that man being Sam Benzert, the auditor, Benzert the back number, Benzert who was to play second fiddle to Denham, the new comptroller of the Johnson Steel Company.

The entire audience for the show was Lem Johnson, himself. He leaned far back in his huge, leather-seated armchair, chewing on an unlighted cigar, saying nothing. From beneath his heavy gray thatch of eyebrows his glance darted, sometimes at Benzert, oftener at Denham. His face was not to be read. It was square jawed and noncommittal. But Denham felt that the greater frequency with which the glance bored into him evidenced a grim interest on the president's part in observing his comptroller to be under fire.

Benzert's biting words at last reached their climax.

"You have come here for three successive years, Mr. Denham," he said unemotionally; "three years, as head of Brackett & Sloper's accountants, to audit this company's books. You have never found any serious fault in my figures. Yet, all this time, you have been worming yourself into Mr. Johnson's confidence and slowly undermining me. I've been aware of it, and I wasn't aston-

ished when it came to this. You aren't even satisfied now, with being comptroller, over my head. You'd like to be rid of me altogether, wouldn't you?"

Denham opened his mouth but no sound issued forth. Benzert leaned far across Johnson's desk, and shook a slow, lean forefinger under the fascinated accountant's nose.

"Of course you would! I can read your mind, Denham. Well—you shall be. You shall be rid of me. But watch that I don't come back when you least expect it!"

He withdrew the finger, as if putting it back into a case; straightened himself; and, with the slow, slipperlike shuffle which was peculiar to him, left the office. The murky spell of his words kept the others silent until the heavy door had clicked behind him.

"Now, what the devil did he mean by that?" Lem Johnson exploded, at last.

Denham cleared his throat. He was gathering himself together.

"These scenes are inevitable, Mr. Johnson, when up-to-date methods of accounting take the place of the old ways. Though I wish Mr. Benzert would be more reasonable, nevertheless——"

Johnson interrupted him, impatiently.

"I want to think this over alone, Denham. We've dated your contract to begin a month from to-day. That will give your people time to finish the audit they're making. I suppose they'll want you to remain in charge till it's wound up?"

Denham bowed silently and prepared to withdraw; but the president called after him as he reached the door.

"Don't feel too sore about it, Denham. Sam's a reasonable animal. He's like me—getting old and has a temper. He'll cool down."

The comptroller to be doubted that. He was aware of a number of reasons for questioning it. The very sincerity with which he acknowledged his own ability to himself made him sensitive to the disapproval of others. Until the show-down in Lem Johnson's office, Benzert had never offered him an angry word; nor had Denham openly criticized Benzert. He had condemned the old fellow rather through subtle irony, and damned by the things he left unsaid. His work had gained cumulative force by virtue of the fact that he came once a year at the head of his delegation to audit the company's books, and each year gave the screw another twist. And most of the things he left unsaid, but carefully implied, were true. Benzert *was* old fashioned. He had not by any means been taking full advantage of the figures he prepared. The balance sheet was to him the place where his month's work reached its climax. To Denham it was merely the starting point for a host of subtle statements and analyses, which laid bare the soul of the business. In the kind of game the public accountant played the old auditor had been a loser from the start. In spite of Benzert's silence, Denham felt that the old man knew it; that he had known it, all along. Now the explosion had come.

Yet, as the month before the new relation became effective wore on, Denham wonderingly acknowledged that Johnson's words seemed like good prophecy, after all. As far as Benzert's attitude was concerned, the scene in the president's office might never have occurred. The old man was neither more nor less obliging than before. He gave any data or clerical help requested. There was no enthusiasm in his manner of doing so—but there never had been. Denham had no reason for complaint. Still, as the month closed, he felt uneasy. He feared a bomb of some sort. Relations between them had been too placid to be natural.

On the first morning of his new incumbency, Denham was met at the door by several of the clerks. He took their presence for a greeting to himself, until a quick glance about the accounting room proved his error. None of them was at work. They were gathered into little groups, with heavy faces, with excitement apparent in every word and gesture. Most of the girls were crying. The voice of Boggs, the chief clerk, old and deaf, at whom Denham directed his first sharp query, broke as he answered.

"Mr. Benzert, sir. He came down early this morning, and shot himself at his desk. They took him to his son's—he's a doctor. I just got a telephone message that he is dead."

"Dead!" Denham started violently. "How can that be?"

"I can't seem to realize it, myself, sir," the old man said gently.

Denham closed his lips, for fear of making some other banal remark. He hesitated a moment, then strode through the midst of the agitated clerks into Johnson's office.

The president was sitting at his broad desk, with both hands hanging limply at his

sides. His rugged face seemed as limp as the hands. He motioned Denham to a chair, and, almost in a whisper, asked:

"Have they told you?"

Denham nodded.

"How much did they tell you?"

"That—Mr. Benzert has shot himself."

"I didn't mean that. They haven't told you. Why should they?"

Johnson's features worked. He rose and walked to the window. When he returned to the desk his face was set.

"I'll tell you, myself. Before old Sam died he left word that none of us was to come to his home—no one connected with the company. He mentioned me particularly. We aren't even to send flowers. We are simply to—keep away."

Denham was recovering his poise.

"That seems hard, of course," he observed gently. "Still, I suppose it's natural—an old man's whim——"

"Benzert was justified!" Johnson interrupted fiercely. "I'm a miserable hound. It took his death to show me up. Do you know what was the matter with Benzert?" he demanded, rising again and kicking his chair away. "He was growing old. There was nothing wrong with his work. There never had been. I threw him on the scrap heap because he was old; and, God help me, I'm old, too. I'm rich and he wasn't—there's the difference."

"But you didn't throw him on the scrap heap, Mr. Johnson."

"Let me finish!" thundered the president. "He's gone. Here you are, in his place. I've nothing against you. Anything I might say about you would hit my own case, too. You're the comptroller of this company. From to-day you take entire charge of Benzert's organization. Do anything you please with it; but show me whether you can hold down his job."

Denham started to speak, but something in the old man's face silenced him. He considered it best, on the whole, to get out of Johnson's office as quickly as possible. Some other time would do better to rehabilitate his fluttered dignity.

Once more in the general office, he issued a few quiet, confident commands, which scattered the clerks back to their desks and the routine work. Benzert had shaped a good organization, indeed, which could resume its functioning on the very morning of his suicide.

With some inward shame Denham congratulated himself on the fact. He possessed no experience in directing a large office force. He could criticize and appraise one by its results, but to manage it was a different affair. His task was to find himself and learn to handle the steering wheel before Johnson discovered his deficiencies.

On the second morning, deaf old Boggs came to him, and rather diffidently offered any help or information that might be needed. Denham eyed him coldly.

"I don't know that anything of the sort will be necessary, thank you, Boggs," he replied. "The proposition here seems very simple."

Boggs went out with fire in his eye. With that speech the coupling was broken between the new comptroller and his organization. It was Denham's manner rather than his words. He had not really meant to be overabrupt. His pride as an accountant had been hurt a little—that was all. But the incident was the beginning of a losing fight—a fight which, as Denham fondly hoped, the president of the company did not observe.

But one day, with characteristic abruptness, Johnson stopped in striding past his comptroller's desk.

"What's the matter, Denham?" he demanded.

Denham, deep in figures, looked up with anxious eyes.

"You've changed more in four months than I have in ten years," the president persisted. "Know what you remind me of? You remind me of a cat, treed by a dog. You're up in the air—away up. Come down. Take things a little easier."

He passed on with what was meant for a kindly smile. Denham impulsively hid his face on folded arms across his desk—the desk that had been Benzert's. He was up again instantly, with shoulders squared, looking about to see that no one had perceived his weakness. But in that moment the truth had hit him hard. He was failing—the president of the company saw it. He was trying vainly to hold a dead man's job. Benzert had threatened to come back. Whatever he had meant by that, this was how he was doing it—by the fact that the organization which he had trained remained loyal to his memory, and declined to "pull" for his rival.

Denham determined to face the facts.

His only hope for victory, he told himself, lay in even harder work—work hard enough to drive this brooding memory of Benzert out of his mind. Harder work and longer hours.

So he buckled to it, grimly. His eyes became bloodshot. He avoided the clerks even more than at first; and, as far as possible, they avoided him.

This was the situation one night, six months after Benzert's melancholy leave-taking. It was the twentieth night, hand running, that Denham had remained at his desk until nearly midnight. Add to this that he had behind him a record of several months of such excess, and even an unimaginative accountant might have been expected to feel a touch of nervousness. Denham's state of mind betrayed itself in the frequency with which he gnawed his silky mustache; in twitchings of his body; in the impatient quiver of his forefinger as it traveled a second time over some column of figures which he should have needed to add but once. He rose occasionally and refreshed himself at the cooler of spring water in a corner of the office. Each time, he passed a little bookcase filled with Benzert's books, which had never been sent for, with a curious old pipe rack of Benzert's still on the top of it. The silver cup which he carried from a drawer in the desk to the cooler had been his predecessor's. Most men—even most unimaginative men—would have been unable to drink from the cup unconcernedly; but that was one of Denham's ways of forgetting Benzert's threat. The comptroller was trying to evolve an intricate yet vivid analysis such as he had produced for Lem Johnson while Benzert was still in charge; but in those days the old auditor had built the foundations on which the dazzling superstructure had risen. Now, Denham was erecting from the bottom, and he found the task unfamiliar and rather difficult.

After two hours of solid digging he leaned back in his chair, with drawn face, trying to catch by the tail some fact which just eluded him. He was overlooking something. The figures were not right.

"Benzert, old chap," he soliloquized at length, "I wish you were here for five minutes. You know this game better than I do, after all."

He started at the sound of his own voice, then laughed shamefacedly and looked around the vacant office. What would any of the clerks have thought to hear him talking to himself—and expressing such a sentiment? And suppose that, by some strange chance—some extension of those laws of which, when all is said, we know nothing—suppose—— He brought himself up short with another laugh, and reflected that this night work was coming a little too strong. He would have to ease up a bit.

The slight break in the tension set his mind free again, and he remembered that Benzert had always been very methodical in filing away his rough working sheets. Such a sheet, applying to the last annual statement, was likely to be in the accounting-department vault, on the floor below. Denham rose from his chair and started downstairs.

As he came to the street entrance on the lower floor he heard the buzz of a signal box in the entry way, and saw the stooped figure of the watchman, who was replacing his key in a baggy pocket.

"Just starting on the office round, Jake?"

"Just getting through, sir. I won't be back in the office for an hour."

Denham nodded and passed on to the vault. He concentrated intently on his search, and in half an hour had the satisfaction of recognizing, on a neatly docketed working paper, the figures he sought. He switched out the vault light, locked the door again, and started back to the other floor.

His mind was still filled with figures as he traversed the length of several offices between the vault and the stairs. He had almost reached the top of the latter when a vague sound from above brought him to a halt. His breathing hesitated, then asserted itself again with a gasp Overwork will play strange tricks with a man's brain. He had seemed to hear slow, shuffling footsteps crossing those upper offices. They had stopped just as he paused to listen. He smiled at the odd fancy.

He had to cross all of the upstairs suites before reaching his office: Treasury department first, with credit department beside it; billing and accounts-payable divisions in the next room, distinguished by a score of somberly shrouded, mechanical bookkeeping machines; cost division. These places were dimly lighted, with one or two wall bulbs apiece, in contrast to the bright illumination from the open door of his own office, beyond them.

The desk where he had been sitting was around a corner of his office, in a sort of alcove. It was not visible from the doorway. He paused within this doorway—for no reason which he would have cared to admit—then walked directly to the alcove and rounded the corner.

He stopped. Some one was sitting at the desk. It was a bowed, crumpled figure, with the head down, as if the eyes were fixed on the various statements lying about. The hands were moving slowly and soundlessly among these. Except for a livid mark on the right temple, the face seemed translucent, like wax.

Denham knew instantly who it was. A wave of horror surged over him. The roots of his hair tingled, and a soft but very cold wind seemed to bathe his body, as though he had stood there naked. He tried to move backward, out of sight of the apparition, but found it impossible to retrace a step. He sought to turn his eyes away; but they continued to focus on the figure and on the twisting hands, until he felt his eyeballs ache with the strain. Even the lids refused to shut, and remained stiff and open, with a dry prickling back of the lashes.

Unable to move though he was, his mind suddenly became active—furiously active, like a racing engine. It called up a panorama of scenes, linked together, extending back over the past few years. The scenes all concerned his relations with this man, whom he had thought gone. As he stood there, he seemed to be judging himself. He saw things clearly, in new values. And he condemned himself.

His gaze turned at last to the red mark, standing livid on the pale temple. The blame for that lay with him. With the admission, a great humility came, crowding out his first fear. He felt an overwhelming pity for the crumpled figure in the chair, a frantic willingness to give all that he had, if only the red mark might be wiped away. He longed to assure the soundless figure that he was sorry—but he could not speak.

In his efforts to do so, some sort of sound must have passed his lips. For the first time the figure of Benzert lifted its eyes and looked at him. Denham returned the gaze for one supreme moment, and toppled over, unconscious.

Three days later Denham reappeared at the office, immaculate as ever, but pale and extremely nervous. He walked into old Lem Johnson's room, and, with his first words, resigned as comptroller of the Johnson Steel Company.

The president tilted back in his chair, with open mouth; then, collecting himself, motioned Denham to a seat.

"What's the reason, Denham?" he inquired.

"Brackett & Sloper have asked me to go back to them. I should like to accept." Denham hesitated, and went on slowly. "You may have heard of my experience the other night, Mr. Johnson?"

Johnson nodded. "I heard something about it."

"I'm not superstitious. I had been working hard, and very likely my eyes or my brain were overtired. But what I went through has changed my viewpoint on a number of things."

He stopped. A conflict seemed to be going on within him. Some of the instincts of the cold accountant, who had stepped into Benzert's job, were urging him to reticence. Something bigger, more elemental, moved him to speak. The second prompting won.

"Take my relations with the clerks—I realize now that these have not been right. I have been insufferably snobbish. And Mr. Benzert——" His lips tightened. He clenched his hands. "Mr. Benzert would not have killed himself, but for me. I am ready to admit that. Possibly I am a good accountant; but as a man I've been a failure. I want to go somewhere else and try again."

He rose and slowly pushed his chair to one side.

"There you have the truth, Mr. Johnson. Will you release me from my contract?"

Johnson had listened to his words—especially the last part of them—with evidence of profound and increasing astonishment. Once he had all but interrupted. He rose at the question and walked sharply to the other end of his office, hands in pockets, head sunk on chest. Returning, he faced his comptroller.

