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The Popular Magazine

25¢

OCT. 7, 1924

A COMPLETE NOVEL BY A.M. CHISHOLM

Get a Job Like These

Earn $3500 to $10,000 a Year

in the Big Pay Field of ELECTRICITY

20 Years Old—Makes Almost $500 a Month

Harold Hastings of Somers, Mass., says: "The profit on my electrical business amounts to $475 a month. My success is due entirely to your instruction. You make your men just what you say—Electrical Experts. No man will ever make a mistake enrolling for your course."

Dickerson Gets $7,500 a Year

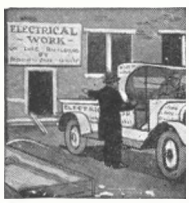
"I earned $30 a week when I started with you—$60 a week when half through your course. Now I clean up at the rate of $7,500 a year. Thank you a thousand times for what you did for me. Electricity pays big on the farm." Herbert M. Dickerson, Warrentown, Virginia.

$20.00 a Day for Schreck

"Use my name as a reference and depend on me as a booster. The biggest thing I ever did was answer your advertisement. I am averaging better than $600 a month from my own business now. I used to make $18.00 a week."
A. Schreck,
Phoenix, Ariz.

Pence Earns $9,000 a Year

W. E. Pence, Albany, Oregon, says: "Your course put me where I am today, Mr. Cooke—making $750 a month doing automobile electrical work—think of it—$9,000 a year. Besides that I am my own boss. My wife joins me in thanking you for what you did for us."



$30 to $50 a Day for J. R. Morgan

"When I started on your course I was a carpenter's helper, earning around $5.00 a day. Now I make from $30 to $50 a day and am busy all the time. Use this letter if you want to—I stand behind it."
J. R. Morgan,
Columbus, Ohio.

It's your own fault if you don't earn more. Blame yourself if you stick to your small pay job when I have made it so easy for you to earn $3500 to $10,000 a year as an electrical expert. **Electrical Experts** are badly needed. Thousands of men must be trained at once. One billion dollars a year is being spent for electrical expansion and everything is ready but the men. Will you answer the call of this big pay field? Will you get ready now for the big job I will help you get? The biggest money of your life is waiting for you.

I Will Train You at Home

I will train you just like I trained the five men whose pictures you see here. Just like I have trained thousands of other men—ordinary, everyday sort of fellows—pulling them out out of the depths of starvation wages into jobs that pay $12.00 to $30.00 a day. Electricity offers you more opportunities—bigger opportunities—than any other line and with my easily learned, spare time course, I can fit you for one of the biggest jobs in a few short months' time.

Quick and Easy to Learn

Don't let any doubt about your being able to do what these other men have done rob you of your just success. Pence and Morgan and these other fellows didn't have a thing on you when they started. You can easily duplicate their success. Age, lack of experience or lack of education makes no difference. Start just as you are and I will guarantee the result with a **signed money back guarantee bond.** If you are not 100% satisfied with my course it won't cost you a cent.

FREE—Electrical Working Outfit and Tools

In addition to giving my students free employment service and free consultation service, I give them also a complete working outfit. This includes tools, measuring instruments, material and a real electric motor—the finest beginners' outfit ever gotten together. You do practical work right from the start. After the first few lessons it enables you to make extra money every week doing odd electrical jobs in your spare time. Some students make as high as $25 to $35 a week in spare time work while learning. This outfit is all FREE.

Mail Coupon for FREE BOOK
—the Vital Facts of the Electrical Industry

The coupon below will bring you my big free electrical book—over 100 interesting pictures. The real dope about your opportunities in electricity—positive proof that you, too, can earn $3500 to $10,000 a year. Send for it now. Along with the book I will send you a sample lesson, a credit check allowing you a $45.50 reduction, my guarantee bond and particulars of the most wonderful pay-raising course in the world. Send the coupon now—this very second may be the turning point in your life. Send it while the desire for a better job and more money is upon you, to

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Without obligating me in any way send me the "Vital Facts," your Free Book, Sample Lessons and particulars of your Free Outfit Offer, Free Employment Service, and proof that you can fit me for a big-pay electrical job.

Name.....

Address.....

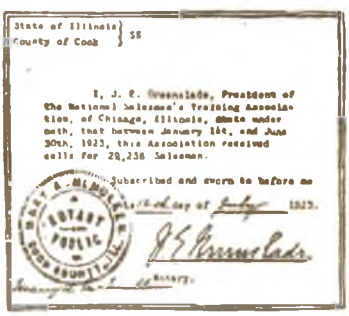
Occupation.....

If You Want Bigger Pay Make This FREE TEST

There's a sure way to increase your earning power. And here is such an opportunity. Look into it—you may recognize it as your one chance to earn the biggest money of your life.

ARE you ready for a shock? Then, let me tell you that if you have average intelligence and can read and write, there is a quick and easy way for you to earn enough money to satisfy any average ambition. And after reading this offer, if you do not quickly make more money, you have no one to blame but yourself.

Don't take my word for it. By a simple test—you can make in the privacy of your home—you will know that every word I say is true—or otherwise. The test does not obligate you or cost you one penny. But make the test. Then judge for yourself. It has proved to be THE opportunity for thousands. They have found the way to bigger pay—are now earning from five to twenty times as much as formerly. And the beauty of it is they enjoy every minute in the day's work. They are their own bosses.


State of Illinois } ss
County of Cook }

I, J. F. Grossclade, President of the National Salesmen's Training Association, of Chicago, Illinois, state under oath, that between January 1st, and June 30th, 1923, this Association received calls for 29,238 Salesmen.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this ... day of January 1923.

NOTARY PUBLIC

The thousands who have made this test before you, and who are now making the money you would like to make, are now salesmen. Ninety-five per cent once thought they were not "cut out for selling" that salesmen were "born" and not made. They found it was a fallacy that had kept them in the rut. They discovered that anyone with proper training can sell, and they are making from $5,000 to $10,000 a year, because they had the vision to recognize opportunity.

Thousands Have Proved It!

For instance, A. H. Ward, Chicago, earned $1,350 last month. Has averaged $1,000 a month the last year. H. D. Miller, another Chicago boy, was making $100 a *month* as a stenographer in July 1922. In September, 3 months later, he was making $100 a *week* as a salesman. W. P. Clenny of Kansas City, Mo., stepped from a $150 a month clerkship into a selling job at $500 a month. He is making $850 a month now. M. V. Stephens of Albany, Ky., was making $25 a week. He took up this training and now makes 5 times that much. J. H. Cash of Atlanta, Ga., exchanged his $75 a month job for one which pays him $500 a month. O. H. Malfroot of Boston, Mass., stepped into a $10,000 position as a SALES MANAGER—so thorough is this training. All these successes are due to this easy, fascinating and rapid way to master certain invincible secrets of selling.

Simple as A B C

Sounds remarkable, doesn't it? Yet there is nothing remarkable about it. There are certain ways to approach different types of prospects to get their undivided attention—certain ways to stimulate keen interest—certain ways to overcome objections, batter down prejudices, outwit competition and make the prospect act. If you will learn these principles there is awaiting you a brilliant success and more money than you ever thought of earning.

As you will see by the affidavit to the left thousands of reputable selling organizations in America turn to this Association for their Salesmen. We can never take care of all the demands made on us for this better type of trained salesmen.

Make This Free Test at Once

Don't turn this page until you have clipped the coupon, filled it out, and sent it on its way. The test is contained in a free book, "Modern Salesmanship" which we will gladly send you without obligation. After reading the book through you will ask yourself the question it brings up. The answers will prove whether this is your opportunity or not. So mail the coupon NOW.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASS'N.
Dept. 4-R, 53 W. Jackson Blvd. Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Ass'n.
Dept. 4-R, 53 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

Please send me without obligation on my part your free book, "Modern Salesmanship" which will enable me to test my ability at home, and full information about the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training and Employment Service.

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Age ..... Occupation .....

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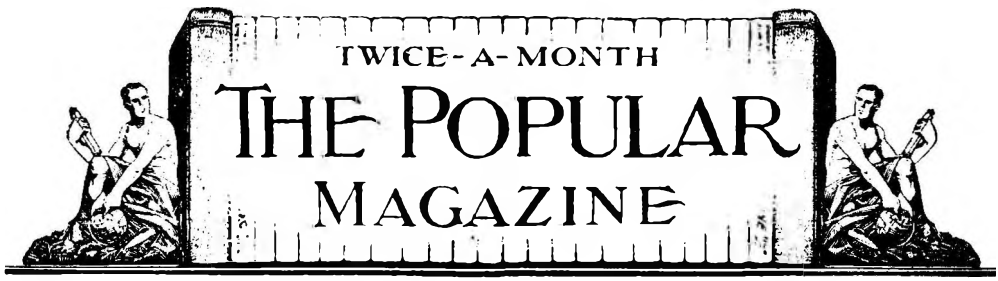
Vol. LXXIII **OCTOBER 7, 1924** **No. 6**



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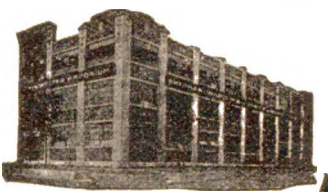

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MADAME X COMPANY, Inc.

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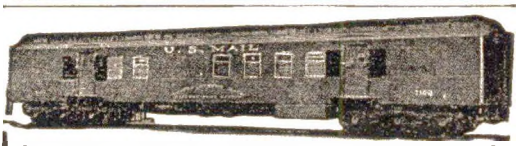

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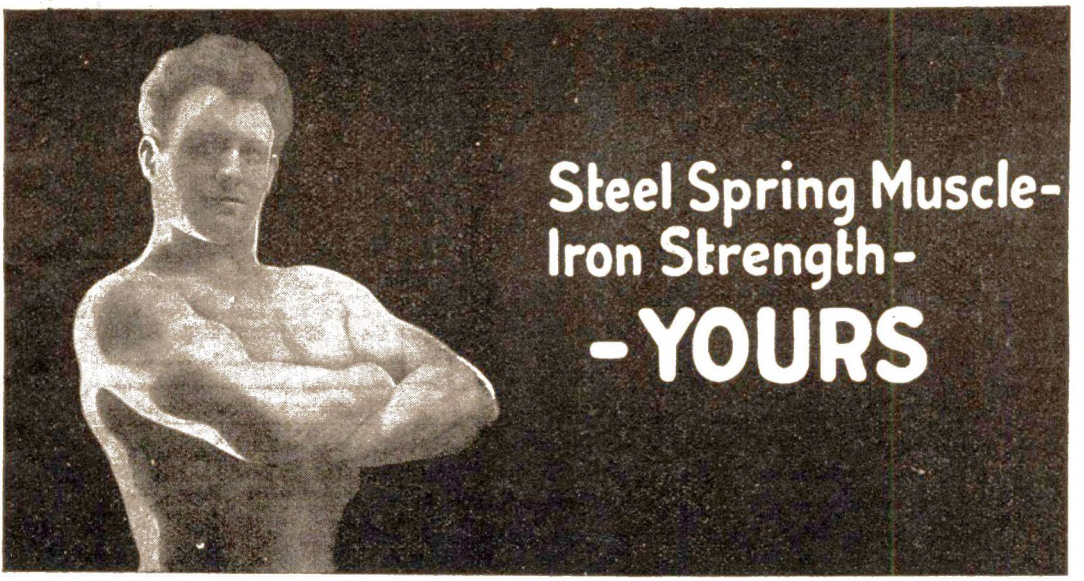

This new way of building strength and muscle is the most astonishing, the simplest and the most successful method I know!

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Never before has such news been released in the world of physical training!

I have known of Breitbart for years. But I never before realized what a superb physical specimen he is. His "ats of strength are astoundi..g—unequalled! He drives nails through oak planks with his fists. He bends silver dollars between thumb and finger. He sustains more weight or lifts more than any living man. He bends steel bands around his arm like so much ribbon. *And as a young man he was a puny weakling.* For years Breitbart has kept his method secret. "Anyone who knows my method can do what I can," he says. But now he wants the world of men, hungry for strength, to know. He has made his fortune and he is satisfied. So now, gladly, he has divulged his secret — he makes known the simplest strength-building method ever devised. Yet it is the most positive, quickest and successful of all known systems.

What Is This New Method?

I have been a student of physical culture for years. I know the methods of every physical culture expert of any prominence in the country. They are all much alike. But here is a different, better method. Here is a system of strength and muscle building unlike anything I have ever seen. It has enabled Breitbart to become a superman. It has put inches on my own muscle. It has built rugged strength and power into even slightly built fellows who never had an idea they could become "strong men." There is no one so puny or weak whom Breitbart cannot help.

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Then wake up, come to life and get what Breitbart offers you!

Breitbart's method is unique, because it builds strength and muscle too. What is the Breitbart secret that is now made known for the first time? Here at last is a method that not only gives you big, bulging arms, shoulders and legs — muscles you'll be proud of—but strength as well. There are many ways of developing the size of your arms, but they fail to give you real strength. But the Breitbart way gives you the rugged muscular power to lift, to bend, to break, to crush and it makes every fibre count. So that as your muscles grow big your strength grows in proportion.

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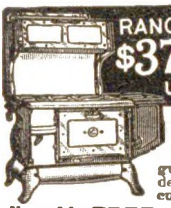

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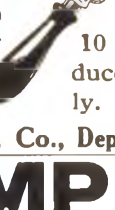

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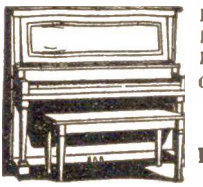

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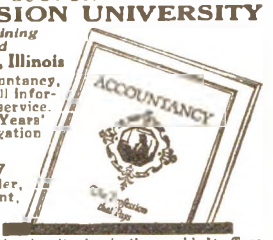

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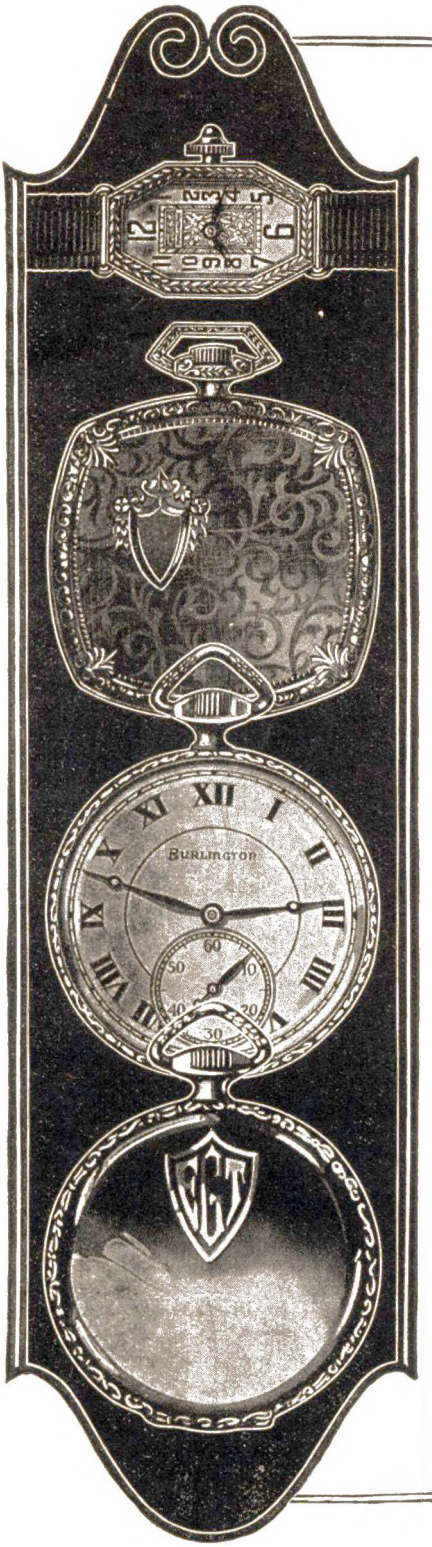

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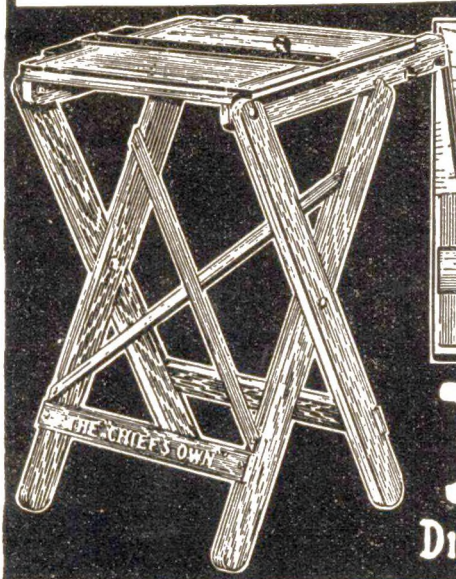

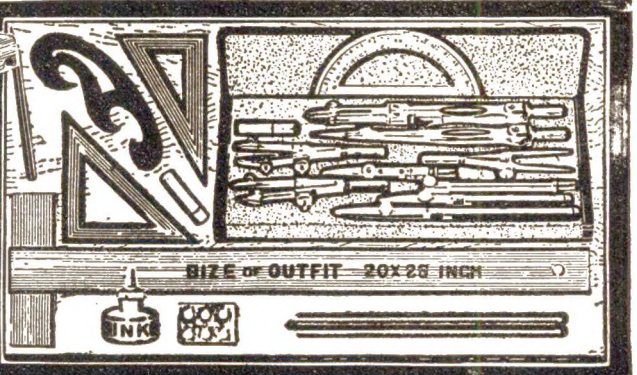

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Second Prize,	5.00,	William Marsh, 280 Spring St., Portland, Maine. *For letter submitted on Durham-Duplex Razor.*
Third Prize,	3.00,	Albert A. Zieger, 30 Ridgewood Ave., Newark, N. J. *For letter submitted on Ivory Garter.*
Fourth Prize,	2.00,	Mrs. E. R. Skemp, Box 1100, Rt. 7, Sacramento, Calif. *For letter submitted on Listerine Tooth Paste.*

The Advertising Department is most grateful to the many thousands of readers who so generously responded to the invitation to make a "better job" of our Advertising Department.

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ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

STREET & SMITH CORPORATION

79 Seventh Avenue **New York City**

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Anyone who can remember a tune can easily and quickly learn to play Jazz, Ragtime and Popular Songs by ear, at a very small cost. New Niagara Method makes piano playing wonderfully simple.

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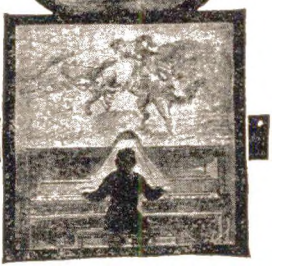

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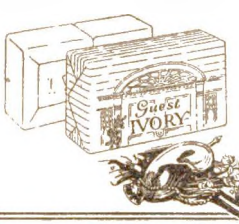

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

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The Law West of the Pecos

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "The Riders from Texas," "The Scalp Lock," Etc.

Of all the bards of the early West whose works we have read—and they are many—we know of none more thoroughly versed in his subject than Dane Coolidge. Moreover, Mr. Coolidge's writing has a quality which distinguishes it clearly—the quality of sturdy, uncompromising honesty. We mean by this that he never exaggerates, or glosses over, or goes seeking romance where it is not. He paints men and things as they really are. His desert is not the kind of desert he imagines his readers will like—it is the real, stark, monotonous, blistering, terrifying thing. And his men are not unrelieved angels and unmitigated devils; there is something to find fault with in the best of them—and in the worst there is always a redeeming streak of some sort. Real men are that way. As for the present story—it is full of adventure, full of humanity, full of pathos, and saturated with the spirit of the early Southwest. It is a vivid picture of "The Border" as it used to be, swift, calamitous, vigorous—and withal a glorious place to have lived if you had the soul and the sinew to stand it. In those days only one law ran west of the Pecos. This is a tale of the men who made that law and the men who scorned it.

(A Four-Part Story—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

THE KING.

THE overland stage was late and, slapping on his Mexican hat, "King" Wootan strode out of his crowded saloon and squinted down the road to the west. Across the street at the stage stand the horse tender stood waiting, ready to open the gate for the mules, but there was not even a dust streak in Apache Pass to herald their galloping approach. The King shrugged his shoulders and plucked thoughtfully at the tufted eyebrows which formed a bar of black across his brow, then at the flash of a skirt in the door of the dance hall he threw out his chest and smiled. One hairy hand crept up to twist

his long, drooping mustachios, he swelled and pouted like a pigeon in the sun; but at a shrill, mocking laugh he glanced hastily across the street, where his wife had just stepped out on the porch.

The dance-hall girl laughed again as she saw his pinions fall before the level, contemptuous gaze of Mrs. Wootan, and the King in self-defense turned to look the other way, where a cowboy was riding in from the east. Then his front came up again, for the man did not live who could make King Wootan back down, and swinging into the barroom he donned the warlike trappings by virtue of which he was king. First he slipped on a calfskin vest in which two bowie knives were sheathed, and took down a sawed-off shotgun, which he hung by a strap from his shoulder; then, slapping the brace of pistols which he always wore in his belt, he swaggered out to meet the stranger.

But the cowboy himself was far from being defenseless, for in western Texas in 1880 every man went fully armed. A broad belt about his waist held two 45-caliber pistols, with a double row of cartridges above; and in a scabbard by his right knee the butt of his carbine stuck up where he could draw it with one sweep of the hand. A short leather coat, like a vest with sleeves, set off his broad shoulders and trim waist; and a low, stiff-rimmed sombrero half hid the wary eyes that searched every doorway he passed. They were eyes as clear and blue as the summer sky, but steady and unsmiling; and as King Wootan met his gaze he set him down for a gunman, for Jess Roundtree was a Texas Ranger. He wore no badge, no Lone Star of Texas, to tip his hand to strangers, but there was stamped on his young face the record of hard rides and bloody fights, and the King let out a roar of defiance.

"Hello, there!" he challenged. "Act like you was looking for somebody. Say, seems to me I've seen you before, somewhere."

"No, sir," responded the ranger after a brief, appraising glance. "What's the chance to get something to eat here?"

"No chance, sir; no chance at all, until that stage gits in and it's already two hours late. Must 've been held up by the Injuns—the wire's cut."

"Indians!" repeated Roundtree with an incredulous stare. "I thought they were all rounded up."

"Rounded up—hell!" exploded Wootan. "That's what the colonel says, sitting up there at the post, swilling beer. But I lived here at Dragoon before they was any fort and I know a dam' sight better. Apaches! By cracky, I've seen 'em by the thousand, right up on those palisades above there; and if we'd waited for the soldiers to round the rascals up we'd all be scalped by this time. No, sir! I kept this station when they wasn't another white man between here and Horseshoe Crossing, on the Pecos; and I killed the dirty devils any way I could git to 'em—with cold lead or cold steel or pizen. Pizen? Sure. I sweetened some sugar I had to leave in my wagons when they surrounded my supply train at Charco, and it deadened over forty Mescaleros. And every time I seen one I bored him through and through—that's the only way to deal with these Apaches!