"If you want me to release you, I will," he promised. "But, first, do me a favor. Sit here till I come back."

Johnson left the room. He strode through the busy general office to the roll-top desk at the far end where old Boggs, shoulders hunched and head craned forward, was meditating on a profit-and-loss statement.

Johnson tapped the chief clerk on the arm, just perceptibly beckoning him. He led the way to the private office that had been Benzert's. There, Johnson drew up a chair for himself, while he motioned Boggs to another. The chief clerk sat down with wondering uneasiness. The president eyed him sternly, and paused before speaking, like a man who chooses his words with care.

"I want to ask you a question, Boggs," he said at last. "If you ever tell any one I asked it, I'll fire you."

Boggs stood up, in trepidation.

"Sit down! Give me a straight answer. When you found you were mistaken about Sam Benzert's being dead, did you tell Denham?"

Boggs looked with troubled perplexity at his chief.

"I'm exceedingly sorry for the mistake, sir, just as I said at the time. Mr. Benzert's son was angry with us and he telephoned us to keep away and not send flowers. How I ever got the impression from him that Mr. Benzert was dead, I don't know. It must have been my deafness. I'll never forgive myself. As soon as I learned the truth, I came in and told you."

Johnson shook his forefinger emphatically under Boggs' nose.

"What I want to know is—*did you tell Denham?"*

"Didn't you do that, Mr. Johnson?"

The president swore, softly.

"Were you and the other clerks very talkative with Mr. Denham—very chatty and chummy, so to speak?" he went on.

Boggs' troubled countenance indicated blank amazement.

"Why, no, sir! Mr. Denham never encouraged anything like that. We rather went out of our way to avoid speaking to him."

"So when you learned that Benzert was alive, and probably would recover, you left it to me to tell Denham; and every other man-jack in the office, including myself, left it for some one else to tell?"

"I fear it must have been that way, sir. Mr. Denham knows now, of course?"

Johnson got up heavily, with something between a sigh and a growl.

"He's going to know inside of ten minutes. If I can ease it to him so he won't faint, as he did when he saw old Sam himself, I'm lucky. The bunch out there heard something about that, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'll tell you the facts. If they start any cock-and-bull story, you can nail it. Old Sam's getting better fast. He was doing so well that they laid off the night nurse. Then what does he do but have a fit of delirium, the very next night after the nurse left. He'd been worrying about the office—I suppose some of you told him things when you visited him—and he still had his key. Then, too, I think he had a sort of fixed idea that he was to come back, as soon as he possibly could. He came down here, crazy as a loon, let himself in, and sat down at his old desk. That's where he was when Denham saw him. It was hard on Denham, but I think the little trip did Sam good. He's been improving ever since." Johnson paused. "You understand, that's for *your* information, so you can kill any lies?"

"I understand, sir."

"You can get back to your work, then. Don't forget that if you spill too much of this around the office you'll be asking me for a recommendation. I won't have my comptroller made a fool of."

Johnson reëntered his office with marked reluctance. He drew up a chair for himself, close to the one in which Denham still sat. He sized up the comptroller, thoughtfully and regretfully. Then he gritted his teeth and went to it.

Though Lem Johnson was bluff, outspoken, often rough in his manner of conveying ideas, he did not lack understanding of men. Without it he might have felt less confidence in the success of his task of explanation. Instinct told him, however, that the Denham who sat in his office, listening to his halting words, was a man who had undergone a profound though subtle change. He was not the Denham of former days. He was a simpler, more genuine type, of the kind Johnson understood.

Johnson had begun with considerable hesitancy; but he soon perceived that his comptroller was going to hear him through without a tremor. With that knowledge the president proceeded to tell the story in his own natural, straightforward fashion. He told it from start to finish. He covered the whole subject, even to small, unpleasant details he had meant to omit. Denham did not faint. He sat tight, white lipped, breathing hard at times, but master of himself. At last Johnson straightened up.

"You've taken that like a man!" he declared. "I said I was willing to cancel your contract. Well, I've changed my mind. I don't want to."

"You've left out something," the comptroller said slowly, in a rather weak voice. "I should like to know how Mr. Benzert feels toward me."

Johnson chuckled.

"I'll tell you how he feels. He's been mighty sick, remember. That changes a man—just as the ghost you thought you saw changed you. I dropped in on him yesterday. He's doing fine now—we ought to have him back in another month. Maybe he did mean once to kill himself and come back to haunt you—I don't know. He isn't explaining about that—but he did tell me that he particularly wants to see you. Says he thinks you and he should be friends."

Denham sprang to his feet.

"Did he say *that?*"

"He certainly did."

"Do you think he meant it?"

"I know he meant it."

Slowly, Denham sank back into the chair. He bowed his head, a moment. When he looked up again, his eyes returned Lem Johnson's understanding glance.

"I'll stay, Mr. Johnson. But I must insist on your changing my contract in one particular. Put me on, not as comptroller, but as an accountant with special duties. I can work better that way."

Johnson returned Denham's gaze with an incredulous stare. In a moment, he broke into a grin. He gripped the comptroller's hand.

"I wonder what a *real* ghost would have done to you?" he chuckled.

Another story by Mr. Suter will appear in an early issue.

THE ULTIMATUM

THERE is a rear admiral in the United States navy famous for two things: his bluntness of speech and his amazingly beautiful and charming daughter. An ensign in the service, having fallen deeply in love with the girl, went to the father, seeking his permission for the match.

"You want to marry my daughter, do you?" grumbled the rear admiral, his under jaw thrust forward.

"Yes, sir; I do."

"Well, what do you propose to support a wife on, with nothing but an ensign's pay?"

"If I'm not mistaken," replied the lover, red in the face, "you were married, admiral, when you were an ensign."

"Yes, I know I was, young man," said the admiral; "but I lived on my father-in-law, and I'll be damned if you are going to do that!"

THE TWO TYRANNIES

SAMUEL GOMPERS, president of the American Federation of Labor, had a conference on the strike situation last July with the Senate committee on labor. When it was over, a brigade of newspaper photographers asked the labor leader to pose for them. He refused, but later gave in when Senators King, Borah and Walsh, of Massachusetts, said that, as they were going to pose, he might as well join them. While the cameras were clicking, Mr. Gompers looked about as cheerful as a man having three teeth pulled.

"Senator," he said gloomily to Mr. Borah, "when I was down in Mexico recently President Obregon confided to me that they had abolished all forms of tyranny in that country except two."

"What tyrannies survive down there?" asked the senator from Idaho.

"The mother-in-law and the photographer," replied Gompers.

Talks With Men

By Martin Davison

XI.—ON THE FORCE OF EXAMPLES.

IN talking with you, when I started some months ago, I had to commence with advice. Not that I think advice amounts to much. Many people give it, few take it. It is a commodity that falls to the ground neglected like privet blossoms in spring. The force of example, however, is a different matter. We are all born mimics. Let a man make a million dollars, save a life or burn a barn, and if his achievement is placarded abroad he will soon have a thousand others trying to do the same thing.

A few issues ago I printed a letter from a Mrs. Z. who, with her husband, since the war, had succeeded by economy in piling up a nice little fortune. She wanted to know whether she ought to spend some of her savings buying a house. I told her not to, knowing all the time that she would not in any case. I gave her good advice—the kind she was bound to take.

Since then I have had a lot of letters from people who are interested in saving rather than in spending. For instance:

"I feel impelled to say that I truly appreciate Mrs. Z.'s letter and your reply in April 20th POPULAR. If it is only a parable it is splendid, but if it is really a bona-fide letter and experience it is precious. It is interesting, it is encouraging, it is helpful. She indeed tells of a living, real successful life and it is so exceptional in these times of reckless extravagance and indulgence, when thousands of people are chasing around in expensive automobiles that they cannot afford—people who if hard times came and they lost their jobs would be paupers inside of three months. If every other article were obliterated from the twentieth of April issue of POPULAR and only this published it would well have repaid the cost of it. It surely is refreshing to learn of real, living folks such as she and her husband are. And thank you for publishing it and indorsing it so heartily in your reply. Truly yours, W. B."

W. B. suggests that the letter may have been "only a parable." Not at all. All the letters I print are genuine ones. I'm not going to fake anything in this department. So far as I can make out there is no hokum of any kind in the

whole magazine and I'm not going to start putting it in. Besides, the editor would not stand for it if I tried to. Mrs. Z.'s letter was an inspiring human document. Furthermore it is all literally true. I have heard from Mrs. Z. again in greater detail, and you can take it from her—and she knows—that it is possible to save money on a small income and still get a whole lot out of life.

L. C. C. writes me from Los Angeles:

"My story may serve to encourage you in the sane effort to preach sane saving, though I have no complaint to make about the world or the people in it, no plea for advice or help. I have never had any ambition to be rich or great, to sway the multitude or loan it money or borrow from it.

"I have had a consuming ambition to amass a modest competence in order that the fear of poverty in old age might not force my wife and myself to be a burden on our children or on the State. Three times in my life I have reached that point and was all ready to garner in my sheaves, when some cuss came along with less conscience and more wit than I, and gathered my crop into his own barn. Three times I have gone back to the most trying and poorly paid manual labor because nothing better offered and idleness was unthinkable.

"When we got into the Great War I had a nice little business established that might have made me a fortune pursued during those days, but, while utterly opposed to our entry into the conflict, when my own boys were in the fracas I could not feel that any one at home had the right to be a nonproducer and a fortune hunter, and so I closed my office and went back to the stock farm where my experience and knowledge were sure to count heavily.

"Being 'found' I had no reason to spend money and spent none, the munificent checks of fifty dollars a month going to my good wife, who promptly salted them down in Liberty Bonds, she and the daughter earning enough to keep the little flat and feed themselves between spells of Red Cross work.

"When 1920 found my boys home I got back into my old profession again, and having then about eight hundred dollars saved up from that fifty dollars per, and rents becoming foolish, we bought, about two thousand dollars below the market, a modest home. But, while we had the eight hundred dollars, we did not pay that down, but only five hundred dollars. We figured that we could pay one hundred dollars each month on the principal, but agreed to pay only forty dollars. In fact we paid more than the one hundred dollars, but kept out the anchor to windward.

"By 1923 business came along where we had bought, as we knew it would do, and we sold at advance enough to purchase two lots well located but not swagger, and again below the market, as this time we paid cash.

"Knowing the building game and also the loan, we built two modest though high-class apartment buildings and both were rented and one sold before completion.

"We have now the one left and to keep, which nets us seven per cent on thirty thousand dollars, besides our own lovely flat, and my ambition has been reached, as by the end of the year it will be practically clear, and I can put out to sea when the call comes, knowing that the dear ones will not have to worry about old age or poverty.

"The lesson, if there is one? I am seventy-one years old. We began this last crusade when I was sixty-seven. I am at the office from six thirty a. m. to five p. m., with no time off for lunch, which is merely a cake of chocolate carried in my pocket. The young men come in at nine, take two hours for lunch and quit at five. I am paid a higher salary than any one in my line because I have the experience to back up a trained brain. No young man, no matter how bright, can fill my shoes, because in my line, as in many others, experience is the great thing.

"There is no dead line in age or accomplishment, given the opportunity. Age need not fear. While youth may be served, still youth must also serve.

"A word now and then to encourage the hopeless old ones may be a wise and merciful thing.

"Were we happy when economizing thus? We were supremely happy. No sedan, coupé or even a flivver; a wheelbarrow and lawn mower were and are my limit, and believe me it is a mighty good limit for a poor man. My personal expenses are twenty cents per day, with now and then a baseball game or a college meet with my sons.

"I lost my hearing years ago, but am happy all the time. With a busy brain stored with the wealth of past ages from Moses and Milton to Mommsen and Motley and from Joshua to Theodore, with my table close at hand and my POPULAR for amusement, recreation and instruction I lack nothing, for my dear family are all in easy reach, and I can work. When the first rays of the morning sun flash into my window from the Hollywood hills my matin song is: 'Thank God for work,' and when vesper having closed the gates has led the day to rest, unwearied lips breathe a good night of: 'Thank God for work, the privilege of work and the power to accomplish each day's task.'"

THIS is another inspiring letter telling the story of a really successful life. L. C. C. starts out by saying that he never had any ambition to be a rich man. Four times in his life, it is evident that he lost everything that he had—three times when sharpers cleaned him out, and the fourth time when he gave up his chances, on the outbreak of the war. And yet, in spite of all this, he winds up with a sum of money that would seem like genuine riches to the great majority of the human race.

I advised Mrs. Z. to keep away from real estate and to stick to her public-securities investment, continuing to pay rent in her little flat. L. C. C. is a horse of another color. He knows two businesses. One is stock raising and the other is the real-estate business. He does not say so in his letter, but his business paper shows that he is the title officer in a big real-estate company. That, and his location in a rapidly growing city on the west coast, accounts somewhat for the ease with which he began to pile it up when he did get started.

As a cold matter of fact, while we are on the subject of real estate, I want to say that it is a business by itself. I have often seen it said in print that any one who bought real estate on Manhattan Island, for instance, or anywhere in the immediate vicinity of New York, would be sure to make money on it. This is simply not the case. Millions have been lost in New York real estate. To a man who knows the game there are wonderful investments—but you need just as much expert advice when it comes to buying city lots and houses as you do when you are buying stocks and bonds.

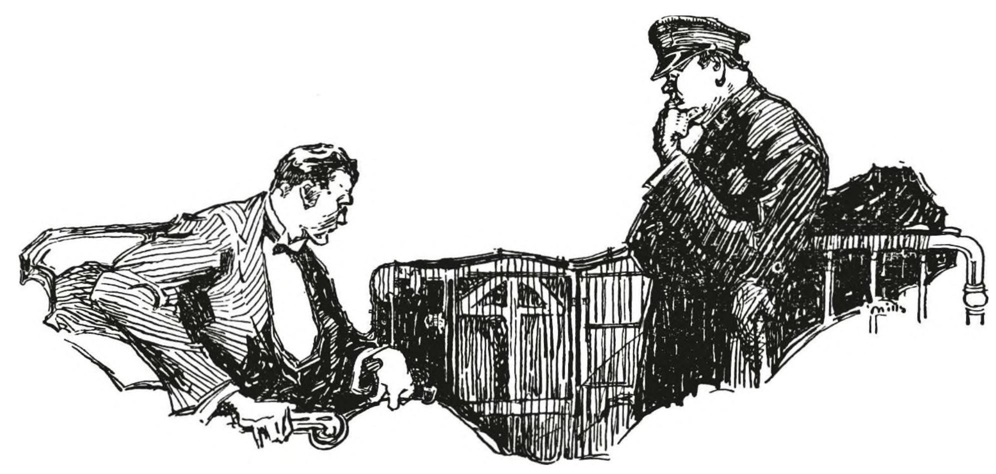
A FRIEND of mine, a man of wealth, who knows the real-estate game better than most, was telling me about the fine house, in the select neighborhood, in which he lived when he was a boy.