"But these yaller-legged cavalrymen, when they did take after the Injuns, would give all their orders by bugle call. *Tlah, lah—lah, lah!* You could hear 'em for forty miles; and jest enough of them renegades had been government scouts so they knowed every move that was made. No, sir, it takes the settlers and the Texas Rangers to clean out these murdering Apaches; and if that stage has been robbed we're all set to ride after 'em and trail 'em to the far side of hell. Been held up three times inside of a month but old 'Pecos Bill' up here—commanding officer at the fort, where all these drunken soldiers come from—he r'ars back and says it cain't possibly be Injuns, because every buck is present or accounted for. He's wired the reservation and the officer at Fort Stanton claims they ain't a mule eater missing; but I'll bet you the drinks that's what's holding the stage up—they're making another stand ag'inst Injuns!"

"And don't we get anything to eat until that stage comes in?" demanded the ranger, stepping down from his horse. "Well, I'll bet I get something; and I want that horse rubbed down and fed a big bait of corn."

The King glared at him a moment, for his bluff had fallen flat; then, turning his massive head, he shouted to a Mexican who came running to take the horse.

"So you think you can git something?" he said with a wry smile. "Well, that jest shows you up for a tenderfoot. My wife's running that dining room and she wouldn't

feed Jeff Davis—not until that stage arrives. But come on in," he invited with a hospitable gesture; "you can git a little lunch at the bar."

He whisked into the saloon and Roundtree followed after him, feeling many hard eyes fixed upon him.

"I'll jest take that gun belt, if you don't mind," insinuated Wootan, "and put it behind the bar. Rule of the house," he blustered; "no exceptions for nobody. Even the captain of the rangers has to put up his gun when he comes inside that door. Ah, that's more like it—I'll put it right here, where you can git 'em when you go out; but any shooting that's done in the Lone Wolf Saloon I figure on doing myself. Now, what'll it be, my friend?"

He slapped his hand on the bar and grinned affably at the stranger, and a crowd of tipsy loafers who had been waiting for this signal came shuffling up to drink. But the ranger eyed them coldly and turned away.

"How about that little lunch?" he said.

"Oh, a lunch? Sure, sure!" nodded Wootan, jerking his head for the bar flies to go. "Right over where you see that Mexican."

He went on with his work as if nothing had happened until Roundtree had finished his meal; then as he came up to pay for it the King slapped the bar again, but the ranger did not take the hint.

"I'm not drinking," he said and the King grunted scornfully.

"All right," he replied. "That's your privilege."

"No offense," observed Roundtree and was turning away when Wootan picked up a bowl.

"See this?" he began. "That's an interesting cur'osity—that's the skull of my old friend, Bill Pranty. Bill got killed down there in that cañon you jest come through—the Apaches jumped the stage—but the driver and the rest of us took to the rocks, and we finally fought 'em off. Well, we buried pore old Bill and never thought no more about him, being busy with this thing and that; until one day I was riding through there, looking for some hawses I'd lost, and I come across pore old Bill's grave. We'd buried him in a hurry, the Apaches being so bad, and the crick had come up during a cloudburst and washed the grave plumb out. There was his skull laying out there as slick and clean as a gourd, so I brought it back home here and sawed off the top of it and we use it right along for a sugar bowl. Now every time I mix a julep, I think of pore old Bill—didn't see any Injuns yourself, did ye?"

"Nary a one," answered the ranger dryly.

"Well, now, maybe you think they ain't no Injuns about—maybe you think I'm trying to fill you—but they're robbing the stage and killing emigrants regular. Robbed the big Chihuahua caravan last fall. But say, here's a friend of mine I sure want you to meet—Big Benjy, the eddicated bear. Ain't afraid of bears, air ye? Well come right along over, then—he's harmless as a sucking dove, anyhow."

He led the way across the room to where a medium-sized brown bear was chained to a ring in a post, and at the word of command Big Benjy rose up and rolled his red eyes knowingly.

"He wants to shake hands with you," announced Wootan pompously. "You don't need to be afraid of him—he's chained."

"I ain't afraid of him, nohow," answered Roundtree and stepped in and took him by the paw.

"Mm—waw!" whimpered the bear, rubbing his muzzle against his shoulder, and the ranger was smiling and scratching his ear when Benjy infolded him in his powerful arms.

"What does he want?" asked Roundtree as the bear thrust out his tongue, and the crowd set up a whoop of laughter.

"He wants a drink!" grinned Wootan. "Didn't I tell you he was eddicated? He's asking you for a bottle of beer."

"Bring him over one," ordered the ranger, and while the bear was watching his master he laid both hands on his shoulders. Then with a sudden heave he broke the hold about his waist and laid Big Benjy on his back.

"There's your bear," he said to Wootan; and the King eyed him truculently, for Benjy was the pride of the place. Moreover, he had been trained not to release his victim until he had bought the drinks for the house.

"Think you can wrastle him, do ye?" he demanded and the ranger nodded confidently.

"Sure I can," he responded, "for dimes dollars or doughnuts. He don't look bad to me."

"Well, by grab, we'll jest match you," the King rumbled arrogantly. "Only don't blame me if he puts you in the hospital and breaks every bone in yore body."

"I won't blame you for nothing, and here's a ten-dollar bill that says I can ride him like a goat."

"You'll play hell, riding Benjy," scoffed Wootan, uncorking the bottle of beer; and as the shaggy brute drank it down through a space in his muzzle Roundtree stepped in and felt of him playfully.

"Aw, he's gentle," he said, with a rugged smile. "I can see he's been raised a pet." And while Big Benjy was sucking the last drops of beer he slipped his arms about his waist and, rocking him gently to and fro, suddenly tumbled him on his back.

"By grab, you keep on monkeying with that bear and I'll turn him loose on you!" yelled Wootan. "That's the best-trained bear in Jeff Davis County and I don't want him spoiled by nobody."

"Well, turn him loose, then," dared the ranger, "if you think he can wrastle. I'm a plumb stranger in these parts but I'll bet you the drinks I can make him lay down and beg."

"Go on!" encouraged the crowd and with a muttered oath King Wootan unsnapped the chain.

"Eat 'im up!" he snarled at Benjy.

"Here I am!" returned Roundtree, and stepping swiftly in he slapped Big Benjy on the nose, ducking back to avoid a blow from his paw. But now at last the huge creature was aroused and as Wootan hissed him on he made a rush at the ranger, giving vent to a hair-raising roar. Roundtree dodged and leaped aside and in a flash he was on Benjy's back with his spurs hooked into his sides. Leaning forward he grabbed his ears and, gripping his ribs with his knees, he rode him till they rolled on the floor. Benjy broke loose and rose up rumbling, pawing angrily at the muzzle which kept him from using his teeth; then with a terrifying cough he lumbered forward to lay hold of him and the ranger promptly kicked him in the stomach. The battle was at its height when King Wootan rushed in raging and jerked off the animal's rawhide muzzle.

"Go git 'im!" he bellowed, but as Benjy bared his teeth the smile left Roundtree's face.

"Sure!" he said, whipping a butcher knife from his boot. "Come ahead—I'll take you on."

His blue eyes were suddenly blazing, his tawny hair bristled aggressively; and when King Wootan saw him advancing with the knife on his pet, he snapped up his sawed-off shotgun.

"You touch that bear and I'll blow your head off!" he shouted, and the crowd made a rush out of range.

They faced each other in silence, the ranger fighting mad and the King with his gun cocked to shoot; but before they could move a woman stepped forward and cleft her way through the crowd. She was handsome and finely formed, with a flashing black eye which showed her a stranger to fear; and as she walked in on Wootan he flinched and lowered his gun before she snatched it away from him.

"That's enough of this," she said in a vibrant contralto. "Chain that bear up—understand? And I'm going to give this boy the finest meal I can cook for whipping that miserable Benjy."

She turned on the bear, who had been watching her anxiously, and as she raised her broom he whimpered abjectly and shambled off to his den.

"There," she said and, smiling approvingly at Jess, she returned to her realm across the street.

"Well, gentlemen, the drinks!" spoke up a tall man with a pointed beard who had been an interested spectator; and when the King, slightly mollified, had filled the glasses all around the stranger drew Roundtree aside. He had a high, thin nose and aristocratic features; but as the ranger looked him over he noted, despite his smile, the cruel, frosty blue of his eyes.

"You're quite a wrestler," he observed. "Where are you from?"

"No place," answered Roundtree with a ready smile. "Born and raised in Texas—where're you from?"

At this unexpected return the stranger regarded him searchingly; but seeing in him, as he thought, only a rollicking cowboy he replied that he had come from the East.

"I'm not exactly sick," he explained, "but I wasn't very well, and my doctor sent me out here, so you might say I came for my health."

"Sure. I'm here for my health, too," responded Roundtree with a knowing grin,

but the stranger did not encourage his levity.

"It's a fine, healthy country," he observed. "That is, if you mind your own business. But I'm going out of my way a little, and violating my own principles, to explain about Mrs. Wootan. Just because you saw King Wootan called down by his wife don't get the idea *you* can bluff him. That man is cold steel and he's killed more would-be bad men than you've got fingers and toes. He's a natural-born killer, which means he takes no chances; so look out, when he brings up that shotgun. I ordered that round of drinks to keep him from getting ugly with you, because I could see you were new to the country; and if you'll take my advice you'll keep away from him a while until he recovers from this blow to his pride. Because the fact is, he stole this woman from an emigrant that was passing through here and she's turned the tables completely."

The stranger lowered his voice and into his cold, cynical eyes there came the gleam of a smile.

"This was a hard country then, and the King was a king indeed. What he wanted, he took, and when this wagon came by he had his eye on the woman. She's fine-looking yet, and she may have given him the eye; but when that poor jasper hooked up his team the next morning the King stepped out with his shotgun.

" 'You can go on,' he said, 'but leave that woman here!' And the emigrant said nothing—just drove off.

"You may have observed," went on the stranger, "that the roughest man in the world can be handled like putty by a woman; and when the King approached the lady and began to make advances he found her exceedingly shy—until he'd taken her to the post chaplain and married her; and then, by the Almighty, he found out the reason why her guardian had submitted so meekly. Wootan had thought at the time he was mighty low spirited, not to put up some kind of a fight; but the woman was a tartar, a devil in female form; and after the first few bouts the King weakened. He didn't dare to kill her, and she couldn't be conquered any other way; so for the last ten years she's ruled him like a child—but be careful, because these call-downs make him dangerous."

"I'll remember that," promised Jess and as the tall stranger went on talking he let his eyes wander about the room.

The men that he saw there were of a type he had learned to know, some coarse and brutal, some keen eyed and cunning, but nearly all hard, dangerous men. It was to help check their depredations that he had been ordered to Dragoon, for the country was in the hands of outlaws; but the man with whom he sat had evidently taken it for granted that he too was a fugitive from justice. By degrees he worked around to making guarded inquiries as to Roundtree's skill as a cowboy and he was just on the point of offering him a job when a black-bearded man stepped through the door. He was of medium size, with a barrellike chest, and his face was calm and austere; but what Roundtree noticed most was the characteristic way in which he passed through the door. With one swift stride he entered and stepped aside, his back against the wall and his eyes upon the occupants of the room—a trick that the rangers used.

"Who is that man?" asked Roundtree, and the stranger's lips drew thin as he watched the purposeful form by the door.

"That's Captain Ross, of the rangers," he muttered, and Jess sensed his unspoken hate. For a few seconds Ross stood immovable, his glance shifting from face to face; until at last for a moment his eyes rested on Roundtree and the ranger rose to his feet.

"Stage's coming," announced the captain; and as the barroom suddenly emptied he lingered by the door.

Jess went out last and as he passed him he said:

"I'm Sergeant Roundtree—reporting for duty."

The captain nodded briefly and followed after him, his eyes on the approaching stage.

CHAPTER II.

MYSTERIOUS DAVE.

THERE was a strip of yellow dust out across the billowing plain and at the head of it, like an eye, was the black of the Spanish mules as they came galloping down the road. Not a minute before they had surged out of Apache Pass and entered on the last lap of their run, but as they neared the stage stand their pace did not slacken—they were fleeing in a wild stampede.

"I'll bet it's Injuns!" bellowed Wootan, and the crowd gave way as the mules took the turn in front of the stage stand. They swung out and swung in again, never breaking their mad gallop until they whirled through the gateway and fetched up in the familiar corral. And like leaves drawn by the wind the crowd was sucked in after them, every man shouting out the same question.

"Injuns!" announced the driver, wrapping his lines around the brake. "Killed Keno the first crack. How's them passengers?"

He came down over the wheel and was looking into the coach when Captain Ross stepped up.

"Here's another passenger you didn't know about," he said and as he unlashed the boot a disheveled man scrambled out.

"I winged two of 'em, cap," he announced with an apologetic grin. "Couldn't shoot good—stage was rocking too much."

"Where'd *you* come from?" demanded the driver, gazing blankly at the ranger, and the little man laughed at him hectoringly.

"Shut up in the boot—figured on surprising them holdups. Did you see those two Injuns fall?"

"I didn't see nothing," declared the driver with an oath. "I was too busy dodging bullets. Was that you doing all that shooting back there?"

"Damn right it was!" returned the ranger, "and I knocked two of 'em off their horses before they knew what was up. Come on, cap; let's go back and git 'em!"

"Get your horses," ordered Ross and as Jess ran for his mount the man from the boot shot past him. Though he was only a few inches over five feet tall his movements were astonishingly quick and as Roundtree swung up he saw him spurring out ahead of him, scattering the crowd in his reckless charge.

King Wootan and his followers were already well started, flogging their horses as they galloped down the road; but as the miles went by and their mounts tired of the pace the three rangers pulled up and passed them. Captain Ross was mounted on a Roman-nosed roan which he whipped forward with a pair of crossed sticks; and "Quick" Talley, the diminutive ranger, was perched like a monkey on the back of a huge dappled gray. Jess Roundtree rode the horse which had carried him on many a chase, a blue of the hardy *grulla* breed; and behind them, lightly packed, there galloped a zebra-marked mule with the commissary on his back.

Ten miles across the plain they came to Apache Pass, a deep cañon cut through a range of rocky hills, and as they dashed out the other end Captain Ross reined in his horse and began circling, his eyes on the ground.

"Here's blood!" he exclaimed, "and an Apache *tejua*. Must have shot this buck through the leg."

"And right over there I shot another one," replied Talley, leading the way to a second blood spot.

They circled about, noting the tracks of the ponies and the record of the Indians' hasty flight. Two men had dismounted and lifted the wounded bucks back on their horses; a double trail showed where they had led their mounts away; and after a quick look about Captain Ross waved his hand and they plunged after him up through the rocks. In the pass below them they could see the rest of the posse as they gathered about the body of Keno Wells, but Ross had not even paused to look at the dead express guard, for the sun was low in the west. With the darkness the Indians would scatter and escape to the high mountains, to meet later at some distant rendezvous, and with his eyes on the trail he flailed his roan along so savagely that the rangers gradually fell behind. Then as he topped the divide ahead of them they saw him drop off his horse, taking his long-barreled rifle with him; and the next instant he had separated the two sticks of his riding switch and made a rest for his gun. He aimed long, and fired; aimed carefully again; and when the rangers dashed up they saw two ponies running wild and the dust where others had fled.

"I got two of 'em," he announced. "Talley, you take that man—Roundtree, take that. And bring 'em in alive," he shouted. Then, pointing both ways at the bobbing heads of galloping Indians, he went charging through the brush after a third. Jess looked out the ground and went down the slope as fast as Old Blue could jump until, topping the next hill, he saw the fleeing Indian ahead of him, leaning forward and whipping for his life. But Roundtree leaped to the ground, firing rapidly with

his carbine, and at the third shot horse and man went down. Instantly the ranger was up and riding, standing high in his stirrups to make sure that his man did not run; but when he dashed out into the open he was astounded to see a white man, standing up with his hands in the air.

"Don't shoot," he called, and as Jess rode close he looked up at him with calculating eyes.

"I'm a captive," he said; "you just got here in time. They tried to kill me, back there—scoundrels shot me through the leg and——"

"You can tell that to the captain," broke in Jess.

"Who? Captain Ross, of the rangers? He's an old friend of mine, and he certainly saved my life. I don't remember seeing you before."

"I'm a ranger," Roundtree answered shortly.

"Well, now here," went on the man, wiping the paint from his face and talking with suave rapidity, "why can't we come to terms? You never saw me—understand? I got away in the rocks. Let me go and you get ten thousand dollars!"

"Like hell!" scoffed Jess. "Where you got it—in that G string?"

He glanced at the dirty rag, bound about the prisoner's loins, which made up the principal part of his disguise; but the man ignored the jest and, as if talking against time, made a final appeal for terms.

"What's your name?" he rapped out. "I'll leave you the cash in care of King Wootan, at Dragoon. Is that satisfactory? Well, what *is* your price? Every man has his price, you know."

"Not me," answered Jess. "And when I do sell out it won't be for any phony money. What you doing, rigged up like an Indian?"

"None of your dadburned business," returned the white man malevolently and sat down to nurse his wound.

Jess was patiently standing guard over him when Captain Ross came galloping up, his roan blowing and puffing like a bellows.

"What you got here?" he asked, eying the prisoner in astonishment. "Well, if it isn't 'Mysterious Dave!' That explains several things we didn't know before, including where you got your money."

He laughed silently and stepped down from his horse, meanwhile nodding approvingly at Jess; and as Talley came riding up, bringing in a wounded Mexican, Ross jerked his thumb toward Dave.

"Know this hombre?" he inquired. "Supposed to be an Apache Indian. I thought it was mighty funny the way those Indians kept tab on the express shipments—turns out to be our fine-haired friend."

"Yes, I know the dirty dog," replied Talley vindictively. "Wish I'd been on his trail and I'd killed him. But it ain't too late, cap," he suggested hopefully. "You know they'll jest turn him loose."

"There's no doubt about that," admitted Ross impassively, "because they've done so twice already. The only question is—will he meet us halfway and tell a few things that he knows."

"You can't shake me down," spoke up the prisoner defiantly. "So go ahead and kill me, if you want to. You've got the name of killing your prisoners so you might as well have the game, but you can't bluff me for a cent."

"Leave him to me," ordered Ross as Talley retorted in kind and after a last, disgruntled curse the little ranger mounted his horse.

"You boys go take a description of those two hombres I killed," directed the captain, motioning them away; and as they rode back together the rangers exchanged glances, but Talley shook his head.

"Ump-um!" he said, "he won't kill him, and Dave knows it—the captain is tenderhearted as a woman. But if you ever ketch that feller out in the open again, for cripes' sake don't shoot the *horse*."

He laughed and looked Roundtree over with dare-devil blue eyes, a little towheaded man with high cheek bones and an aggressive nose and jaw.

"My name is Quick Talley," he offered.

"I'm Jess Roundtree," responded Roundtree, leaning over to shake hands. "Just got in from Del Rio and the Pecos. Say, who is that prisoner, anyway?"

"Him? That's Mysterious Dave—kind of gambler and short sport that hangs around Dragoon. Plays the piano and deals monte—light work like that. The hound ought to be killed."

Having thus disposed of Dave, Talley picked up the captain's trail and backtracked him to the men he had killed. They lay where they had fallen, their bronze bodies bored through and through by the unerring bullets of Ross; but in-

stead of the sharp features of Mescalero Apaches the faces were typically Mexican. They were clad only in G strings and knee-high moccasins, the upper half of their bodies being naked; but the long, coarse hair, tied back from their foreheads with handkerchiefs, was only a crudely made wig.

Here at last was the secret of the raiding Mescaleros who so persistently had been robbing the stage, and after burying the bodies the rangers hurried back to make their report to Ross.

They found him sitting off by himself, rubbing his long nose reflectively and evidently sunk deep in thought; while the two prisoners, unbound, stood sweating like whip-broke horses as they watched him. But if they had ever been tempted, as now seemed unlikely, to make a break for liberty they gave up at the return of the rangers; and the captain, looking them over, shook his head and unpacked the mule, which had come up after the fighting.

Over a fire of mesquite coals they boiled coffee and broiled bacon and, opening up the half sack of flour which completed the meager pack, the captain prepared a batch of bread. Emptying a canteen of water into the top of the sack he mixed it to a stiff dough; then, giving each man a fistful, he twined his portion around his ramrod and baked it over the coals.

"Well," he began, after their brief repast was ended, "what d'ye think we'd better do with these prisoners?"

"Kill the scoundrels!" spoke up Talley vindictively. "Didn't they jest shoot Keno Wells?"

"They undoubtedly did," replied Ross judicially. "And neither one will say a word."

"I'll make 'em talk!" exclaimed Talley. "You boys jest ride ahead and leave 'em to me—I'll try some of this Apache stuff."

He made significant gestures which caused the Mexican, who spoke no English, immediately to draw away from the fire, but the captain shook his head.

"No, boys," he said. "My human principles, what few I have left, won't allow me to do violence to a prisoner. So I reckon there's nothing for it but to take them back to town and throw them into the Snake-hole."

"Sure, throw me in," mocked Mysterious Dave, who had suddenly become quite debonair. "But I'll tell you right now I won't stay there. The jail isn't made that will hold me a month—and what's the charges against me, anyhow?"

"Never mind about the charges," replied Captain Ross angrily. "And if you import some blackleg lawyer to get you out on bail I'll throw the scoundrel in, too. I'm going to put you in jail, and I'm going to keep you in jail, if there's rangers enough in Texas. And if the governor will send me out an honest judge I'll have you sent up for life."

"Go ahead," shrugged Dave, "the bridle is off. But I'd like to lay a bet, at ten to one, I'm out of that hole in a month."

"If I did my duty," stormed Ross, "I'd shoot you, right now, and save the expense of hanging you. But I'll resign from the service before I'll kill a wounded prisoner. Get up on your horse—that's all."

CHAPTER III.

THE LAW WEST OF THE PECOS.

HIDDEN away behind the walls of a deserted and ruined stage station the headquarters of the rangers was in a solid stone cabin, backed up against an old stone cellar. They arrived there after midnight, having circled around Dragoon, and, locking their prisoners in the cellar, which served the purpose of a dungeon, they stood guard by turns until dawn. In the ghostly moonlight the tall oak trees of the cañon cast black shadows against the crumbling walls of the corral, demolished long before by the Apaches. Now the roofs had fallen in, the corral was empty, and the only sound that caught the ear of the guards was the snorting of their hobbled horses; but in the morning when they entered they found the dungeon wall half breached—and the hole had been dug from the outside.

Captain Ross made no comment, more than to order the prisoners bound; but after breakfast he went out and, sitting down by himself, rubbed his nose in silent meditation. Then at last, leaving Talley to stand guard over the cellar, he beckoned Jess into his office. This was a walled-off room in one corner of the cabin, furnished principally with an old roll-top desk; and while Jess sat waiting the captain unlocked a small drawer and spread out a collection of papers. Frowning purposefully to him-

self he sorted them slowly, pausing to glance at each one as it passed; then, sweeping them all together, he hurled them back into the desk and turned to face the ranger.

"Sergeant Roundtree," he said, "I'm facing a serious situation, as you can see by what happened last night. Only the shortness of the time saved me from losing both these prisoners, and the work was done by their friends. One of those Indians that escaped rode ahead of us into Dragoon; he informed the other members of the gang; and already, before daylight, they had nearly made good Dave's boast and turned him out of jail. It has come to a showdown between the rangers and Dave's gang. The question is, can these prisoners be held —can the rangers enforce the law?"

He paused and fell into one of the long, brooding silences which came over him when deeply moved; and at last he rose up and smote the desk with his fist.