"There were no subways then," he said, "and the taxes were low. There was only one bridge, the ferries and the horse car. It took us about three times as long to get in and out of town then as it does now. And yet then, that house cost a hundred thousand dollars—and now the house sells for thirty."

This is in spite of the fact that the cost of building has gone up three or four times and that the very materials in the old house, if bought now, would cost more than it is bringing. As a matter of fact, very few houses to-day are built as well as that one was.

The secret is, that it is going to be torn down and carted off as waste material. It is to make place for a new apartment house with two and three-room apartments, and dogs and radio sets and victrolas in each apartment. Large families are going out of style in New York City and a lot of people have lost money because of the change in fashion.

This is about enough for now.



The Honest Dollar

By Robert H. Rohde

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System and routine are the chief instruments of professional crime detectors. But the Great Macumber could do without them—for he always contended that he was no detective, but a magician.

MISS RONNIE SCANLON—who is the younger and, in the Great Macumber's opinion, by a shade the lovelier of the celebrated dancing and singing Terwilliger Twins—has been frequently spoken of in managerial circles as "the most dependable little woman in vaudeville." Never, that is to say, has she permitted storm or strike or act of God to cause her to miss a call. Orchestra leaders the country over hold her in highest esteem, for when the overture on the rack before them is Ronnie's they know it will not have to be *ad libbed* until violence threatens from the galleries.

But the punctuality of Miss Scanlon, for all the pride she takes in the distinction it has won her, is purely a professional characteristic. In her private person the wonder girl betrays all the instability of her sex regarding time. Six o'clock will always mean to her any minute between six and seven; and so it came about that Macumber and I, having engaged ourselves no less than a week previously to be hosts to Ronnie at her birthday dinner, were left on the appointed evening cooling our heels in the small and secluded parlor which the management of the Hotel Margharita reserves for the sequestering of gentlemen in waiting.

The blond bell girl who had urged us into the reception room had drawn a drape as she abandoned us, as if to deny the mysteries of the Margharita to our profane eyes; but a space nevertheless remained through which a good part of the lobby could be seen.

In the background, almost the whole length of the hotel desk was visible, with the elevators to one side. Beyond the drape obtained a somnolence profound, an atmosphere as loftily serene as that which one may find in the clubrooms of the Union League directly after the luncheon hour.

Mere man had no place in the picture. The clerks behind the desk, beautifully marcelled, yet altogether businesslike, were women. The elevator operators were girls, and the pages more properly pagettes; for the Margharita is conducted not only exclusively for but exclusively by the fair,

and is dedicated to the principle that of the sexes into which inscrutable Providence has seen fit to divide humanity, at least one is self-sufficient.

The Great One seemed pleased with the outlook.

"Our people at the Rawley might take a lesson from the ladies, lad," he said. "They contrive to run their show quietly enough, don't they?"

I had taken notice that silence appeared to be the rule of the house. Employees flitted about like wraiths. Conversations were held in polite undertones. So still was the lobby that the light click-clack of a set of knitting needles wielded by a white-haired little guest who seemed to have eyes for nothing but the task in hand came distinctly to my ears across its breadth.

For the tenth time Macumber consulted his watch.

"In three minutes," he announced, "I'm going to begin to get impatient. It will be just a half hour then since Ronnie phoned she—— Hullo, what's up!"

A buzzer was sounding; and certainly it was an agitated finger that pressed the button controlling it. The thing chattered frantically. In an instant I had traced the disturbance to the vicinity of the elevators.

"Some one," I remarked, "is evidently in a rush to get downstairs."

The Great One was on his feet, listening intently. A car had started up; but the clamor, muffled with the closing of the gate and growing fainter as the cage ascended, kept on.

"You've told only half of it, lad. Some one's in trouble above. That contraption's fair articulate. It's a call for help we're hearing!" He strode to the door and swept back the curtain. "Ah! Am I wrong?"

The elevator was down again; and at sight of the passenger who came running forth the snowy-haired woman, whose fingers had been idle since the strident vociferation of the buzzer, broke her count, dropped needles and knitting and screamed.

With the cry the discipline of the Hotel Margharita went to pieces. A confusion of voices shattered the quondam tranquillity of the lobby, and there was a surge of guests and employees alike toward the figure which had emerged from the lift. I got no more than a glimpse of this figure before it had vanished, leaving me with the impression of a narrow black rectangle surmounted by a thin face ghostly white and filled with horror.

Macumber offered a swift and matter-of-fact explanation of the disappearance of the terror-stricken face.

"She's fainted, lad," said he, and started across the lobby.

He was right. As we approached the center of excitement a voice obviously accustomed to speak with authority, but now a little tremulous, rose above the rest.

"Oh, Miss Gray! Will you please call Doctor Petrie's room and ask if she'll be good enough to come down at once?"

And then the same voice, pitched in a lower tone, asked:

"I don't believe I've seen this lady before, have I? Who is she?"

A woman immediately in front of me, evidently one of the office staff, replied:

"No, Mrs. Brundage, you were in the back of the house when she registered. It was less than an hour ago. She's a Miss Carson, of Chicago."

The Margharita's manageress, who had been on her knees beside the prostrate guest, caught a whisper as she rose.

"Said there was a man in her room, did she? A *man!*" she cried. "Some of you people call an officer, if you please. We'll soon have Mister Man out!"

The girl operator whose elevator had answered the frenzied call of Miss Carson of Chicago murmured something I couldn't hear. She, too, was pale; and her eyes were wide with fright. The Great One's ears were sharper than mine.

"What's this? What's this?" he sang out. "Do you say the man is *dead?*"

The girl nodded. Speech came with a struggle.

"Dead isn't all! M-murdered!"

II.

There was a chorus of gasps, followed by a brief interval of blank silence. Then the manageress spoke up sharply:

"Nonsense! Except for the porters there's never been a man above this floor since the hotel was opened. Who showed Miss Carson to her room? You, Amelia? And you saw no man, living or dead, did you?"

She shot a glance of triumph around the circle of alarmed and bewildered faces; the

page girl to whom she appealed had emphatically shaken her head.

"And you, Tillie? Come, now; you didn't *see* any man?"

"No'm," confessed the chauffeuse of the lift. "No, Mrs. Brundage. But——"

"But," put in the Great One as the girl hesitated, "wouldn't it be well to have a look in the lady's room?"

The manageress appeared to take notice of Macumber for the first time. She received his suggestion dubiously.

"Perhaps it might be better to wait," she demurred, "until a policeman——"

"And here comes your policeman now," said the Great One, nodding toward the entrance. "In the nick of time, too, to hear from the lady herself. See? She's coming to!"

The guest from Chicago had stirred. Now her head was lifted from the pillow which had been placed beneath it; she was up on an elbow, looking dazedly about her, struggling to rise. Macumber bent forward and put an arm beneath her shoulders. Apparently without the slightest expediture of effort he brought the woman to her feet. For a moment the problem of equilibrium engrossed her; for another she seemed fighting for memory. And when memory came, terror seemed to return with it. She pressed her hands to her eyes.

"Have you seen it?" she asked weakly.

From her expression and manner I gathered that Mrs. Brundage took the other to be the victim of a violent delusion, perhaps a dangerous lunatic.

"Seen it, my dear woman?" she exclaimed. "Seen what?"

"The—the body."

"Whose body? Are you sure you are quite yourself?"

Miss Carson's reply might have been intended to apply to either question, or both.

"I don't know."

The bluecoat whose advent Macumber had announced joined the group in the lobby. The manageress cut short his question.

"Just you wait a second," said she. "Now, Miss Carson, please try to get a grip on yourself. An hour ago you were shown into a room that had very recently been gone over thoroughly by a maid. The room was empty then. How in the name of common sense could a—a *body* come to be there?"

The reply was scarcely audible.

"It came," said the woman in black, shuddering and wringing her hands, "with me!"

Mrs. Brundage stared at her, then turned a significant glance upon the policeman.

"We'll have a doctor here presently," she whispered. "Maybe it will be well——"

"Undoubtedly the best thing to do at this minute," interjected the Great One placidly, "is to hear what else this lady may have to say. If I'm not mistaken she'll have an explanation of the remarkable assertion which she has made. Proceed, please, Miss Carson!"

"It came with me," reiterated the woman. "It's—it's in my trunk. A dead man! A man with a knife buried in his heart—sunk almost to the hilt in him! He died trying to pluck it out; with his eyes wide open and the hate and the fear frozen into them. Oh, it was horrible! I don't know how I found strength to get out of the room when I'd opened the trunk and seen him crouching there with the wild dead eyes staring into mine."

"Crouching?" repeated Macumber. A small wrinkle took shape on his forehead, and quickly vanished. "Ah, I see. It's a wardrobe trunk, of course—a trunk standing on end. That would be it; and if you've no objection, Mrs. Brundage, I'll go along with the officer and have a look into this trunk of Miss Carson's."

If an objection did exist in the mind of the manageress, she was denied opportunity to voice it; for the Great One, as he spoke, had fastened a hand on the arm of the perplexed policeman and propelled him into an elevator.

With a shrug Mrs. Brundage submitted to the domination of the temerarious male.

"The room," she said briefly, after a reference to the clerk, "is No. 635."

I had followed Macumber into the car at his nod of invitation.

"You surely don't think," said I, as the reluctant Tillie swung over the controller handle and the lift shot upward, "that we're going to find——"

"Stranger things have happened, lad," replied Macumber.

Tillie left the elevator with us, but hung back when we had reached a turn in the main corridor.

"D-down there," she quavered, pointing. "The door's standing open."

Our policeman, I could see, was preparing himself for the worst. He fumbled under the skirt of his uniform coat, and when he caught up with the Great One at the door of room 635 his service pistol was in his hand.

But No. 635 was empty. A wardrobe trunk stood in a corner, open; and that was empty, too. Macumber jerked open the door of a clothes closet, peered into the bath, and devoted a moment to a swift but thorough examination of the trunk, dragging out one after another the drawers of the bureaulike compartment built into it. The bluecoat regarded him with amazement.

"What's the idea?" he wanted to know. "What's it all about? I don't get it."

The Great One was standing at the open window, staring out thoughtfully over the roofs of the row of old-fashioned flats flanking the Margharita to the west.

"The idea?" he echoed softly. "Well, I'll admit I more than half expected we'd find the body of a dead man in yonder trunk. I believed that the lady below was neither insane nor romancing—that she actually had seen what she said she had seen. And after looking through the trunk I'm still credulous; for while there's no body in it at the moment, as you'll doubtless agree, neither is there anything else. No, not so much as a handkerchief!"

Macumber turned to me, rubbing his hands together and chuckling.

"A while since, lad," said he. "I remarked that stranger things had happened. Aye, and something stranger *has* happened!"

I shivered, for a raw wind was blowing into the room and I stood in the sweep of it.

"What do you mean? What has happened?"

"Miss Carson's traveling companion has traveled on further—over the roofs. See, youngster! It's no great drop down!"

"Say, listen——" began the policeman.

"I will," said Macumber. "In a moment. But first answer a question for me. Is it the habit of maiden ladies of fifty to sit behind open windows in January?"

III.

Neither then nor later did the Great One get an answer to his question. The policeman, shrugging it aside and looking at him queerly, merely remarked that since it was patently a false alarm which had brought him from his post it now lay in the course of duty to waste no time in getting back to it.

Nor was an answer to come from Miss Carson herself. Doctor Petrie had the guest from Chicago in hand when we returned to the lobby; and even though Ronnie Scanlon had turned up at last to sponsor him, Macumber was not permitted to interrogate the patient.

The physician, a high-nosed woman of autocratic mien, barred us from the room into which No. 635's occupant had been taken in our absence.

"I know who you are, Mr. Macumber," said she. "You have a reputation as a solver of mysteries. But there's no mystery here. Miss Carson is in an extremely nervous condition, to say the least. Either she was visited by a nightmare while taking a nap, or she is subject to hallucinations. As yet I haven't had time to determine which. You may be sure, though, that the explanation of her peculiar conduct lies either in a bad dream or an unbalanced brain."

The Great One nodded soberly.

"In all probability, doctor. Yet with your permission, there's one thing I'd learn from the lady."

"If it concerns any such ghastly and preposterous proposition as a body in a trunk, I most certainly would refuse to——"

"Ah, no, Doctor Petrie!" interposed Macumber quickly. "I appreciate that you'll be trying to turn her mind out of the morbid track, and I'd propose nothing to set back your patient."

The smile he turned upon her had a certain quality of magic. It brought a faint flush to the physician's sallow cheeks.

"It seems to me," she temporized, "that the incident is closed. You say it's just *one* thing you wish to learn?"

"Just one."

"The question can be asked through me?"

"Indeed it can. What I'd like to know is simply this: Did Miss Carson on her arrival in New York to-day come directly from the station to the Margharita?"

A queer question Doctor Petrie thought it, as was plain in her look of astonishment. But after an instant of indecision she disappeared into the room. When she came back to us she nodded.

"Yes; she came straight to the hotel. But what——"

"It's a minor point of curiosity with me,

doctor, and perhaps I might have put the question more directly. Adding your information to what I already know—the approximate time that Miss Carson reached the Margharita, that is—I'd calculate she had traveled from Chicago on the Century. Ah, she chanced to tell you that was her train, did she? I'm in your debt, Doctor Petrie!"

And with another smile and a bow the Great One was off to join Ronnie Scanlon.

"A case of nerves plus imagination," was his report to her; and when Ronnie sought to reopen the subject while we were dining he dismissed it lightly. But after we had dropped the younger Terwilliger Twin at the Margharita and had started afoot toward the Rawley, he remarked:

"Like enough, lad, there'd be an ugly angle to this business we've stumbled upon. Does it not appear so to you?"

"How so?" I wanted to know. "Do you really mean you take stock in——"

"Of course I do."

"You persist in the belief there was a man's body in Miss Carson's trunk?"

"I'm not saying so," objected the Great One. "I merely continue to be of the mind, as I've indicated before this, that Miss Carson saw what she says she saw—exactly that. As to the trunk in room 635, I don't for one minute imagine it belongs to Miss Carson. Trunks of that make and pattern are common enough, Lord knows. Why, you've one yourself, lad!"