"We've got to do it!" he said.

"Why don't you put them in the guardhouse, up at the fort?" suggested Jess, but the captain shook his head impatiently.

"It can't be done," he declared. "I'm at outs with Colonel Stivers over this matter of the Apaches robbing the stage. He has maintained from the first that the Indians were not doing it—and as it turns out, unexpectedly, he was right—but our relations are so strained I wouldn't venture to ask his help, and if I did he would surely refuse me. He claims it is the duty of the State of Texas to put down this lawlessness and disorder; and unless we can prove that the wards of the government are responsible he won't turn a hand to help us. The sheriff has resigned and the county is bankrupt, so we can't look for any aid there. The fact is the Texas Rangers are the law west of the Pecos. To-morrow there may not be any law."

He bowed his head in thought and as Jess gazed at his austere features he noticed a strange resemblance to a picture he had seen at home—the portrait of Stonewall Jackson. It had hung on the wall, grim memento of the war and of the men who had died for the Confederacy; but here before him was the black beard, the broad brows and stern eyes, and the long, determined nose. He was a Jackson and his back was to the wall.

"This country," he said at last, as though reciting a well-known fact, "is dominated and controlled by criminals. Judges and juries won't convict, honest citizens are afraid to testify; and when a man does make a complaint the criminal is turned loose to go back and kill the informer. I've been out here for ten years, fighting the Apaches and Comanches, and I'm free to confess that the class of men who have taken their place are much more dangerous than the Indians. They have been robbing the stage regularly, emigrant parties are never safe, and the caravans from Chihuahua lost over a million dollars in three big raids last year.

"The Mexican government made official complaint that their trade caravans were not protected; and the secretary of state, after a conference with the war department, passed the papers on to the governor of Texas. He called up the adjutant general and the adjutant general called on me and by that time the correspondence had got so hot you couldn't touch it with a stamp iron. I was ordered to Austin, where I made my report and tendered my resignation; but after a talk with the governor we finally agreed, as a compromise, to call a meeting of the ranger captains.

"At that meeting I laid before them the problem we are facing—a territory of thirty thousand miles, over half of it uninhabited, and such a backwash of desperate characters from California and the gold fields that the country is absolutely swamped. Many of these men are hardened criminals, driven out of California by the Vigilantes and out of Tombstone and other mining camps by the officers; and here in the Big Bend they not only find shelter but rich caravans and stage lines to rob. Every year the express company sends millions of dollars east, principally gold from Arizona and California; and the government has threatened to abolish the mail service unless something is done about these holdups.

"From Chihuahua City and the big mines that have been opened up in northern Mexico a tremendous trade has sprung up, the summer caravans going as far as St. Louis. Not only do the smelters send out millions in silver and gold but the merchants export hats and filigree work and blankets, besides all the silks and fine liquors and so on that come in, duty free, from France. This trail is the only route from San Antonio and St. Louis to Chihuahua and the interior of Mexico and the

money that is sent up to purchase supplies for Mexican merchants is a fortune in itself.

"Heretofore, when there was a robbery, we have been satisfied to get the leaders and break up one band after the other; but the profits from this business have now become so great that a new element has entered the country. At first the men who came here were largely fugitives from eastern Texas, men who had committed some crime or got into some shooting, but many of them not criminals at heart. When the Apaches were raiding through here the rangers could always rely on them to do their share of the fighting; but with the elimination of the Indians all that rough country below the Rim filled up with desperate men. A new class of leaders—what you might call an intellectual type—slipped in here to take advantage of conditions; and now we have criminals of the highest type, men who make murder and robbery a business.

"This Mysterious Dave is one of these new men—a man apparently of good family, well-mannered and agreeable, but thoroughly vicious and dangerous. If he and a few men like him could be killed on sight, like Indians, it would simplify matters wonderfully—but Dave is not the man we want. Somewhere in this country there is a man far his superior who has organized these criminals as they were never organized before, into a band that makes robbery a business. That man must be found—that gang must be located—and every man must be killed."

The captain raised his stern eyes and surveyed Roundtree intently, but the sergeant did not flinch.

"Of course," went on Ross, "this is not official. I have been ordered by the governor to clean up this Big Bend country—and no questions will be asked. The oldest rule we have—that no Texas Ranger can go beyond the boundaries of the State—has been set aside for this case. You can go into New Mexico, or across the line into old Mexico, and the governor and Washington will square it. But we have got to get these men. It is useless to kill the leaders—new leaders will take their places. What we have got to do is to locate their hiding places and kill the men themselves. To do that I need more rangers, and I have been given the pick of the service. I chose you for two reasons—your record at Del Rio and the fact that you understand Spanish; and as soon as we dispose of this matter of the prisoners I intend to send you down into Mexico. Because first of all, before we strike a blow, we must locate the leader of this gang."

He sat immersed in thought and Roundtree smiled to himself, for a great adventure had opened up before him. In his mind's eye he saw the sweep of the muddy Rio Grande and the white houses of the Mexicans along the banks; he visioned Presidio del Norte and San Carlos and San Vicente, and mysterious trails leading far into the interior. He beheld strongholds among the peaks with bands of ladrones riding forth from them to swoop down on the creaking caravans—and the rangers, all picked men, spurring out to cut them off and fight them, five to one, on the plain.

"This gang," resumed the captain, as if he had not stopped, "may be anywhere or everywhere. Any man that you meet may be a member, or its leader—the rangers know nothing for certain. But to the best of our information they have a secret hold-out somewhere between here and the line; and, since this upper country is prairie, it is probable again that their headquarters is below the Rim. About forty miles below here there is a continuous wall of rock, where the country breaks off down to the Rio Grande. On the other side of the river it rises up again. For hundreds of miles, between that wall and the river, there are cliffs and mountains and cañons; the worst place in the world to hunt down a criminal, the best place in the world for an ambush. You take your life in your hands every time you enter the country, but our duty is plain and the honor of Texas is at stake. I don't need to say any more.

"Now about these caravans—they come through every summer as soon as the rains bring good grass, along in July and August. Sometimes a hundred wagons will band together for protection and the teamsters all go armed, but whoever it is that's at the head of this gang undoubtedly has his agents in Chihuahua. That's what makes me think sometimes their headquarters are in Mexico; but however that may be, they keep track of the treasure shipments and rob only the caravans that carry gold. The Mexicans are game to fight, but each time they are attacked they are caught in some predicament which makes it out of the

question. The attacks are very sudden, and generally at night, and before the Mexican freighters can get over their surprise the treasure and cognac is gone.

"Across the river in Chihuahua there is a big band of Mexican bandits that call themselves *Vinagrones,* or Sand Scorpions, and there is some connection between that gang and this Texas one—in fact, they may be the same. Chico Cano is the leader of this Mexican outfit, but I don't think he has the brains to plan these robberies, and certainly not to handle the spoils.

"That is the one big point that brings us back to American leadership—of all this gold bullion that has been taken from the caravans not a slug has been spent by the men. Whoever this man is he has agents to dispose of the gold, and that again argues brains. It takes a smart man, and a hard one, to control these desperate characters; and I have no doubt there is a death penalty for any man that informs on the gang. That explains why our prisoners will never talk."

The captain sighed and sank into thought again.

"I have taken a new tack," he said at last. "Heretofore I have hunted for evidence that would lead me to this man; but now that I see what a shrewd customer he is I am looking for the man himself. What I mean is, a man like that, with his ability to organize, must be far above the ordinary. He is a man of exceptional intelligence and knowledge of the world, one who would stand out in any country; so I am combing the top, you might say, of this Big Bend community and scrutinizing every likely man. Because among those eight or ten men is the one I am looking for, the man who is the leader of this gang."

"How about King Wootan, then?" suggested Roundtree, after a silence. "When I captured Mysterious Dave he tried to buy me off—offered to give me ten thousand dollars and leave the money with Wootan."

"Of course it's possible," admitted Ross, "but I think in this case you're wrong. The King is a lone wolf and hunts by himself. He is satisfied to run his saloon and get the money from these criminals without setting himself against the law. In fact, strange as it may seem, he's the one man in this community that is always on the side of the rangers. And then, once more, there's the test of brains. The King is courageous, he's a lion in a fight; but the way he lets that woman keep him under her thumb is proof conclusive that his intellect is low."

Ross smiled, a trifle cynically, and glanced at Jess shrewdly.

"I saw you yesterday," he began, "talking with a tall, high-nosed man. His name is Livernash—what about him?"

"Well, he's intelligent," answered Jess, "and he's got something to conceal; because when I asked him where he was from he looked at me a minute and said he was from the East. I could tell by his eyes he was suspicious of me then—and talking about eyes, he's got the frostiest pair of blinkers I ever looked into in my life. Another thing I noticed was those long lobes on his ears and the way his teeth come to a point, like a dog's. That's supposed to be a sign of a cruel disposition—maybe he's the very man you want."

"Well—maybe," nodded Ross. "He's one of the ten. And when you go back I want you to get acquainted with him and find out all you can. Now about these prisoners—as I said before, the rangers have got to hold them; and the only tight place, where they can't get out, is the Snake-hole—the county jail. When this county was organized the greatest need they had was for a jail, to hold their prisoners. The rest came later but the first thing they did was blast a jail out of the rock. Then they covered it over with twelve-inch timbers and built the sheriff's office above it, and the only entrance is a trapdoor in the floor and a ladder that they let down through the hole.

"Now, as far as I know, the Snake-hole is empty, the sheriff and his deputies having quit; and since we will need it anyway I'm going to take possession and put you and Talley in charge. You can live in the jailer's room and keep your horses in the patio, but I want to warn you right now that this Mysterious Dave is slippery as an eel. You've just got to watch him, every minute. If he can't buy his way out he'll begin to dig and saw; and then his friends on the outside will try to get you drunk, or send some woman to help. He's got lots of friends, and especially around the dance halls; and since Talley has a weakness along that line I'm giving the key to you. You know what that means, I reckon."

"Yes, sir," replied Jess. "I understand."

"Now one question," said the captain, rising up. "Sergeant Roundtree—can you hold this prisoner?"

"I can damn sure try!" answered Roundtree stoutly and went out to stand his guard.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SNAKE-HOLE.

THE courthouse of Jeff Davis County had been built in the grim days when the Apaches were an everyday menace and it presented to the outer world four dead walls, ten feet high, and a single iron-spiked gate. Within there was a patio in the Mexican style with a series of low rooms on three sides; and the largest and strongest of these was the old county jail, now generally referred to as the Snake-hole. It occupied the whole west wing of the county buildings, the rest, now tenantless, having sheltered judge and recorder and clerk and the other officials of the government.

With their prisoners securely bound the rangers rode in at dusk and took possession in the name of Texas; and for a week Jess and Talley stood guard day and night, but Dave's friends seemed suddenly to have deserted him. All day he and the Mexican lay on their cots in the gloomy prison, having their meals lowered down to them through the trapdoor. Two heavily barred windows, placed just above the ground, let in feeble rays of light; and only in the mornings, when the contract doctor came, were they allowed to come up for air. Then the trapdoor was opened, the clumsy ladder let down, and while the rangers stood guard the doctor dressed their wounds and returned to his hospital at the fort.

Every day, when he was off duty, Roundtree mounted the massive stairs that led to the roof of the jail; and from there he looked out over the loopholed wall at the town and fort beyond. Dragoon lay at the base of the high, basalt palisades which had protected it from the rush of the Apaches, a huddle of mud houses with barred windows and shaded doorways in front of which gaunt cow ponies drooped. He could see King Wootan, his gold-mounted hat worn like a crown, swaggering about among his satellites like a god; and then the sleek black head of the handsome Mrs. Wootan as she came out from the stage-stand eating room. Beyond on their broad parade ground the blue-clad soldiers rode and drilled, waking the echoes of the high cliffs with their bugle calls, routing the ravens with their sunrise guns. Officers' wives with their soldier escorts rode decorously by, gazing curiously at the young ranger on the roof; each day the stage flashed past with its wild Spanish mules which never broke their furious gallop; and suddenly it came over Roundtree that he too was shut in jail, while the world was passing by.