That, indeed, was the fact. I began to construct a theory to match Macumber's.

"You think there's been a mix-up?"

"Precisely."

"Then will you be good enough, maestro, to explain to me by what miracle a dead man could have——"

"Tush, lad!" cried the Great One. "If there's a lunatic concerned in the affair of the trunk it would surely be yourself!"

I made no retort; and when we had walked a block or two in silence Macumber, who had been whistling softly, remarked:

"Our friend the policeman was within an ace of lifting himself into a plain-clothes berth this evening, had he only known it."

"And how?" I asked frostily.

"Had he displayed anything like a proper respect for my opinions I think I could have pointed a way for him to distinguish himself. At least he could have attracted the favorable attention of his superiors, and might have had his name in the newspapers to boot—which is grist, lad, to the policeman's mill."

Macumber delved into an overcoat pocket and brought forth a small locket of tarnished silver, to which were fastened the ends of a broken chain.

"A souvenir left by the late occupant of the trunk in room 635," said he, and added hastily: "No, I told no lie when I said the trunk was absolutely empty. I'd picked this out of the bottom of it a moment before I spoke. While you were absorbed in conversation with the beautiful Ronnie I took advantage of the opportunity to examine it. The thing's an amulet, lad, and a queer sort of one. Have a look at what the locket holds."

I sprang the catch, and a little roll of blackened and greasy paper tumbled into my hand.

"Why," said I, smoothing it out, "it's a dollar, a bill that's seen plenty of hard service and has passed through many ungentle and unclean hands."

"Right you are," said the Great One. "And moreover it's a dollar, I fancy, which its late owner would have valued at a price far above par. He would have preserved it for the luck he believed to be associated with it. And that, lad, gives us a line on the character of the man. He'd have been of a superstitious turn. There'll be some one interested in our trophy, I'll guarantee, and willing to go to long ends to get possession of it. And here we are, fortuitously, within a block of the uptown office of *The Sphere*. The morning's 'Lost and Found' column shall carry news of the amulet, youngster—and should anybody come to claim it we'll be in a way to plumbing the mystery of the man in Miss Carson's trunk. I'm sure of it!"

IV.

Following his pen tracks as he scrawled his advertisement, I observed that Macumber preferred not to be precise in his mention of where the locket had been found; yet again, as always, he kept within the bounds of truth. It had been picked up, he wrote, "near Fifth Avenue and Forty-ninth Street"—and that went very well for the Hotel Margharita.

Also I took note that the Great One did not sign his name to the advertisement. In-

stead, he directed that the amulet's owner apply at the office of the Rawley; and when we had reached the hotel he spent several minutes in conversation with the assistant manager.

Before he turned in that night Macumber smoked many pipes of his loathsome Louisiana perique. He slept restlessly, and I wakened to find him fully dressed. He stood in the door of my bedroom, shouting to me to stir myself.

"If you'd be coming along with me, lad," he said, "you'd better be piling into your clothes."

I asked whither he was bound.

"On the trail of Miss Carson's trunk," was his reply. "Where else?"

He shook his head over my next question.

"Oh, youngster," he mourned, "when will you learn to reason? The procedure was obvious. The lady, of course, would have surrendered her check to the baggage agent who passed through the train as it came into New York; and it would be here, almost certainly, that the trunks got mixed. Miss Carson was not the only victim of the snarl. Three others already have complained to the company that trunks not theirs have been delivered to them—three, that is, who were passengers aboard the incoming Century yesterday."

"You've made inquiry so early?"

"Aye," said Macumber grimly; "and before me there was another who would not be satisfied until he had a list of the names and addresses of the Century travelers who had got hold of other people's trunks. There's need for haste, lad, I'm telling you. There's black evil overhanging some one of those who were Miss Carson's fellow passengers yesterday and the night before. With or without you, I'll be out of here in five minutes."

And, good as his word, in another five minutes the Great One was hailing a taxi in front of the Rawley. But he wasn't alone.

"We'll follow the line of least resistance—start with our nearest man," said Macumber as he climbed into the taxi; and consulting a memorandum he instructed the driver to take us to an address within a few blocks of our own hotel.

It was a private residence in front of which the taxi halted, and when the Great One asked for Mr. George Parsons the florid-faced man who admitted us scowled and snapped:

"That's me! What is it?"

"Good!" said Macumber. "I understand you've had trouble with some baggage on the Century."

Our man seemed a trifle short of temper.

"Oh," he grunted. "So you're from the express company, eh? Say, what the devil use d'you suppose I've got for a trunkload of sample blankets? Look like an Indian, do I? Hey! Where're you goin'?"

But the Great One, dragging me by the arm, already had gone. Looking through the rear window as the taxi whirled us away I saw the man with too many blankets treading a solo measure at the top of his stoop and menacing us with a hairy fist.

"There's one off the list," sighed Macumber. "And now for number two." He leaned forward and called, "The Buckminster Club next, driver!"

But when we had arrived at the club, we got no farther than the door. From a club servant we acquired the information that Mr. Seth Tomlinson a quarter hour since had exchanged a trunk he didn't want for one which was his own.

The Great One's face had lengthened when we were again in the machine.

"Just one more chance," said he.

"And then?"

"Then it will be time to consult the express company again. Perhaps by now they'll have had other complaints."

Now our objective, as announced by Macumber, was the Scollard House, a venerable hostelry to the south of Greeley Square. The traffic rush of the morning was at its peak and on the way down Broadway we traveled slowly. The Great One drummed nervously on the taxi window with his finger nails as time after time we were held up interminably at crossings, and when at last we turned a corner and drew toward the Scollard a groan escaped him.

"Oh, lad," he said bitterly, "I should not have waited over the night. We're too late."

"Too late!" I exclaimed.

"Aye! Do you mark the big man in the black soft hat standing in front of the hotel? It's not accident that has brought him. He's Duggan of the headquarters homicide squad—a bird of ill omen here!"

At almost the same moment the man in the black hat had caught sight of Macumber, and I judged from his puzzled grin

that recognition was mutual. He came forward as we stepped from the cab.

"It beats hell, professor," he announced cheerfully, "the way you keep turning up when there's anything doing. How do you work it—magic?"

"The black art," replied the Great One, "is always an aid. What's up, Duggan?"

"Murder in the Scollard. Knife case."

The detective offered the information nonchalantly, as one who deals with violent death as a matter of daily routine; and then very suddenly his expression of blasé indifference underwent a change.

"The victim wouldn't have been a guest registered as Paul Edwards, by any chance?" Macumber had asked.

Duggan, the last shadow of his grin gone, regarded him incredulously.

"My hat's off, professor," he said, after a moment of futile cerebration. "But how the devil could you know? The inspector himself hasn't showed up yet. Where did you get the wire?"

The Great One was tearing up the slip of paper which had been our guide on the tour in the taxicab.

"Set it down as a species of sorcery, if you will, lieutenant," said he. "Perhaps you'll have a few lessons of me some day when you've time. But just now I look to you for instruction. What do you know about Paul Edwards?"

"Not much—except that he's dead. The hotel people never saw him before he came in yesterday; and as far as the register shows he belonged in New York. They've got an idea he was on his way to Europe. Was to leave to-day or to-morrow, I think."

"I infer the murderer made a clean getaway?"

"He did."

"Clews?"

"Not a blessed thing but the queer sort of knife he left sticking in Edwards' body."

"A queer sort of knife, eh? That's better, at any rate, than a common one. Motive?"

Lieutenant Duggan shrugged.

"Looked like robbery, and then again it didn't. Edwards has got marks of rings on his fingers, but the rings are gone. Not so much as a match was left in his pockets—and he showed a considerable roll when he paid in advance for his room. There's your robbery. But on the other hand hotel sneaks don't go in a lot for killings. No, and they don't bother to cut identification marks out of clothes they leave behind, either. All we've got to identify Paul Edwards is the name he put in the register; which I've got a hunch don't belong to him, anyhow."

"You've been through his baggage?"

"Sure. And, say, there's an angle to this case that beats anything I've ever run up against. Of all the crazy collections of junk in the world, what d'you think Edwards had stored up in that trunk of his?"

A faint smile pulled at the corners of the Great One's mouth.

"You want me to guess, Duggan? You'd be challenging a man who's a wizard by trade, mind!"

"I give you leave to use all the magic you've got, and you can have twenty guesses, at that."

"One," said Macumber gently, "will be quite sufficient, I thank you. Paul Edwards' trunk, to be sure, contains not clothing for a man, but the wardrobe of a woman who would be conservative and middle-aged and by all odds unwed."

Lieutenant Duggan took his cigar from his mouth and carefully removed a segment of frayed wrapper. He sighed.

"Professor," he said with reverence, "you ain't human!"

V.

Except in rare instances Macumber, who will regard himself only as a dilettante in criminology, and never even in those cases in which his peculiar talents have figured most vitally has sought to divert credit accruing to the official police, has maintained a most friendly relationship with the powers at headquarters. With Inspector Breede, Duggan's chief, he had been for years on terms of some intimacy, and within a half hour after Breede's arrival at the Scollard all the facts which the homicide-bureau men had been able to glean were in the Great One's possession.

The facts beyond those we had had from Lieutenant Duggan were few. The man who called himself Paul Edwards had been slain as he slept. Apparently he had had some forewarning of an impending attack, for he had retired with a pistol under his pillow. This weapon itself was missing, but its outline could plainly be traced in the indentation left in the bedding. The murderer, the police believed, had entered and left the room by way of a convenient fire

escape straggling up the rear wall of the old building.

As to the identity of the murderer no clew had been developed aside from his knife; but Breede was inclined to associate with the crime a man who had called the hotel by telephone shortly before ten o'clock on the night preceding, and had asked many questions concerning the guest Edwards. Failing to get the information he desired from the switchboard operator, this man had asked to be connected with the desk. He had wanted to know then what sort of looking person Paul Edwards was; but the rather hazy description given by the room clerk appeared to have disappointed him. And when the clerk had recalled that Edwards bore a scar on his forehead the man on the wire, seemingly convinced he was on the wrong trail, had rung off.

"Did you learn if Edwards was told of the call?" Macumber inquired of the detective who had brought this report to Inspector Breede.

"No; not a word was said to him," was the reply. "He was out of the hotel when the party phoned, and didn't come back until a couple of hours later. The whole thing had gone out of the clerk's mind by then, he says."

At the moment we learned of the inquiry for Edwards, and Breede had built the fact into his all-too-slender structure of theory, we were in the room in which the man had died. But now the medical examiner had come and gone, photographs and charts for the homicide-bureau records had been made, and the body had been removed.

Breede stood at the window when his man had gone. In his hand was the one tangible connecting link between crime and killer.

"Funny sort of sticker, isn't it?" said he. "It's got the homemade look. Handle seems to be a bunch of leather washers, glued together; and the blade don't seem to be of any too-good steel." He glanced involuntarily toward the bed. "Good enough, though, for the purpose."

He handed the knife to the Great One, who held it gingerly for a moment and then passed it back with alacrity as if glad to be rid of it.

"Peculiar weapon," mused the inspector, rephrasing his earlier remark. "Ever see a knife like it before?"

I thought Macumber showed a shade of hesitancy. But as he replied he met Breede's eyes frankly.

"No," he said. "It's the first knife of the kind that has come to my attention."

With a grimace of repugnance Breede tossed the thing onto the bed.

"Well," he conceded, "it isn't much to go on. By a lucky chance we might trace the owner through it, but in the police business it don't do to bank on luck. System's the thing—the old routine. The knife'll help us all right if we ever get a suspect to spring it on. Having it dropped in front of the man that used it might get his goat. Still and all, we can't expect action until we find out just who this Edwards was and who didn't love him. That's the way all proper murder investigations have got to start. Routine, Macumber! System!"

"If there's a man outside the department who respects police system and routine," said the Great One, "it's myself. The routine, I suppose, has already covered transatlantic passenger lists of the immediate future?"

"You bet it has. No such name as Paul Edwards is listed for any sailing up to a month from now. But names don't mean anything, you know. It'd be easy—— Well, you're not leaving, professor? What's your hurry?"

The door had opened to admit Lieutenant Duggan; and in the same instant the Great One had glanced hastily at his watch and grabbed up his hat.

"I've overstayed my time already, Breede," he said, and with a smile and a "Hello!" for the lieutenant he passed swiftly from the room.

"Lord, lad, but that was a close shave!" he breathed, as we walked out of the Scollard. "I'd been trembling lest Breede mention the astonishing contents of the trunk; and in a half dozen seconds, with Duggan there, the subject would have been up. *That* would have been embarrassing, for until I've experimented a little on my own I've a notion of keeping the adventure of Miss Carson in the dark."

He waved aside my question.

"Later, youngster, later. Just now I'm going to rely on you to attend to a matter of business for me which may prove of greatest importance. We were distinctly unfortunate, I think, in not having been asked up until after Edwards' body had been taken from the room. I'd have preferred to have had a look at him, but a print of one of

the pictures taken by the police photographers will serve. I want you to get hold of one. Use any pretext. Say I'd cherish it as a souvenir. Say anything. But have a fair likeness of Paul Edwards with you when you show up at the Rawley."

It was no difficult assignment Macumber had given to me, for all the consequence he chose to lend it. In many trips with him to police headquarters I had learned my way about the building and had made acquaintances there. So when I turned up at the hotel a couple of hours later I laid before the Great One the picture he seemed to want so badly. It represented a rather solemn-faced and square-jawed man whose age would have been in the neighborhood of forty.

"Why," cried Macumber, "he looks to be alive!"

"That's the way the photographer intended he should look," I told him. "This is the picture the police are going to circulate in the hope of finding out where Paul Edwards came from."

"System!" murmured the Great One. "Routine! It's truly remarkable how thoroughly headquarters covers the ground. But look hard at Edwards, lad. Of whom does he remind you?"

I did not have to hesitate for a reply, for the resemblance had struck me at the moment the photograph came into my possession. Paul Edwards might have been a brother to Mickey McGuirk, who with his wife had trouped over the big-time circuit with our vaudeville magical act for a half dozen seasons.

"And they're of about the same build, too," said I. "Put such clothing as we saw in Edwards' room on Mickey, and trick him out in a wing collar of the sort Edwards appeared to fancy, and——"

"And," finished Macumber, "with the addition of a few judicious high lights and shadows, there you have Paul Edwards!"

For a while he sat studying the picture; then he dropped it into the table drawer and picked up the periodical he had been reading when I came in. It was a magazine singularly unexciting in appearance, called, as I remember, the *American Journal of Penology*.