Mysterious Dave and his Mexican *compadre* no longer fretted against their fate or shouted appeals to their guards; they had found the jail tight and were resigned to their fate, but Jess was a free agent—he could go. Night after night Quick Talley had gone uptown and mixed recklessly with the rough element at the saloons; Jess had stayed, watching his prisoners, for it was to him, after all, that Ross had given the key. Quick Talley was a good man but in town he had his weaknesses; Roundtree, being a sergeant, was in command. But now that no visitors came with requests to see his prisoners and the nights were as dull as the days a sudden longing for the open, for excitement and action, made the ranger pace to and fro. He was responsible, to be sure, in case the prisoners escaped; but Talley was on duty, the jail had been proved safe—only a vague fear, a premonition, held him prisoner.

In the Texas Rangers every man is a general—under orders but free to think for himself—and, shaking off his fear, Jess saddled his prancing horse and set out at a gallop up the road. Many horses were standing outside the Lone Wolf Saloon; Jess glimpsed Wootan and Livernash in passing; but Blue was fighting his bit and Roundtree let him have his run, until at last he slowed to a trot. Then he patted his neck and swung him about and they jogged back toward the saloon.

King Wootan was out watching for him, but this time without his shotgun, and as Jess came ambling by he stepped out under the *ramada* and gazed admiringly at Blue.

"That's a good hawse you've got," he said in his big roaring voice. "How about it—did you kill any Injuns?"

"Too swift for me," grinned Jess, but Wootan shook his head wisely.

"I don't know about that," he rumbled. "You rode by me like I was staked, and I

hear you've got two of 'em in the stray pen. Come in—the drinks are on me."

There was a big crowd inside, the roulette wheels were spinning merrily and, sensing in this invitation the suggestion of an apology, Roundtree stepped down and followed him inside. Once more he felt the hush and the hard scrutiny of watchful eyes as he entered the thronging saloon, but with a swift look about he walked over to the bar and took a drink with his host.

"Reckon you're a ranger," insinuated Wootan, twisting up his black mustachios and staring him full in the face. "Well, Ross is my friend—understand?"

"Sure," nodded Jess, "but I suppose, all the same, I might as well check my jewelry."

He unstrapped his gun belt and shoved it across the bar, and as Wootan put it away Jess glanced into the glass at the watchful faces behind him. It was an old trick on the frontier, for while he could read every face the fact that he was looking was concealed.

"Looking at them tarantulas?" inquired Wootan, turning to admire the curiosities which lined his ornate mirror; and Roundtree fell in with his mood.

"Are those tarantulas?" he asked. "I was looking at that butcher knife."

"That's the scalping knife of old Magoosh—scalped over twenty-five women and children with it; but say, here's a good one about them tarantulas."

He leaned across the bar and as the ranger listened he watched Livernash in the glass. He was sitting in a card game, his back against the wall, and between times as he dealt and played he glanced over at Roundtree with a keen, almost sinister look.

"About a month ago," began Wootan, "a rank tenderfoot come in here, all got up like a border ruffian. He had his hat rim slapped back and a red handkerchief around his neck and you could see he thought he was ba-ad. Jest come in from the East, on the stage.

"'Gimme some tarantula juice, barkeep,' he says and I looks him over a minute.

"'I suppose you mean what you say?' I asks and he slaps his hand down on the bar.

"'You bet your boots!' he yells. 'Gimme some regular old tarantula juice.'

"So I jest reaches up behind me and takes down one of these bottles, containing an A-1 specimen.

"'All right, pardner,' I says, and setting out a glass I poured off the alcohol and dropped the old tarantula into a mortar. Than I picks up the pestle and gets busy as a hunting dog pounding the specimen into powder. I could see he was beginning to weaken so I pours out a glass of whisky and sets it on my shelf, behind the bar.

"'There's your medicine,' I says, pouring the powder into the alcohol and mixing them up together; and when he wasn't looking I jest switched them drinks and handed him up the glass of good whisky.

"'W'y, I—I don't think I'll drink it,' he gags.

"'Why not?' I hollers. 'Ain't that what you called fer? Ain't that the genuwine tarantula juice? Then lookee here, my friend, you drink that, understand, or I'll blow the top of your head off.'

"I brings up my shotgun and let him look down the muzzle of it, and he turns as white as a ghost.

"'I—I'll pay for it,' he says, 'but——'

"'You'll drink that,' I says, 'and do it damn quick! I take a great pride in the way I mix my tarantula juice and I won't be insulted by nobody!'

"Well, the poor sucker gagged and begged but he seen I meant business so he drank it and fell down in a faint. That's a fact, so help me Gawd, and if it hadn't been for a soldier I reckon he'd 'a' died, right there.

"'Bring some lard!' he yells, 'that's the only thing that will save him!'

"And when that tenderfoot come to they brought some lard on a butcher knife and shoved it down his throat like snow. It made him sick, of course, but when he got over it he couldn't thank that soldier enough.

"'You've saved my life!' he says, staggering out to ketch the stage; and for three days that soldier was Injun drunk on the money the tenderfoot had give him. And it was nothing but pure whisky, all the time!"

The King slapped the bar and burst into Homeric laughter and at the now familiar signal the bar flies came drifting up, gazing with hopeful eyes at the laughing ranger.

"That's good!" nodded Roundtree.

"Say, give me a bottle of beer. Is it all right to set 'em up for Benjy?"

"Sure, sure!" nodded Wootan, beckoning the bar flies away again, and in the greatest good humor he followed along after him as Jess went over to the bear.

"Hello, Benjy," he said, drawing the cork out of the bottle with a pop; and at the sound Benjy forgot his misgivings and held out his paws for the beer.

"We're friends now, eh?" coaxed Jess, scratching the animal's ear as he slobbered over the bottle; and while he was playfully wrestling with the bear Livernash threw down his cards and joined him.

"You seem to have taken quite a fancy to that bear," he observed, and Jess suddenly remembered his warning.

"Yes," he said, putting Benjy's arms aside and starting toward the door; and as Livernash followed after him he remarked apologetically: "I plumb forgot what you told me the other day."

"Oh, that's all right," answered Livernash with a friendly smile, "you seem to be a privileged character around here. I understand you've got a job with Captain Ross, helping guard Mysterious Dave."

"It isn't much of a job," replied Jess. "Nothing to do much except just sit around. Old Blue and I are about burned out on the proposition. What we want is action—eh, Blue?"

He picked up his reins as if to go but Livernash detained him with a gesture.

"We were talking last week," he said, "about a possible job on my cow ranch—about sixty miles below here, under the Rim. Are you thinking about making a change?"

For a moment Jess hesitated, for he could hardly believe that Livernash was still ignorant of his position; and then something warned him, perhaps the cold blue of his eyes, not to trust this tall stranger too far.

"Not right now," he replied and, while they were talking the matter over, Livernash halted in the middle of a sentence. Jess followed his stare as a heavily veiled young woman drew rein in front of the stage stand. She was tall and trimly built, wearing the long riding skirt of the period and mounted on a pinto horse. The horse alone was sufficient reason for staring, for he was a three-colored pinto strikingly marked with black, white and yellow, and on his nose there was a bristle of hair like a short mustache; but Livernash's eyes, and Jess', were held by the lady and by the wrinkled old *mozo* who rode behind her.

"My Lord!" exclaimed Livernash as she threw back her veil, "that's the prettiest Mexican girl I ever saw. I wonder where she came from!"

The girl glanced across the street at them, hesitated a moment and drew back; and then from her living rooms Mrs. Wootan stepped out and the girl spoke hurriedly in Spanish.

"Sure! Come right in!" responded Mrs. Wootan with a friendly smile; and as a crowd began to gather the white-haired *mozo* dropped down and held the stirrup for her to dismount. He stood then, holding the two horses which were gaunted by their long journey; and after a few minutes his mistress emerged again, accompanied by the executive Mrs. Wootan.

"Come over here, young man," she called to Jess. "This lady wants to talk to you."

"Who—me?" stammered Roundtree, and as he turned to look behind him the smiling Livernash strode swiftly forward.

"No, I don't mean you!" snapped Mrs. Wootan scornfully. "I mean that young ranger that wrastled the bear."

"Perhaps I could assist you?" suggested Livernash, bowing gallantly to the handsome young lady; but she ignored him without seeming to, fixing her eyes on the flustered Roundtree as he came hurrying across the street.

"You can go," said Mrs. Wootan, looking Livernash through and through; and when he had retired she turned to Roundtree with only a slight softening of her asperity.

"This young lady," she began, "is a sister to one of those prisoners. She's come up from Mexico to see him. Will you let her go over and visit him?"

Jess glanced at the girl, who met his eyes with an appealing smile; but as he noted her refined features and the slim whiteness of her hands he straightened up and shook his head.

"Must be some mistake," he said abruptly. "I've only got one Mexican and he's black as an Indian. Better ask for her brother's name."

"His name is Raymondo," the girl answered in English. "Is it not permissible to visit my brother?"

"Well—yes," conceded Jess, "if that's his name. I thought it was Ramon Flores."

"Oh, let the poor girl go!" scolded Mrs. Wootan. "She's ridden all the way from her home down in Coahuila, having heard that he was wounded—or killed."

"No, he's all right," said Roundtree. "Well, she can come over by and by. Just tell her to knock at the gate."

"Oh, I will go right now!" cried the girl. "I am not tired the least bit." And while the ranger stood staring she offered her foot to the *mozo,* who deferentially assisted her to mount.

They rode off in silence, Jess more conscious of the crowd than of the fair lady who rode by his side; but when he glanced at her again and remembered the evil-visaged Mexican he wondered if he had gone mad. How was it possible for a woman like this, an aristocrat in every feature, to be the sister of a low-browed *pelado* Mexican, so black he had passed for an Apache? There was some mistake about it—that was all.

"What did you say your brother's name was?" he asked, and as she met his eyes she blushed.

"Raymondo," she answered faintly, and every accent was like a caress.

"Raymondo, eh?" he mused. "He said it was Ramon. But—by the way, what's the rest of the name?"

"De Montana," she replied with the ghost of a smile. "My name is Alicia de Montana. But his—well, in my country he is Raymondo Cantara; but here he is Mysterious Dave."

"Mysterious Dave!" he repeated aghast. "Why, he's an American. I mean——"

"He is my brother," she responded stiffly.

"Oh—all right," nodded Jess with a shrug of the shoulders and unlocked the iron-barred door.

It swung in on creaking hinges, and he closed it and locked it behind them before he led the way to the jail. Under orders from Captain Ross he was not to refuse visitors, and so he let her in; but the old *mozo* he motioned back and closed the door against him, for he knew that something was wrong. The habits of a lifetime cannot be changed in a few years and, though Dave was dark, he spoke with a Southern accent quite different from her precise schoolgirl English. In his manners and speech he was typically American and his Spanish, as Jess knew, was imperfect. When he talked with the Mexican, Roundtree had listened through the floor and his accent was strongly American. But it was a fixed idea with Ross that through some visitor, like her, they might discover a clew to Dave's identity; so without more words, more than a warning to Talley, Jess hammered on the big trapdoor.

"Here's a visitor for you," he announced to Dave and let down the cumbersome ladder.

"Who is it?" whispered Dave from down below.

"Don't know," answered Jess. "Says she's your sister."

"Hell's bells! What does she look like? I haven't got any sister—that is, in this cursed country."

"Come on up!" ordered Roundtree and purposely stood before him until he had mounted the ladder. Then suddenly he stepped aside and as the girl saw Dave's face she gave a low cry and rushed toward him.

"Ah, Raymondo—*querido!*" she sobbed and threw her arms about his neck, murmuring questions and endearments in liquid Spanish. As for Dave, he stood still, his hard eyes on the watchful rangers, accepting her embraces stoically. But as he held her in his arms, his lips moving in muttered curses, his expression suddenly changed. The pained frown left his brow, the cold eyes became purposeful and he began to return her caresses.

"Come over here," he said in Spanish and as Jess and Talley exchanged glances he led the girl to a bench. They sat down together, whispering eagerly, exchanging glances; until at last with a farewell kiss she drew herself away and Jess lowered her lover down the hole.

"Oh, dear," she shuddered as she gazed down after him, "do you keep him in that dark place all day? He is wounded and sick. Is it not permissible for him to walk in the patio outside? He is badly wounded, you know."

"He'd try to escape," replied Roundtree. "He's got out twice, already."

"Oh, but now he is wounded," she protested. "It is necessary for his health. But surely you will allow me to bring him his supper? I will get a nice tray at the hotel."

"We're not worrying about his health a bit," returned the sergeant, but at a dig

in the ribs from Talley he gave a reluctant consent.

"Say, Alice," suggested Talley with a mischievous grin, "you'd better be my sister. Mysterious Dave's goose is cooked."

"'His goose is cooked?'" she repeated with a troubled frown, and Roundtree beckoned her to the door.

"You'd better go home," he advised, "and forget about Mysterious Dave. He's held for murder and robbing the stage."

"Oh, but I know he is innocent—and besides, he is sick. I could not leave him now. Will you let me bring his dinner this evening?"

"Sure!" laughed Talley, "come and see him often, Alice, and be a sister to us all. We'll call you Sister Alice, and when you're through with kissing Dave——"

"Shut up!" broke in Roundtree sternly.

"Shut up yourself!" retorted Talley, but he did not follow them out.

"Never mind about him," said Jess reassuringly as he passed her out the big gate. "But you'd better stay away—understand?"

She looked in at him through the bars and tried the effect of a smile.

"Why?" she inquired. "Are you angry?"

"I'm just telling you," he said. "You can come if you want to. But I know Dave isn't your brother."

"Then you be my brother," she urged coquettishly, making eyes at him through the bars, but Roundtree turned grimly away.

"You sure need one," he said. "To take care of you."

CHAPTER V.

JUST ENOUGH SPANISH TO GET INTO TROUBLE.

"WHAT'S the matter with you?" complained Talley as Roundtree came striding back. "Ain't you got the brains of a rabbit? Here's the very chance we're looking for and if we work this sister right we can get the goods on Dave."

"Yes, and if she works us right—and you seem to be willing—she'll turn Mysterious Dave out of jail. I know what they're after and I don't want her in here—the first thing we know she'll slip Dave a few hack-saw blades or maybe a dagger, to knife us. So if you'll kindly cut out this Sister Alice talk of yours——"

"Why, you dadburned fool!" exclaimed Talley indignantly, "don't you think I know what she's after? I know these Mexican women better than you do and they'll sell their souls for their man. Of course she's trying to help him, and when they were over in that corner he was telling her how to do it. Didn't you notice how nice she was when I began to make up to her? He's given her a tip to make us think she's in love with us, but I know how to copper that bet. There's a girl down in the dance hall that's just crazy over Dave and we'll bring the two together. Then you watch the fur fly, because this Frankie is a wild one—and after that, one of them will talk."

"Say, what are we here for?" demanded Roundtree angrily. "To match a fight between two women or hold these prisoners? I don't want 'em around, understand? And another thing—this girl isn't a dance-hall Frankie, so don't be so damned familiar. She's a girl of good family that's been deceived by this scoundrel and——"

"Oho!" laughed Talley, "so you've fallen for her already! Well, I'll admit she's a pretty girl. Don't see many like her around here, but what's the use—you saw her with Mysterious Dave."

"Sure," said Jess, "I know she's in love with him; but that's no reason for letting this go on. He probably met her some time when he was down in old Mexico——"

"Yes, and she's not the only one," said Tally significantly. "I've been getting his record, down at the dance hall."

"Well, we'll let her come to-night," decided Roundtree grudgingly, "and see what she has in that dinner; and the first file or hack saw that I find in the pie I'll bar her—she'll never come back."

He paced about restlessly, for his mind was in a furore, and as the evening came on and there was a knock at the gate he went out to open it himself. It was apparent already that in a case of this kind the impulsive Talley was not to be trusted; but when he looked out through the bars and saw her sad, appealing eyes, he himself was struck with compassion. Other women before her had been led astray by gay adventurers; and it was no fault of hers if the man she happened to meet was a scapegrace of the most dangerous sort. He opened the door in silence and led the way into the jail; and behind the old servant bore a tray, neatly laid with Mrs. Wootan's choicest food.

"Can he not come up and eat in this

room?" she asked with a confident smile and while Talley was shouting assent Jess shook his head grimly and raised the crust of the pie. Then, after searching the food carefully he stuck a candle on the tray and passed it down the dog hole.

"You can wait here for the tray," he said.

"Oh, thank you," she sighed, sinking into a chair and looking up with a weary smile. "I am so tired," she explained. "We rode all night, for fear of the Indians and robbers."

"Don't need to be scairt of Injuns," spoke up Talley brashly. "We spiled their little game when they jumped the stage last week —'Handsome Dave' was the Injun chief."

He jerked his thumb toward the trapdoor down which the tray had vanished and Alicia stared at him wonderingly.

"Do you mean Raymondo?" she asked.

"Call him any name you will—he's got a new name in every town, and a new girl to boot, I reckon—but your friend Mysterious Dave, or I mean your brother, was took disguised as an Injun. Captain Ross had noticed that when there were rangers on the stage, no matter if they rode like passengers, the Injuns never held it up. So he hides me in the boot, where I could shoot out through a hole, and I wings two of these savages before they knowed it. Then we took out after 'em and Captain Ross killed two; and when we come up to the wounded ones, Mysterious Dave was one and this Mexican down below was the other. Since then they ain't been no Apaches."

"Oh, I cannot believe that," she said with a pained frown. "Raymondo would not rob the stage. He is a wild boy, I know, but he loves excitement and adventure. And are you the man who shot him?"

"I'm the man!" acknowledged Talley, laughing recklessly as she eyed him. "What's the matter—don't you think I oughter done it?"

"I do not like you," she said at last and with eyes flashing angrily she turned on the silent Jess.

"Is it true?" she asked appealingly. "Oh, somehow I cannot believe it!"

"Yes, it's true," nodded Roundtree. "I was there."

"He's the man that captured Dave," teased Talley. "I don't reckon you like him, either."

"No, I don't," she declared. "But—oh, why do you all hate him? He is only a headstrong boy. They told me first that the rangers had killed him and left his body where it fell; then another man came and said he was wounded and in prison and I rode clear up here to be near him. Now I find he is only sick, from living down in that terrible Snake-hole. Is it not possible for him to stay up here?"

"No," said Jess, rising to throw open the trapdoor; and as he gave her back the tray Alicia's hand trembled and she gave him a look like a blow. But the next morning she was back again, tapping humbly at the gate, and as she entered she smiled at him eagerly.

Day after day she came back with the same doglike devotion and now she no longer asked for impossible favors, nor did she visit long with Dave. Perhaps she sensed the jealous suspicion of the grim-eyed, watchful rangers, or perhaps the first flare of her passion had died away and she saw Dave with different eyes; but, whatever the cause, she seemed almost to avoid him, spending her time in chatting with the rangers. Then one evening when she came the tray was heavier than usual and she laughed as Jess regarded it suspiciously.

"No," she said, "it is not made big to conceal a sledge hammer, so that Raymondo can smash down your jail. I had noticed that you rangers eat only pork and beans, with bread and stewed fruit and coffee—in fact, the same food you give your prisoners, so I have brought this over for you. How else can I thank you for your courtesy and many kindnesses? And soon, my friends, I must go."

"Going home?" asked Roundtree, suddenly brightening up, but she sighed and shook her head.

"I have no home," she said.

"Well, don't let that worry you," leered Talley, looking up from his pie. "I'll stake you to a home, myse'f. And there really ain't much use waiting around her for Dave, because he's throwed into the stray pen for keeps."

"I don't know what you mean," she answered wearily, "but I see you like the pie."

"You bet ye," mumbled Quick. "Sit in and have some yourse'f. We got lots of coffee—ain't we, Jess?"

"Oh, I could not intrude," she murmured politely, at the same time drawing up a chair.

And as the days went by they learned to wait for her coming and to listen for the sound of her laughter. Now that Dave was well and she was rested from her journey she had become more light-hearted and vivacious. There were times when Jess felt a strange thrill of joy as he listened to her soft, modulated voice. It had an elegance and dignity such as he had never heard before and it woke sudden longings in his breast. A woman like Alicia would make a man very happy if he could win her love and hold it; but she had thrown herself away on this cur, Mysterious Dave, who did not even treat her with respect. When they sat together, which was not often now, Jess placed himself where he could watch their actions; and in order to exclude him from their privacies and confidences they carried on their conversation in Spanish. They spoke low and only a word now and then gave him a clew to what they were saying but he could see that Dave was urging her to some action, and at last she bowed her head. But as she rose to go Roundtree saw tears in her eyes; and when he searched his prisoner, which he invariably did, he met Dave's sullen glance with a scowl. No words passed between them but as he put him down the hole Jess could feel his hate leap out at him like the lash of a venomous snake.

Not since the day that Roundtree had shot down Dave's horse and contemptuously refused his bribe had they spoken an unnecessary word; and by that scowling, watchful silence Jess knew that Dave would kill him if the weapon ever came to his hand. He was playing with a serpent that would coil and strike like a flash if he happened to find himself armed, and this in itself was reason enough for searching him down to the skin. But beside this, and beyond it, Jess felt he was protecting Alicia; for if, breaking jail, Mysterious Dave got away again he would carry Alicia with him. In a few days he would desert her, as he had others before; and then, cast off by her lover and her family, her situation would be terrible.

Those were lawless days in Texas and along the muddy river, which seemed to draw the worst elements of both republics; and in the Big Bend, as Roundtree knew, most of the men were hardened criminals. By some miracle she had come safely over the bandit-infested trail that led from Presidio to Dragoon; and then, by another miracle, she had found Mrs. Wootan, ready and willing to take her in. But such miracles could not be counted on and, seeing the tears in her eyes, Jess spoke to her as they lingered at the gate.

"Why don't you go home and leave that surly whelp?" he demanded and she looked up at him defiantly.

"I have no home," she said. "My parents have disowned me, and now—Raymondo does not love me."

"Who—that cold-blooded snake? He doesn't love anybody, except his own precious self. The rangers did you a favor when they shot him in the leg and threw him into the pen; and the best thing you can do is to go off and forget him—your parents will take you in."

"Ah, you do not know them," she answered wistfully. "They are of a very old family—very proud. It is not that I ran away, but I have disgraced their name. That is something they will never forgive."

"Well, go back anyhow!" he urged impulsively. "Dave will never escape—I give you my word for that—and Dragoon is no place for a good woman."

"A good woman?" she repeated with a sad-eyed smile. "You have never called me that before. And when I bring in the food you always search it very carefully, as if you did not trust me."

"I trust *you*, yes," he said. "But that unprincipled hound is liable to make you do anything."

"I have decided to go away," she said.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "The rangers will take care of you—we will send a guard to protect you. But whatever you do don't go over that trail alone, because God only knows what may happen."

"You are glad to have me go?" she asked with a half smile. "Then you are not like Queek—you would not give me a home."