"Where the deuce did that come from?" I demanded, for to my knowledge the *Journal* was as new to the Great One as to me.

Macumber looked up with a smile.

"I bought it," he said mildly, "in connection with my private inquiry into the murder of Paul Edwards. It carries a complete list, you see, of all prison-made products of the United States."

I reserved comment until I had smoked away an inch of cigarette.

"Yes," said I. "That would be extremely helpful in a general way, of course. I take your word for it, maestro. And what does the list tell you?"

"It reassures me," gloated the Great One, "that the Minton Penitentiary in Illinois still holds a monopoly on the manufacture of walking sticks. So now all we need do is sit here and await the returns. System, my lad! Routine!"

VI.

A telegram arrived for Macumber that evening—a corpulent and imposing telegram that bulged out the sides of the long yellow envelope in which it came, and covered sheet after sheet of yellow paper.

When he had read the message a second time the Great One folded it and thrust it into an inner pocket.

"Shades of Morse, what a wire!" I exclaimed, angling. "That might have been a press report of some terrific disaster."

Macumber scooped his stumpy pipe into the tobacco jar.

"Few disasters," said he, "would make a story as interesting."

"Be generous with it," I urged. "What's it about?"

The Great One smoked and debated.

"Well," he admitted presently, "part of it concerns a badly mauled dollar bill which reposes in a silver locket. That part of it I scarcely know whether to call humorous or tragic or just fateful. It's rare, anyhow. The dollar marks an epoch in a human life. I'm certain now that we're going to see the man it belongs to. He believes, as I'd surmised, that the bill in the locket stands as a sure barrier between him and evil. True, he's had bumps; but still he has faith in his dollar. Aye, he'll be after it!"

"But the whole telegram wasn't about the dollar, was it?"

"No," said Macumber. "Some large portion of it concerned a man named Henry Gordon—a man who followed his duty to a point closer to hell, I dare say, than many who fought in front-line trenches overseas ever got."

Just then the telephone bell rang and the Great One jumped to respond.

"Yes?" he said. "Yes, it's I, Jimmy. Oh, it's a phone call, is it? Well, just tell him the party isn't in. Invite him to come around himself to-morrow afternoon. Say the man he wants is always to be found here between two and five. Got it? Good!"

The Great One's eyes were bright as he turned from the telephone.

"Our man, lad!" he exulted. "Our man—and he wants his precious dollar! Now let us put our heads together."

Until bedtime we sat and schemed, for in matters of magic I am always Macumber's confidant and adviser. Early in the morning, at an hour when usually I am breakfasting, I was rummaging through the storeroom in which we keep the props and paraphernalia belonging to shelved illusions; and when, that afternoon, we had a visitor, a big mirror which had not been there before stood in a corner of our living room.

The man who had come to us was of medium height and wiry build. He was a swarthy fellow, with a pair of darting black eyes with something cold and reptilian in their depths. He stood just inside the door when I had opened it to him, waiting for Macumber to speak. But the Great One, sitting in an easy-chair and seemingly lost in thought, appeared not to have noticed his advent.

Back and forth between Macumber and me the black eyes flitted.

"Well," said their owner at length, "you find a locket? I come about it."

The Great One lowered his gaze from the ceiling.

"Yes," he said. "I found a locket—an amulet. You would not do well without it, I think."

The swarthy man hesitated. His eyes devoured floors, walls and ceilings. They came to rest briefly on Macumber.

"Tell me what you think," he said. "They say downstairs you know 'bout such things. It's got luck?"

"Yes."

"You see what's in the locket?"

"Yes. Good money. It is always a power. And I have seen more than is in the locket. I see things that other men do not. I see something at your elbow, my friend!"

To right and left flashed the black eyes.

"I don't see." The man laughed uneasily, showing rows of gleaming and perfect teeth.

"It's just as well," spoke the calm voice from the chair. "The thing is not nice to see. But it is there with you. Would you care to see it?"

The teeth showed again.

"I don't think."

"Would you *dare* to see?"

The brilliant grin faded.

"Dare? I don't like that word! How could I see? Ts-s! I take the locket, please, an' give you my thanks an' go."

Macumber pulled open the drawer in the table and beckoned. The swarthy man stepped forward eagerly, but halted at a lift of the Great One's hand.

"You ask how you could see? I can tell you how. The shadow is at your side now. It moves with you. It will be at your side forever. Your eyes may never see it when there is light. But I have a mirror in which I can show you its reflection. It is there—see?"

Macumber flung out an arm, and automatically the black eyes followed the direction in which he pointed. Having found the mirror they clung to it. One clear-cut reflection was there, but on the surface of the glass elsewhere a haze was gathering.

"'Satan's Mirror,' they call it," said the Great One. "You will see why!"

And even then the mirror's victim was seeing. Beneath the haze a form was taking shape. The haze cleared away, and in the glass appeared the image of a man who seemed to be resting wearily on the swart one's shoulders. This was a man who might have been forty. His face had a solemn cast, and his square jaw jutted out of a wing collar. Above his right eye was a crimson scar.

"Gordon!"

With a hand clutching at his coat above his heart our visitor was backing away. But even as he retreated the apparition was advancing. It came to the foreground of the mirror; and then, suddenly a creature of three dimensions, it was in the room.

One more scream escaped the owner of the amulet.

"Gordon! Gordon! Mus' I kill you again?"

I had seen the Great One coming forward in his chair, shifting his weight to his feet. His long right arm shot out and the pistol that had suddenly appeared in the dollar-man's hand went flying. In the same second I had flung open my bedroom door, and

Breede and Duggan were with us—not to mention the spectral McGuirk.

They had gone. Macumber, lighting up a fresh pipe, seated himself at a point not too far from the MacVickar.

"In certain sections of the mid-West," he remarked, "Minton Penitentiary is famous for the canes made by convict labor within its walls. I've never seen sticks just like them. In fact, none just like them are manufactured elsewhere. The principle is this: a steel rod provides the core; disks of leather, bored through the center, are built upon it; the disks are glued one to the other as added, and then their outer surfaces are shaved smooth and shellacked. It occurred to me that with these materials and a grindstone at hand, one skilled in the manufacture of the Minton canes could make a fairly efficient stiletto."

Out of his pocket the Great One dug a clutter of familiar yellow sheets.

"This thought having dawned upon me immediately I saw the weapon with which Henry Gordon—or Paul Edwards—was murdered, I was at pains to telegraph the warden at Minton all details of the crime, including a police description of the victim. Also I incorporated such attending circumstances as the incident of Miss Carson's hallucination and the finding of the talisman. I said I had hopes of laying hands on the amulet's owner if no general alarm were got it. There had been much trouble in this prison where the steel-cored canes are sounded to frighten him off; for you see, lad, this man Castano would not have seen the advertisement as a trap."

He riffled through the telegraph blanks, and then tossed them onto the table.

"And here, of course," he continued, "I have my reply from Minton. I had requested the fullest information—and I made. It started a couple of years ago with the establishment of an invisible government inside the walls—a sort of convict soviet. First one prisoner who would not submit to the rule of the 'Kangaroo Court' was murdered. Then another. Then, within as many months, three keepers were killed. An attempt even was made on the life of the warden. The ringleaders kept themselves under cover. Many of the prisoners knew who they were, but they were under spell of the terror.

"Then came Gordon. He had been secretary of some civic league or other. He accepted the post as deputy warden, but when he went to the penitentiary it was as a prisoner. Supposedly he had been convicted of forgery. Three months Gordon spent in stripes. He would have lived longer as a convict, but suspicion had been directed against him. Lately there have been a series of trials within the prison. As a result of them six men are in death cells. That was all very well. But Henry Gordon was a marked man. His friends urged him to get out of the prison and out of Illinois—out of the country, for a time. He looked at matters sensibly. He was courageous but not foolhardy. When a good berth was found for him in the foreign service of a big Chicago corporation he accepted it without heroics. And knowing there were men outside the prison as well as inside who would take pleasure in slitting his throat, he wisely decided to put up in New York under one alias and to sail under still another. I scarcely need go into the matter of the trunks?"

"You might," said I. "While I can imagine a great deal I could do with the facts as developed."

The Great One mixed himself a Scotch and soda.

"About all you need to know, lad, is that Castano—who must have been one of the penitentiary highbinders—was a trusty in Warden House. And of course in packing himself away in Gordon's trunk, he must have had the coöperation of another of the convict servants. The two chucked everything else out before Castano, wearing civilian clothing stolen from a keeper's locker, was closed in. He had a rough trip ahead, but little he cared. He was leaving an unserved half of a twenty-year sentence behind, and in near prospect had a most refreshing chore of vengeance. Had the trunk not gone astray and had he not suffered the misfortune of losing his amulet, I fancy Castano would be congratulating himself doubly to-day."

Macumber had provided me with a cue.

"What about the amulet, maestro? You've said there was a rare yarn connected with it."

"There is," said the Great One gravely. "Possibly you may see a moral in it, although on that point *I* am not clear. Would it be that in the worst lurks some slight saving sense of decency—some respect for good?

"But no mind. The story of his amulet is in the main the life story of Joey Castano. But we won't have to consider any but the salient points. At fourteen Castano left school for his first job. There was an opening for a pin boy in a third-rate bowling alley near his home on Chicago's West Side.

"Castano—as I get the story from Minton—worked one day. That evening, after he had been paid off, an older youth expounded for him the theory of easy money and proposed a demonstration of method. Together the two robbed a neighborhood store. Joey never went back to the bowling alley, or to his home. Thus initiated, he made his career in crime. He's been a crook straight through."

The Great One seemed to have finished. I waited a moment for him to continue.

"But I don't quite get the theory of the amulet," I told him. "How does the story connect with the dollar?"

Macumber has an especially weary smile which is mine alone. He made use of it.

"It's the money he earned as pin boy," said he. "The only honest dollar Castano ever owned!"

The next story by Mr. Rohde will appear in the July 7th issue.

CRIMES THAT ARE FAKED

POLICE stupidity is not the only explanation of the fact that many holdups and robberies are never punished. People frequently find it expedient to bind, gag, assault and rob themselves. In fact, Inspector Clifford L. Grant, chief of detectives on the Washington, D. C., police force, is authority for the statement that thirty per cent of the holdups and robberies reported in the national capital are fakes.

There was the case of a man who, living in one of the swellest apartment houses in Washington, reported to headquarters that a thief had entered his bedroom and stolen five thousand dollars' worth of his jewelry while he slept. After long and fruitless investigation without discovering the slightest clew to the robber, Inspector Grant accused the man of having misinformed the police. Under pressure, the gentleman admitted it, explaining that he had sold his wife's jewels to pay a gambling debt and preferred her to think that they had been stolen.

On another occasion a woman, whom her maid had discovered gagged and securely bound to a chair in her bedroom, said a man had tied her up and, after ransacking the room, throwing clothing and other articles about in confusion, had found and stolen a two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar diamond ring and one hundred and fifteen dollars in money. The pursuit of that bold burglar lasted for weeks. Finally, being hotly grilled by the detectives, the woman confessed to them that she had bound and gagged herself and told her story in order to scare her husband into staying home in the evenings.

INGENUITY IN POLITICS

POLITICS, being the science of personalities, sharpens men's—and women's—wits for the business of ridiculing opponents. With the national conventions looming close in the future and all sorts of State fights getting under way, there are examples every day of the effectiveness of derision as a weapon against the opposition.

But there will hardly be anything in this campaign to surpass the effectiveness of a Des Moines newspaper's policy in regard to a candidate a few years ago. The paper was hot against an aspirant for the city council named Zell G. Roe, who was a holder of many meetings and a speaker of many speeches.

The paper reported daily the speeches and names of all speakers, of course, but its shortest reports were of Zell G. Roe's utterances. He got only one paragraph in every daily article about the campaign. This paragraph ran:

"Z. Roe also spoke."

A Chat With You

MRS. L. M. B. who reads THE POPULAR because she has good taste in fiction and is not afraid to read the things that men read, takes exception to some of the remarks made in these columns by various old-time readers.

"For a while," she writes, "I was not reading THE POPULAR twice a month, but now I have started again and I feel I want to tell you how thoroughly I am enjoying the 'new POPULAR.' I look forward to Mr. Paine's work and to Mr. Norton. I have been very well pleased by the screamingly funny Ottie Scandrel stories by Montanye and I sincerely hope you will continue to publish one in each issue. In no other magazine do I find such real humor and unique slang. I must not forget to put in a good word for the Tony and Bill poker stories you have been running right along.

"Altogether your magazine is splendid and I can't understand why these so-called 'old-timers' insist on going back into the past for favorite stories.

"POPULAR to-day is much better than the POPULAR I used to read a few years ago. I am one of the 'speaker sex' as Mr. Scandrel would say, so perhaps this letter is a novelty. I close with thanks for what you provide and with my very good wishes."

* * * *

THANKS for the letter and for the good wishes. We are in hearty agreement with the sentiments expressed. In cold truth THE POPULAR is a better magazine to-day, more worth the money in every way than at any time in its history. We ought to know, for we have been running it all along; we have complete files close at hand and an indexed catalogue containing the specifications of every story we ever published since the start. Besides that we have a fairly good memory.

* * * *

AS a matter of fact the old-timers talk sometimes just to show how well they remember the glories of the past. They know well enough that the magazine is better than ever. We have a fine tradition and a beautiful past, but the present and future are just as good and even more promising. There are high lights that shine out in the back numbers of course. There are the original college stories by Ralph Paine. There is "North of Fifty-three," by Bertrand Sinclair. There is "Chip of the Flying U," by B. M. Bower. But you must remember that Sinclair, Paine and B. M. Bower are still writing for the magazine and writing a little better than ever. Famous regiments in the great regular armies of the world powers carry on their battle standards the names of engagements in which the organization distinguished itself in bygone wars. That does not mean that the regiment is any less now than it was then. It means that it is better still for the bright and splendid tradition. Because the marines still treasured laurels won in the old Mexican War, did it make them any less formidable at Blanc Mont

Ridge or any less desperate in their force and valor when they poured their fire through Belleau Wood?

* * * *

WE like to hear from the old-timers. They remind us of the honorable inscriptions on our standards and help to keep us up to the task of getting out what we have been often assured is the best all-fiction magazine ever published. Any man who sticks to reading one magazine for twenty years is worth listening to whether you entirely agree with him or not.

* * * *

THERE never yet was a big-league baseball game in which "Babe" Ruth knocked a home run but some hard-headed veteran in the bleachers announced sadly that maybe the "Bambino" was all right but that the game was not what it used to be in the days of "Pop" Anson, "King" Kelly and "Buck" Ewing. When Firpo knocked Jack Dempsey out of the ring and Jack climbed back and slapped him so hard that he finally stayed down on the resined canvas, several gentlemen were heard to declare that old John L. Sullivan could have handled either of them with ease. There is a glory about the past.

* * * *

NEXT issue opens with a full, two-dollar book by Robert Welles Ritchie. It is called "Ho! Sonora." It is laid back a few years, being a brilliant picture of part of the great epic of the romantic Southwest of the gold hunters and the filibusters who wanted to annex Mexico to the U. S. A. This is the best novel Ritchie has ever written. It is a full-sized book in quality as well as length. Then there is an unusual tale by H. H. Knibbs, the big last installment of the Coolidge serial, as well as part three of "The Voice from the Dark," by Eden Phillpotts. There is a railroad story by Calvin Johnston, a story of Africa by Ralph Durand, a funny story by Montanye and another tale in the remarkable series by Bertram Atkey. Altogether it is a number to be proud of. It is certainly one to order in advance. We are running true to form, keeping bright the old tradition and we will keep it up just as long as there is a single old-timer left alive to tell us how good we were in the glorious days of old. Good in the past but better in the future is our slogan. Remember it.

One Dollar
—for underwear satisfaction
TO GET the most for your money in athletic underwear, follow these rules:
Pay One Dollar—no more.
Look for the Topkis label.
Comfort? You'll hardly know you have Topkis on! Roomy all over; especially legs and arm-holes. Topkis fits! Good fabrics. Sound tailoring. Topkis wears and wears.
Men's Shirts and Drawers, 75c a garment. Boys' Union Suits, Girls' Bloomer Union Suits, and Children's Waist Union Suits, 75c. In Canada, Men's Union Suits, $1.50.
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TOPKIS BROTHERS COMPANY, Wilmington, Del.
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Ask for TOPKIS Underwear.
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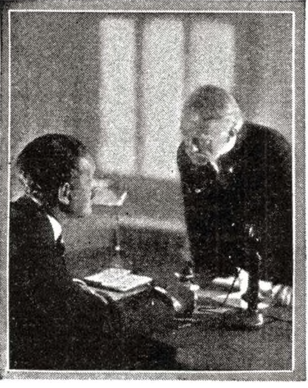
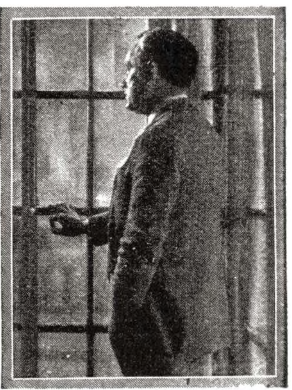
Buy Topkis by the Box—Six union suits for $6. Some men pay as much for three suits—but they don't know Topkis.
TOPKIS
Athletic Underwear

"I am 62 years of age, and looked like 80—a fitter subject for the Old People's Home than an active, outside insurance solicitor. Constipation had been the bane of my life. My feet could hardly carry me along, and my conversational powers were exhausted during business hours. About 12 months ago I was recommended as a last resort to try Fleischmann's Yeast. I can hardly believe it, neither can my associates—that I am the same man of a year ago. 'You look and act like a man of forty,' say my friends today."
(A letter from Mr. Russell Carolan of St. Louis, Mo.)

"A physical wreck—I was irritable, nervous, debilitated. I tried nearly every curative treatment known to science, but to no avail. I was simply depleted of nervous energy. When I heard of Fleischmann's Yeast I was skeptical of the wonderful results attributed to it. In a week's time, after using the yeast, my digestion became better, my complexion brighter, and I slowly regained lost vitality. Is it any wonder that I am a convert to the curative qualities of Fleischmann's Yeast?"
(Mr. Clair C. Cook, of Los Angeles, California)



"Five years ago as an office worker in Milwaukee, I could answer to the description of the 'run-down, nervous, suffering woman' in the patent medicine ads. My sallow complexion was my greatest worry and I was always troubled with constipation. I had taken medicine for four years, but the doctor said that drugs could not effect a permanent cure. Two years ago I learned from the girls in the office to eat Fleischmann's Yeast. Today I am frequently complimented on my fresh complexion."
(Extract from a letter of Mrs. Ella Fitzgerald of Ypsilanti, Michigan)



You may not realize its amazing power

—Put this familiar food to work for you

These remarkable reports are typical of thousands of similar tributes to Fleischmann's Yeast.

There is nothing mysterious about its action. It is not a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense. But when the body is choked with the poisons of constipation—or when its vitality is low so that skin, stomach, and general health are affected—this simple, natural food achieves literally amazing results.

Concentrated in every cake of Fleischmann's Yeast are millions of tiny yeast-plants, alive and active. At once they go to work—invigorating the whole system, clearing the skin, aiding digestion, strengthening the intestinal muscles and making them healthy and active. *Health* is yours once more.

Dissolve one cake in a glass of water (just hot enough to drink)

—before breakfast and at bedtime. Fleischmann's Yeast, when taken this way, is especially effective in overcoming or preventing constipation.

Or eat 2 or 3 cakes a day—spread on bread or crackers—dissolved in fruit juices or milk—or eat it plain.

Fleischmann's Yeast comes only in the tinfoil package—it cannot be purchased in tablet form. *All grocers have it.* Start eating it today! A few days' supply will keep fresh in *your* ice box as well as in the grocer's. Write us for further information or let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Address: Health Research Dept. Z-5, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

Bathe the skin the Fairy way!

A BATH with Fairy Soap is a delightful experience! The rich, foamy, delicately fragrant lather is produced in a jiffy.

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White clear through. Nothing in it but the finest, purest ingredients. A real aid to permanent skin health, whether used for the toilet or bath.

And remember—the oval cake is economical because it wears down to a thin wafer without breaking.

It's white! It's pure! It floats!

FAIRY SOAP

Classified Advertising

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MEN—We are seeking a few good men in choice territory to sell Studebaker Watches, direct from factory to consumer on New, easy payment selling plan; saves 50%. Highest grades, 21 Jewel, extra thin models, insurance for a lifetime. Choice of 54 Art Beauty Cases in newest effects of green gold, yellow gold, and white gold. Opportunity to represent highest grade line —part time or full time—and make substantial profits. Beautiful art catalogue, and details of selling plan sent Free. Write, stating age, experience, references, and locality interested in. Studebaker Watch Co., 303C, South Bend, Ind.

$1 HOUR. Write show cards for us at home. Particulars free. Kwik Showcard System, 64-G Bond, Toronto, Canada.

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AGENTS to travel by automobile to introduce our fast selling, popular priced household necessities. The greatest line on earth. Make $10.00 a day. Complete outfit and automobile furnished free to workers. Write today for exclusive territory. American Products Co., 1856 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

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ASTROLOGY—Stars tell Life's Story. Send birthdate and dime for trial reading. Eddy, 1085 B., Suite 74, Kansas City, Missouri.

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BE A DETECTIVE. Excellent opportunity, good pay, travel. Write C. T. Ludwig, 436 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

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Help Wanted—Female

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ALL Men, Women, Boys, Girls, 17 to 65 willing to accept Government Positions $117-$250, traveling or stationary, write Mr. Ozment, 308, St. Louis, Mo., immediately.

MEN over 18 willing to travel. Make secret investigations, reports. Salary and expenses. Experience unnecessary. Write J. Ganor, Former Govt. Detective, St. Louis.

DETECTIVES needed everywhere; cities, towns. Free particulars. Write National Detective System, 188 East 79th, New York.

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INVENTORS desiring to secure patents should write for our guide-book "How To Get Your Patent." Send sketch or description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Send sketch or model for preliminary examination. Booklet free. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 644 G St., Washington, D. C.

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INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED. Patented or unpatented. Write Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 223, St. Louis, Mo.

Stammering

ST-STU-T-T-TERING And Stammering Cured At Home. Instructive booklet free. Walter McDonnell, 80 Potomac Bank Building, Washington, D. C.

Personal

ETIQUETTE FOR EVERYBODY: Complete for all occasions. Ten cent booklet. Dime or Stamps to Information Service, S. S. 1322 New York Avenue, Washington.

ARE YOU BASHFUL? Self-conscious? Send dime for particulars how to overcome these troubles. Veritas, 1400 Broadway, New York. Desk 22.

Farm Lands

20 acres or more of our best land in Michigan. $20 to $30 per acre; near town 3,000 pop. $10 down, bal. long time. 52 page book Free. Swigart Land Co., X1265 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

How Do You Look In a Bathing Suit?

The good old swimming days are here. Oh, boy! But it's great to rip off the old shirt, into your suit and — SPLASH!! But what a shock to some of the poor girls when they see their heroes come out with flat chests and skinny arms instead of the big, husky frames they expected to see.

You Are Out of Luck

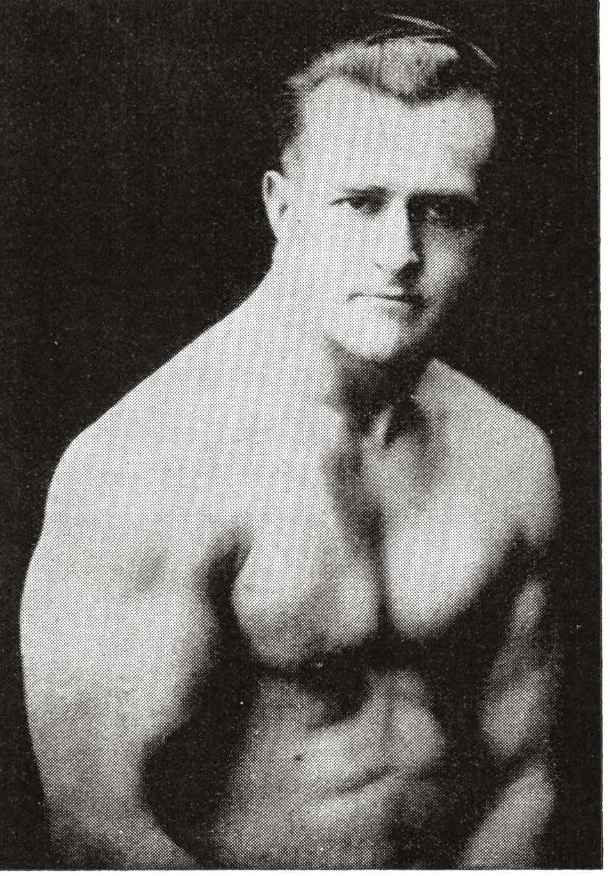
Don't try to make excuses. You are just out of luck. It's your own fault. You can't blame anyone but yourself. What are you going to do? She is going to find you out.

A Physique to Be Proud Of

It's not too late. Snap into it and I can save you yet. It means hard work and plenty of it, but—wait till you see the results.

The Muscle Builder

My job is to build muscle. That is why they call me The Muscle Builder. In just 30 days I am going to add one full inch to your biceps. Yes, and two inches on your chest in the same length of time. But that's only a starter. I am going to broaden out those shoulders and shoot a quiver up your old backbone. I am going to put a man's neck on you and a pair of legs to balance the strong sturdy body they support. You will have a spring to your step and a flash to your eye, radiating the dynamic life within you. Before summer is past you will never recognize your former self. You will have a strong, sturdy, virile body to be really proud of. You will be admired for your perfect manhood—while others are given glances of pity and scorn. This is no idle prattle, fellows. I don't just promise these things. I guarantee them. Are you with me? Let's go! Time is short and we have a job to do.



Earle E. Liederman
America's Leading Authority on Physical Education

Send for My New 64-page Book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

IT IS FREE

It contains forty-three full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. All I ask is 10 cents to cover the cost of wrapping and mailing and it is yours to keep. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send today—right now, before you turn this page.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5006, 305 Broadway, New York City

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5006, 305 Broadway, New York City

Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith 10 cents, for which you are to send me, without obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development."

Name..

Street..

City..........................State..................

(Please write or print plainly)

Help! Help! Help!

Get in the Fight to Prove Fiction Readers seriously read and consider advertising in Fiction Magazines

It is a well-known fact that fiction magazines provide clean, wholesome entertainment for millions of discriminating readers. That these magazines are taken into the best homes in the community and are thoroughly read and appreciated by every member of the family.

Logically then, with this family interest, fiction magazines provide an ideal introduction for a nationally advertised product. But some advertisers have the idea that readers of fiction magazines do not seriously read and consider the advertising section. We want you to help prove differently by selecting from this magazine the particular advertisement that appeals to you and to tell us briefly in a letter which advertisement you have selected and WHY.

We know you would willingly do this as a friendly service, but to instill the spirit of competition we have arranged a contest for cash prizes. It costs nothing to enter this contest. There are no rules. We only ask you to mention the magazine and issue you are criticizing. Prizes will be awarded to the four best letters submitted and the prize list is as follows: First Prize, $15.00; Second Prize, $5.00; Third Prize, $3.00; Fourth Prize, $2.00.

Contest for this issue closes July 1st, 1924

Popular Announces the Winners of the March 7th Advertising Prize Contest

First Prize, $15.00, Peter R. Robertson, 46 Bridge St., Newark, N. J.
For letter submitted on Black Jack Chewing Gum.

Second Prize, 5.00, Harry W. Kimball, Needham, Mass.
For letter submitted on Prest-O-Lite Battery.

Third Prize, 3.00, Mrs. Frances Dunn, Gorham, Ill.
For letter submitted on Quaker Puffed Rice and Wheat.

Fourth Prize, 2.00, Geo. M. Seward, 274 Central Ave., Highland Park, Ill.
For letter submitted on Overland Automobile.

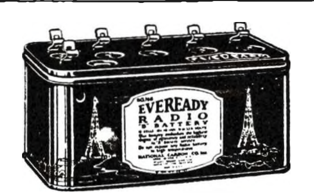
The Advertising Department again thanks the many readers for their very kind interest

Winners for the April 7th issue will be announced in the July 7th issue

"THE AIR IS FULL OF THINGS YOU SHOULDN'T MISS"

Your "B" Battery is the life of your Radio Set

THE broadcasting stations are transmitting wonderful programs for enjoyment in your home. Here a wonderful aria is being sung by a famous soprano—there a radio drama is being given. Here is a play-by-play report of some important athletic event—there an address of national importance. The successful reproduction of all these is absolutely dependent upon the quality of your "B" Battery, for without its silent, energizing current your set would be lifeless—mute.



Eveready "B" Battery No. 766
22½ volts. Six Fahnestock Spring Clip Terminals, giving variable voltage from 16½ to 22½ volts, in 1½-volt steps. Length, 6¾ in.; width, 4⅛ in.; height, 3 3/16 in. Weight, 5 lbs.

The makers of Eveready "B" Batteries have a thirty-year background of experience in battery making. They have expended millions in money and time, in men and methods, in machinery and laboratory research, to bring the dry cell to its highest point of efficiency. They have pioneered and assisted in the march of radio, and out of this broad experience have contributed that marvel of vitality and endurance—the Eveready "B" Battery—that your radio set may pulsate with life and bring forth thrilling speech and rippling music.

Be good to your set. Equip it with Eveready "B" Batteries that will serve and endure. Use Eveready Batteries throughout your set, for there is an Eveready Radio Battery for every radio use—the right battery by test and proof.

Insist on Eveready Batteries—they last longer.

Manufactured and guaranteed by

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC.
Headquarters for Radio Battery Information
New York San Francisco
Canadian National Carbon Co., Limited, Toronto, Ontario

Informative and money-saving booklets on radio batteries sent free on request. If you have any questions regarding radio batteries, write to Radio Division, G. C. Furness, Manager, National Carbon Company, Inc., 208 Orton Street, Long Island City, N. Y.

EVEREADY
Radio Batteries
–they last longer

Have you ever tried it this way?

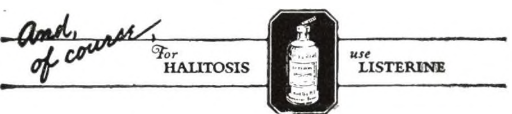
YOU know, of course, that Listerine has dozens of uses as a safe antiseptic. But do you know of its unusual properties as a safe, non-irritating deodorant?

Whenever you don't have time for a tub or shower, or when these are not accessible, simply try dousing on Listerine. See how cool, refreshed and clean it leaves you feeling.

And best of all, Listerine used this way as a deodorant cannot irritate or injure the most delicate skin. Rather, it is soothing, healing, evaporates quickly, and cannot stain garments. It is the ideal deodorant.—*Lambert Pharmacal Company, Saint Louis, U. S. A.*

Interesting news!

Listerine Throat Tablets, containing the antiseptic oils of Listerine, are now available. * * While we frankly admit that no tablet or candy lozenge can deodorize the breath, the Listerine antiseptic oils in these tablets are very valuable as a relief for throat irritations. * * They are 25 cents a package.



The Jeweler is the Judge

ISN'T it logical that a jeweler would be the person best able to advise you in the selection of pearls?

A jeweler *knows* BLUEBIRD and genuine pearls, and the fact that he features both is a compliment to BLUEBIRD!

BLUEBIRD prices are standard—with no bargain-counter skeletons in their closet!

Like all fine jewelry, BLUEBIRD PEARLS are sold *only* in jewelry stores!

Prices from $400 to $10

THE HENSHEL COMPANY
10 East 34th St., New York City

FRECKLES

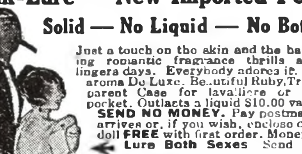
Now Is the Time to Get Rid of These Ugly Spots

There's no longer the slightest need of feeling ashamed of your freckles, as Othine—double strength—is guaranteed to remove these homely spots.

Simply get an ounce of Othine from any druggist and apply a little of it night and morning and you should soon see that even the worst freckles have begun to disappear, while the lighter ones have vanished entirely. It is seldom that more than an ounce is needed to completely clear the skin and gain a beautiful, clear complexion.

Be sure to ask for double-strength Othine, as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove freckles.

Sheik-Lure — New Imported Perfume Sensation



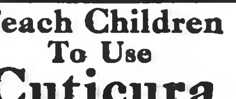
Solid — No Liquid — No Bottle

Just a touch on the skin and the haunting romantic fragrance thrills and lingers days. Everybody adores it. An aroma De Luxe. Beautiful Ruby, Transparent Case for lavalliere or vest pocket. Outlasts a liquid $10.00 value.

SEND NO MONEY. Pay postman only $1.00 when perfume arrives or, if you wish, enclose dollar bill with order. Sheik doll **FREE** with first order. Money back if not DELIGHTED.

Lure Both Sexes Send post card or letter NOW.

Lure Importers, West 1924, Evanston, Ill.



Teach Children To Use

Cuticura

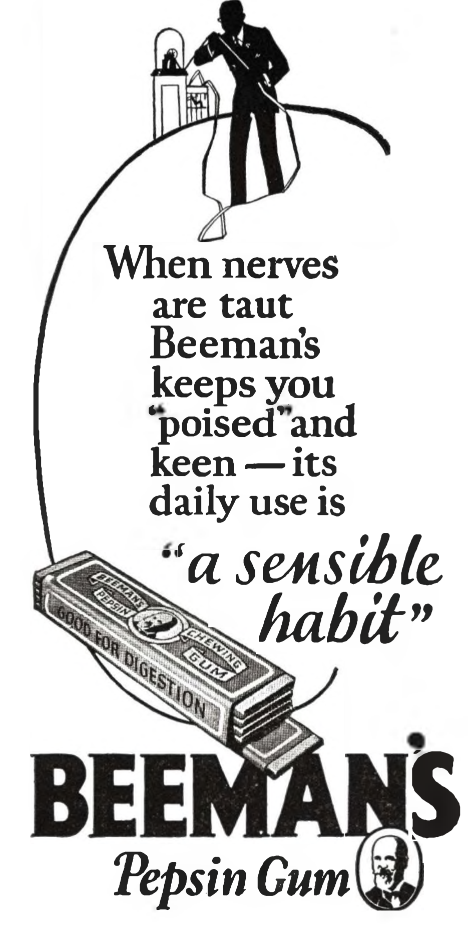
Soothes and Heals Rashes and Irritations

Cuticura Soap Keeps the Skin Clear

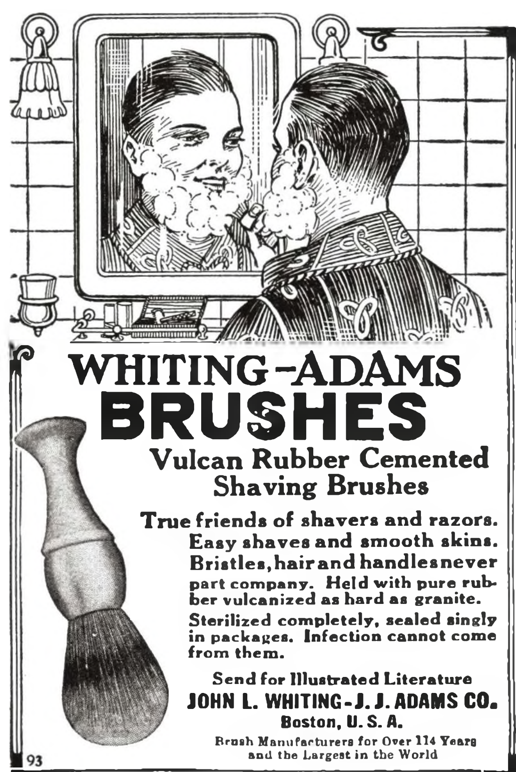
How Did Your Garters Look This Morning?

This friendly reminder to forgetful men has earned for Bostons the thanks of thousands of careful dressers. Be comfortable by knowing your garters are fresh always.

GEORGE FROST COMPANY, BOSTON
MAKERS OF VELVET GRIP HOSE SUPPORTERS FOR ALL THE FAMILY



AMERICAN CHICLE CO.



What Brake Lining came on *your* Car?

YOU may not know what make of lining your manufacturer supplied. But it is mighty important to know that your brakes stay ready to meet each new emergency of modern motoring.

Multibestos, the Brake Lining with the Interlocking Weave, is so dependable at all times, and *lasts for such a long time,* that the makers of a majority of America's cars specify it as original factory equipment.

When you have your brakes relined, ask for Multibestos.

MULTIBESTOS
THE BRAKE LINING
with the Interlocking Weave

New Auto Maps, only 10c

RAND McNALLY & CO., America's best-known map makers, have just printed a new series of absolutely up-to-date Touring Maps, covering every state. By special arrangement, for a short period, we can send you any states you wish for only 10c per map, in return for address of dealer or shop where you have your brakes relined. Order now. Specify sections or states you want.

MULTIBESTOS COMPANY
Dept. A. F. 6, Walpole, Mass., U. S. A.

She Found A Pleasant Way To Reduce Her Fat

She did not have to go to the trouble of diet or exercise. She found a better way, which aids the digestive organs to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

She used *Marmola Prescription Tablets* which are made from the famous Marmola prescription. They aid the digestive system to obtain the full nutriment of food. They will allow you to eat many kinds of food without the necessity of dieting or exercising.

Thousands have found that the *Marmola Prescription Tablets* give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal, healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar a box. Ask your druggist for them, or order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

MARMOLA COMPANY
1715 General Motors Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

IMPORTERS SALE — **REDUCED TO $6.25**

14 KT. WHITE GOLD FILLED
New Tonneau Shape—Regular $20 Value

Wonderful Bargain, 6 Jewel Wrist Watch, regulated and adjusted. Engraved case, 25 year guarantee. Fancy dial, sapphire crown, silk grosgrain ribbon.

FREE Handsome Velvet Gift Case

SEND NO MONEY. Pay postman on arrival $6.25 plus 18c postage. If money order accompanies order, we pay postage. *Money back guarantee protects you.*

SUPREME JEWELRY MFG. CO.
434 Broadway, Dept. 6010 New York, N. Y.

For your Radio get assured performance in the Prest-O-Lite Radio Battery.

Charging Prest-O-Lite Batteries at the Speedway Plant

Why put an unknown battery in your car?

The battery is the very heart of the entire electrical system. On its unfailing performance depends the satisfactory operation of your car. How foolish it would be to get a replacement battery without a name and reputation that assure performance! Assure yourself of dependability by getting a Prest-O-Lite Battery "the battery with a name" that stands nationally for dependability of service and integrity of manufacture.

Back of The Prest-O-Lite Battery lie the great resources and reputation of the Prest-O-Lite organization — sound surety of unfailing dependability.

Prest-O-Lite costs no more.

THE PREST-O-LITE COMPANY, INC., Indianapolis, Ind.

New York: 30 East 42nd Street   Pacific Coast: 599 Eighth Street, San Francisco

In Canada: Prest-O-Lite Company of Canada, Ltd., Toronto

Prest-O-Lite

THE OLDEST SERVICE TO MOTORISTS

The Sign of "Friendly Service" Service Stations Everywhere

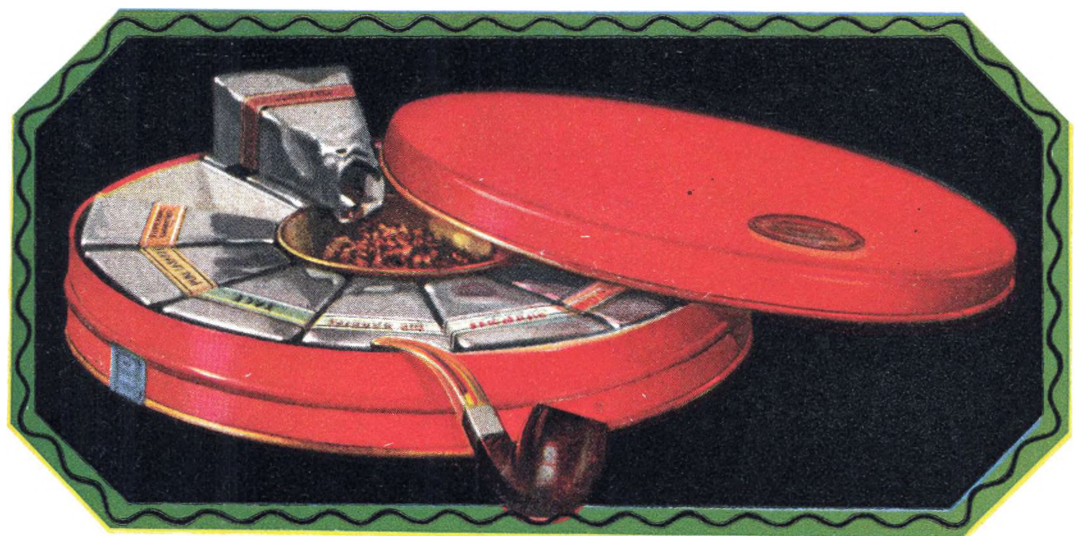
Where does the ice come from?

One advantage of a big organization is that it includes men who have specialized along many different lines. Thus, no matter what your electrical problem may be, there is someone among the 100,000 men and women of the General Electric Company who *knows* and is at your service.

Ice used to come from lakes and ponds—sometimes clean and sometimes not.

Today it comes from an artificial ice plant where electric hoists and ammonia compressors are operated by G-E motors. Jack Frost worked cheaply, but so does the G-E motor; and *it* works every day.

GENERAL ELECTRIC



Get this, men-

A complete assortment of the world's finest smoking tobaccos — sent to any smoker anywhere — *on 10 days approval*

A new idea for Pipe-Smokers: 12 famous tobaccos, packed in a handsome Humidor—shipped to you direct to help you find the soul-mate for your pipe.

GUARANTEED BY

The American Tobacco Co

MOST men have written their John Hancocks on a lot of "dotted lines." But, if you're a pipe-smoker, we'll wager that you've never signed a fairer, sweeter contract than the little coupon at the bottom of this page.

Just a few strokes of your pen—and you can end your quest of years for a perfect smoking tobacco.

But we are getting ahead of our story.

A Test of the 12 Best *for only* $1.50

If you were to try all 12 of these tobaccos in full size packages, the cost would be:

Blue Boar	.25
Capstan	.30
Imperial Cube Cut	.30
Herbert Tareyton	.25
Old English Curve Cut	.15
The Garrick	.30
Carlton Club	.15
Yale Mixture	.25
Folk's Serene Mixture	.15
Three States	.25
Will's Latakia	.45
Louisiana Perique	.25
Total	$3.05

But through the *Humidor Sampler* you get a liberal "get acquainted" quantity of each for $1.50

The average pipe-smoker is the greatest little experimenter in the world. He's forever trying a "new one," confident that some day he'll find the real affinity for his pipe.

So we created the *Humidor Sampler* to meet his needs.

Into a bright red lacquered humidor case, we have packed an assortment of twelve famous smoking tobaccos—covering the whole range of smoking tobacco taste.

There are myriads of different *brands* of smoking tobaccos on the market. But of them all, there are 12 distinctive blends which, in our opinion, stand in a class by themselves for superlative flavor, aroma and quality.

These twelve decisive blends—the twelve "primary colors" of tobaccos—have been selected for the Humidor Sampler. When you have tried these twelve, you have tried the best; if your tobacco-ideal is to be found anywhere, it must be one of these "Twelve Best."

Ten-Day Approval Offer

We are eager to send the Humidor assortment to any smoker, anywhere, on ten days' approval.

Send no money. Just sign and mail the coupon. That will bring you the Humidor assortment direct from our factories to your den. When the postman brings the package, deposit $1.50 with him, plus postage.

If a ten-day try-out of these tobaccos doesn't give you more real pipe pleasure than you've ever had before, simply return the Humidor, and you'll get your $1.50 and the postage back *pronto*—and pleasantly.

Send No Money—Just Mail Coupon

The American Tobacco Co., Inc., Marburg Branch
Dept. 104, Baltimore, Md.

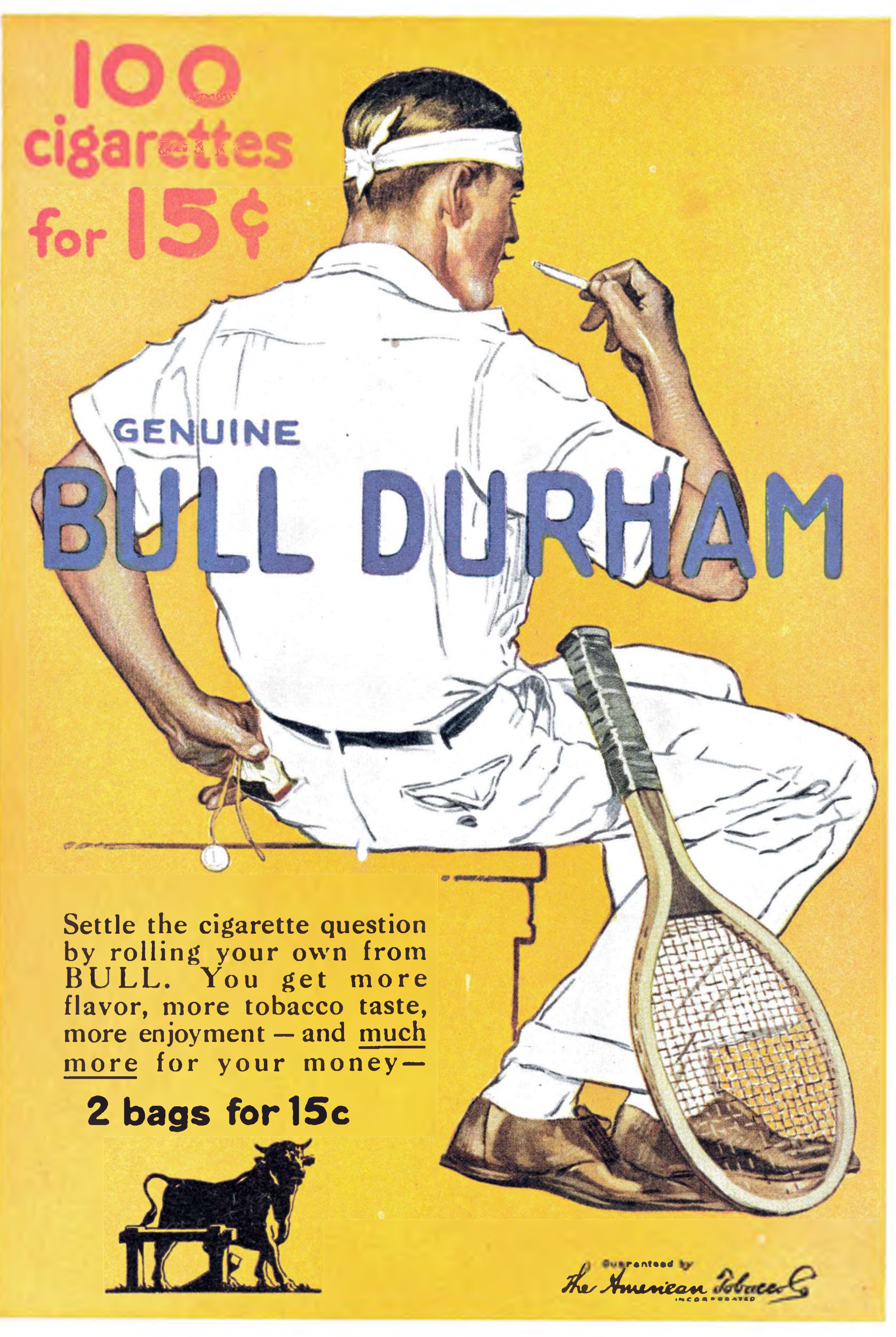
Please send me, on 10 days' approval, one of your Humidor Samplers of twelve different smoking tobaccos. I will pay postman $1.50 (plus postage) on receipt—with the understanding that if I am not satisfied I may return Humidor in 10 days and you agree to refund $1.50 and postage by return mail.

Name..

Address..

City.. State....................

Note:—If you expect to be out when postman calls you may enclose $1.50 with coupon and Humidor will be sent to you postpaid.


100
cigarettes
for 15¢
GENUINE
BULL DURHAM
Settle the cigarette question by rolling your own from BULL. You get more flavor, more tobacco taste, more enjoyment — and much more for your money—
2 bags for 15c
Guaranteed by
The American Tobacco Co
INCORPORATED

HOLDS ITS SHAPE!

ALL day long—or through the evening dance—the Spur Tie holds its shape. Doesn't curl, roll or wrinkle. An exclusive patented feature makes this possible.

ALL TIED FOR YOU

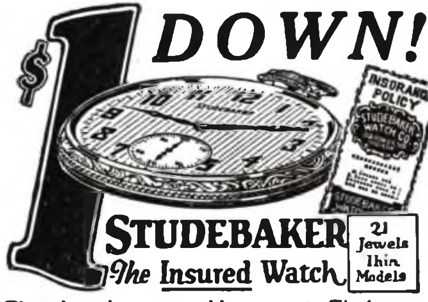
The Spur Tie comes all tied for you by hand. A host of patterns—two sizes—and either pointed or square end models, to choose from.

BE SURE YOU GET THE GENUINE
LOOK FOR THE NAME SPUR ON THE TIE

Write for Style Book C

HEWES & POTTER, Boston, Mass.
Makers of BULL-DOG
Suspenders and Garters, Guaranteed 365 Days
Bull-Dog Belts and Vestoff Suspenders
On the Pacific Coast
Paul B. Hay, 120 Battery St., San Francisco, Cal.

$1 DOWN!



STUDEBAKER 21 Jewels Thin Models
The Insured Watch

The balance in easy monthly payments. The famous Studebaker 21 Jewel Watch—Insured for a lifetime; 8 adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and 6 positions—choice of 54 new Art Beauty Cases. Direct from the maker at lowest prices.

Fine Chain FREE!

BIG SPECIAL OFFER. Beautiful Watch Chain FREE with every watch. Limited! Write at once—while offer lasts.

WRITE
Send today for wonderful Studebaker Book of Advance Watch Styles and our $1.00 Down Offer —FREE!

Studebaker Watch Co., Dept. 306 South Bend, Indiana

Try This on Your Hair 15 Days

Let your mirror prove results. Write for Liberal Trial Offer.

Your hair need not thin out, nor need you become bald, for there is a way to destroy the microbe that destroys the hair. This different method will stop thinning out of the hair, lifeless hair, remove dandruff, itching, darken gray hair and threatened or increasing baldness, by strengthening and prolonging life of the hair for men and women. Send your name now before it is too late for the 15 days' liberal trial offer.
AYMES CO. 3932 N. Robey St. M. 128, Chicago, Illinois.

---

happy legs

grateful for the clean white clasps - no metal - no pads!

IVORIES are light, airy, elastic all the way round. They have clean, white clasps—no metal to corrode and rot the fabric. So Ivory Garters need no pads. They fit any leg comfortably, without a sign of binding.

Notice the V-shaped weave in our new Wide Web Garter. This great improvement makes it the springiest, friendliest feeling garter you ever knew.

Get Ivories at all men's stores. Wide or standard web, single or double clasps. 25c up. Only then will you realize what real leg-comfort can be.

IVORY GARTER COMPANY
New Orleans, La.

Ivory Garter

BUNIONS

PEDODYNE, the marvelous new Solvent, banishes Bunions. The pain stops almost instantly. The Hump vanishes as though by magic. THEN YOU WILL HAVE SHAPELY FEET.

SENT ON TRIAL

I want you to have relief from Bunions. I want you to know the pleasure of foot comfort. I will gladly arrange to send you a box of Solvent to try. Simply write and say, "I want to try PEDODYNE." Address—

KAY LABORATORIES Dept. K-663
186 N. La Salle St. Chicago, Illinois

HAVE YOU EVER READ

Picture-Play Magazine?

BUBBLING OVER WITH SCREEN NEWS

Stop Using a Truss

Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal.

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. **No straps, buckles or spring attached**—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered.

Grand Prix.

Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely **FREE**

Write name on Coupon and send **TODAY.**

Plapao Co. 633 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Name..

Address...

Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao..................

Pimples

YOUR SKIN CAN BE QUICKLY CLEARED of Pimples, Blackheads, Acne Eruptions on the face or body, Barbers Itch, Eczema, Enlarged Pores, Oily or Shiny Skin.

FREE Write today for my FREE Booklet, "A CLEAR-TONE SKIN", telling how I cured myself after being afflicted for over fifteen years.

$1,000 Cold Cash says I can clear your skin of the above blemishes.

E. S. GIVENS, 113 Chemical Building, **KANSAS CITY, MO.**

GET THIN

Free Trial Treatment

Sent on request. Ask for my "pay-when-reduced" offer. I have successfully reduced thousands of persons, often at the rate of a pound a day, without diet or exercise. Let me send you proof at my expense.

DR. R. NEWMAN, Licensed Physician, State of New York, 286 Fifth Ave., N. Y. Desk C-67

BUCHSTEIN'S FIBRE LIMB

is soothing to your stump,—strong, cool, neat, light. Guaranteed 5 years. Easy payments.

Also fibre arms, and braces for all deformities

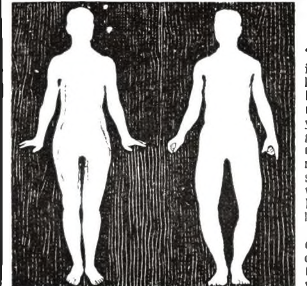
Send for Catalog Today

B. Buchstein Co., 610 3rd Ave., S. Minneapolis, Minn.

Want to Keep Awake?

Read the

Top-Notch Magazine



PERSONAL APPEARANCE

is now more than ever the key-note of success. **Bow-Legged & Knock-Kneed men and women**, both young and old, will be glad to hear that I have now ready for market my new appliance, which will successfully straighten, within a short time, bow-leggedness and knock-kneed legs, safely, quickly and permanently, without pain, operation or discomfort. Will not interfere with your daily work, being worn at night. My new "Lim-Straitner," Model 18, U. S. Patent, is easy to adjust; its result will save you soon from further humiliation, and improve your personal appearance 100 per cent.

Write today for my free copyrighted physiological and anatomical book which tells you how to correct bow and knock-kneed legs without any obligation on your part. Enclose a dime for postage.

M. TRILETY, SPECIALIST
902 L, Ackerman Building, BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

30 Days' Free Trial

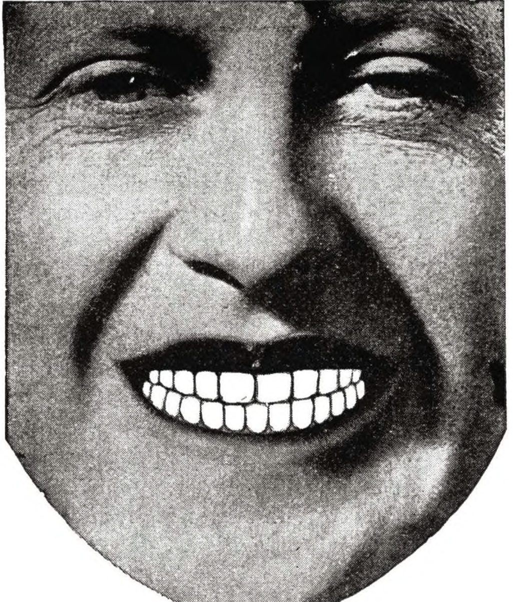
Select from **44 Styles**, colors and sizes, famous **Ranger** bicycles. **Delivered free** on approval, *express prepaid*, **at Factory Prices.** You can easily save $10 to $25 on your bicycle. Prices **$21.50 and up.**

$5 a Month on any Ranger if desired. Parents often advance first deposit. Boys and girls can easily earn small monthly payments. Pay as you ride.

Tires best quality, at factory prices, *express prepaid.* Lamps, wheels and equipment, low prices. **Send No Money,** do business *direct* with makers.

Mead CYCLE COMPANY DEPT. G-4, CHICAGO

Write today for free Ranger Catalog, factory prices and marvelous easy payment terms



Yellow Stained Teeth Bleached White New Safe Way

No more dark, discolored, spotted or tobacco stained teeth. Bleachodent Combination costs only few cents and removes unsightly stains in three minutes at home. Leaves teeth flashing white, lustrous, clean. Recommended everywhere as quicker, surer, safer than old harmful, dangerous scouring. Fine for children's soft, sensitive teeth. No effect on enamel. Bleachodent Combination contains liquid to loosen stain coats and special paste which gently removes them. Paste keeps new stains from forming. Be sure to ask for Bleachodent Combination. Distributed by Bleachodent Dental Laboratories and sold by drug and department stores everywhere.

Ring Watch

Be one of the first to wear this tiny ladies' Ring Watch. New shape, cut corners, in engraved white gold case. Full jeweled movement, fully guaranteed. Butler silver center dial, engraved. Jeweled wind and set. Surprise your friends. Order now! Send size.

Free Catalog

Retail Value $25

$13.65

Order No. F-3619

Send No Money! Just pay postman on arrival our low price, plus postage. Your money back if not satisfactory.

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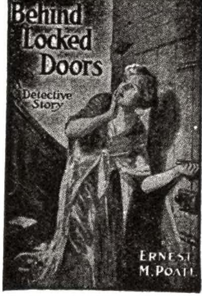

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