"Quick was fooling," he said. "No ranger has a home, nor ever expects to have one, as long as he's in the service. And any time, you might say, we're due to get killed—especially in this man's country."

"Have you ever been in Mexico?" she asked impulsively and before he knew it he had nodded.

"I thought so!" she laughed. "You have been listening to our talk. I am sure you speak Spanish very well."

"Just enough to get into trouble and not

enough to get out of it," he answered with a rueful smile. "But say, I've got to be going!"

"*Hasta luego*—we meet again," she cried gayly.

CHAPTER VI.

SISTER ALICE.

I AM going!" announced Alicia in staccato Spanish as she rattled the great gate the next morning; and Roundtree, looking out, saw the mischief in her eyes while he pretended not to understand.

"My big ranger does not love me, so I am going home," she said, "to ask my papa's forgiveness. Will that make you any happier, *querido?*"

"No savvy," he grunted, shaking his head and smiling grimly, and she reached through and slapped his hand.

"You speak Spanish as well as I do," she declared, still in Spanish. "Shall we have a farewell dinner, to-night?"

"Well, come in," said Jess, throwing open the gate. "That language is too many for me. All I know is *quién sabe, buenos dias* and *adios*. What makes you so happy, this morning?"

"I am going home," she said in English. "And to-night, if it does not rain, I will give you a farewell dinner."

"It's going to rain, though," he observed, glancing up at the thunder caps which already were forming in the east. "But what difference does that make?—our roof doesn't leak. Glad to hear you're going back to your folks."

"I told you that in Spanish!" she cried, pointing her finger at him accusingly; and then she laughed to herself. "Were you ever in Coahuila?" she asked.

"Well, I might 've been," he admitted. "But say, since you're going, don't tip my hand to Dave."

"He knows it already—by watching your eyes he could see that you caught certain words. But since this is farewell and you have been very kind to me I will not—how you say?—tip your hand. To-night, rather late, I will bring over a huge dinner and we three will eat it together; and then, if you wish, I will sing Spanish songs to you, no matter if it rains. After that I will go, but I do not want a guard because Trinidad knows places to hide. We will travel by night—after midnight, when no one is watching—and I will never see my ranger again."

She glanced up at him, half smiling in the coquettish way she had, and Roundtree shook his head.

"You Spanish girls are terrible," he said.

"But are you not sorry, to have me go?" she demanded. "I suppose, when I bring the pie, you will break it to pieces—you do not trust me, at all."

"Sure I'll break it," he answered, "and I'll frisk Dave to the skin after you've shook hands and said good-by."

"Then I will not say good-by," she pouted. "I do not love him, anyway."

"Glad to hear it," he nodded. "He's got a bad record with the rangers. But you understand—I'm responsible for those prisoners."

"Your captain would discharge you if you lost them, no? Does he come to see you often?"

"He's off on a scout, but he's due back any time—and he'd kill me, I reckon, if I lost 'em. But don't you worry, sister, about my losing those prisoners; because——"

"I hope you do," she burst out pettishly. "You do not trust me at all!"

He gazed at her, saying nothing, a half-formed suspicion in his mind; but at the end he shrugged his shoulders and led her into the jail office, which for him was kitchen, dining room and home. It was a large, bare place with a stove and table in one corner and a few chairs and benches scattered about; and at one end, like a well, was the heavy door to the Snake-hole, which he opened by a heave on the huge ring. Mysterious Dave was standing below, his pale face a mask of white in the cold, sepulchral darkness of his dungeon; and as he came up the ladder and accepted his breakfast tray, Roundtree saw him glance sharply at Alicia. Then Dave's eyes suddenly hardened and he backed down into his prison, while Jess raised the ladder and locked the door.

Like the breath of a bat's wing wafted up from the darkness below he felt a premonition of danger, and all that day he stayed close to the jail. Pacing restlessly about the courtyard he examined the outer doors and tried the barred windows that let in light; but the men who had built this prison had blasted so deep into the solid rock that neither door nor windows could be reached. The prisoners were in a hole,

like rats in a cistern, with no exit but the huge trapdoor.

Noon came, and the mutter of thunder turned suddenly into an earth-rocking roar. The white clouds in the east changed from slate gray to black and the wind rushed up columns of dust. Big drops came plashing down, now here, now there, striking up dirt from the mud-covered roof; and as he looked out across the plains at the pageantry of the storm the rain lashed into his face. The wind struck him a buffet that rocked him on his feet, sticks and sand came pelting against him, and then with a rush and patter the clouds gave down their moisture—the summer rains had begun.

That evening, when the sun in effulgent splendor was going down behind masses of clouds, Alicia de Montana with two servants behind her came tripping down the road from town. She saw Jess, like a lone sentinel, at his post on the flat roof and waved her hand at him gayly; but the day had been a hard one and he barely answered her greeting—for Alicia was going away. Fight it down as he would he felt a great surge of longing—a longing to go with her and never to leave her dear presence, though he buried himself for life in some distant hacienda of Coahuila. And she seemed to care for him, too. But the mood passed like a cloud across the face of the dying sun and he strode down to open the gate.

"I have brought plenty," she beamed, pointing behind her at the two servants. "Here is dinner for us all, including the poor Mexican, and a bottle or two of wine besides."

She waved her hand negligently at a huge basket of champagne with which old Trinidad brought up the rear, and as he passed them all in Roundtree glanced at the grimy bottles and wondered at the cobwebs and dust. For, to come there from France, these consignments of wine and cognac had to be shipped and transshipped repeatedly; and then there was the long ride in the bull teams of the caravans before they were landed in Dragoon. Wootan had good wine in his saloon, though most of it was smuggled, but this basket of ancient vintage was still matted with the cobwebs which the French keep to prove the wine's age. Yet it was strange, after traveling so far.

"We will drink a toast," she said, "when our dinner is done. And who knows?" she added: "we may meet again. The world is not so wide."

"Quién sabe—who knows?" repeated Roundtree and she flashed an approving smile.

"If I had known," she said, "that you spoke such excellent Spanish—— But alas, it is too late, now. This very night I go."

She heaved a sigh and went on before him, walking as buoyantly as a dancer in her long riding skirt, which she had donned in preparation for her departure. The horses were saddled, all was ready for the start; but the evening was still before them.

"Now bring out the table," she ordered as soon as they had entered the jail. "We have here a white cloth which Mrs. Wootan gave me, to go with the wine and roast chicken. But no one shall drink until we have had our dinner."

"What's that?" clamored Quick Talley, snatching up a bottle of wine and knocking the top off with his pistol barrel; and as the champagne effervesced they all caught it in glasses, while Talley proclaimed a toast.

"To Sister Alice!" he shouted, and as Jess drank his off soberly the little ranger filled glass after glass.

"By grab, folks," he gloated, "that's too good to waste. Have another one, Jess? Well, here goes, then." And as the wine ran out he poured it down.

"That'll do now," interposed Jess, setting the basket aside and laying a heavy hand on Talley. "What d'ye want to do—get drunk?"

"Why, sure!" crowed Talley, "with all the pleasure in life. "Won't you have a little snifter, yourse'f?"

"Not a drop," answered Jess, "until we've had dinner. That's champagne—it might go to our heads."

"Yes, that is not fair, now," chided Alicia, smiling at Talley. "The champagne is served last, as a toast. This is our last evening together and——"

"All right, all right!" he muttered, but Jess could see his eyes begin to snap.

"We've got too much wine here!" he exclaimed.

"Too much?" protested Talley. "We won't leave a drop of it if——"

"Oh, that is not all for you!" broke in Alicia, reprovingly. "Can you not spare a

bottle or two for poor Raymondo and his friend? It is their last dinner, as well."

"Sure thing," agreed Jess, "give 'em two, if you want to. And while we're about it I'll just hand them down their tray and get 'em off our hands for the night."

"You are so kind," murmured Alicia, whisking the food onto the tray and selecting two dust-incrusted bottles. "But do not tell Raymondo I am going. It is better that I should leave without saying good-by—but wait, you have not searched the food."

"Oh, all right," mumbled Jess, breaking open the rolls, and hastily examining the chicken: and as he heaved up the trapdoor and lowered the tray she rewarded him with a dazzling smile.

"Ah, now we can forget," she sighed as they sat down at the table. "That terrible place—poor Raymondo will surely die!"

"He will not!" defended Talley. "Not from living in that hole. He's more likely to die from a busted spleen when he hears us up here, talking to his girl. Now Alice, before you go I want to ask you one question and I won't take no for an answer."

"Here! Eat something!" broke in Jess, putting some dinner on his plate. "And don't get so familiar on short acquaintance." And Alicia was at pains to laugh and chat until Talley was engrossed with his food. He was a quick, impulsive man, with none of the reserve and somber silences which made Roundtree seem so much older; and as the dinner wore on the champagne he had imbibed made him boastful and disputatious.

"Don't you worry about Raymondo!" he said. "The rangers will take care of him. He'll be right here, whenever you come back—and he'll have lots of company, too. They's lots of rangers around here, more rangers than you'd think for; and in a couple of months, when the round-up begins, we'll have the old stray pen full. All the choice sons of goats that's been robbing the stages and holding up the Mexican caravans, will be right down there with Dave."

"Quick," broke in Roundtree, "you talk too much. How about a little music, Alicia?"

"How about some more champagne?" yelped Talley, leaping up and snatching a bottle; and before Jess could stop him he had whipped out his pistol and cracked the neck at a blow. There was nothing to do then but to fill up their glasses and drink another toast to Alicia; but when she responded by filling his glass again Jess shook his head and drew back.

"What? You will not drink?" she coaxed. "Not to that happy, happy day, when you will come to see me in Coahuila? Aha! So that is different! *Salud!*"

She held up her glass and they clinked rims together, after which Quick Talley emptied the rest of the bottle and knocked the neck off a third. Seeing that protest was useless Jess allowed him to go his way and the evening was still young when, from being boisterous and quarrelsome, Talley gradually became blear-eyed and sleepy.

"I hear the rain," spoke up Alicia as a sudden silence fell. "Is it not sweet, after the long months of drouth? But I must go as soon as it stops, so give me my guitar and I will sing you 'Con El Capo, Tin, Tin.' It is our Mexican song of the raindrops."

She strummed her guitar and Talley sat up suddenly but as she swung into the song he became glassy-eyed and groggy and retreated to his bed in the corner.

"No me mates, no me mates,
Con pistola ne puñal
Mata me con, tus ojitos
Y tus labios de coral.

"Con el capo, tin, tin,
Esta noche va llover
Con el capo, tin, tin,
Esta noche va nevar,
Con el capo, tin, tin,
Esta noche a Seville,
Con el capo, tin, tin,
Esta noche un alto mar."

"Do not kill me, do not kill me,
With pistol or with dagger,
But kill me with your little eyes
And your lips of coral red.

"Con el capo, tin, tin,
This night it will rain.
Con el capo, tin, tin,
This night it will snow.
Con el capo, tin, tin,
This night at Seville,
Con el capo, tin, tin,
There will be a high sea."

It was only a folk song, sung to many different verses in old Mexico and the provinces of Spain; but in the black shadows of the candlelight, with the rain beating on the door, it had an alluring charm. She sang him another, and another after that; until at last when the rain ceased its fitful tattoo she rose as if to go. But folk songs

are love songs, and wine is wine—there was a fever in Roundtree's brain, a gleam in his eye, and he motioned her back to her chair.

"Sing another one," he commanded; "the prettiest one you know." And she began "La Primavera."

"Ya viene la primavera,
Sembrando flores, sembrando flores, ay, ay!"

"Now comes the spring,
Sowing flowers, sowing flowers—alas!"

At first the verses were very gay and tender, as befits a song of spring; but at the end the haunting melancholy of broken love became its theme and Alicia's face grew sad.

"De sepulcro en sepulcro
Voy preguntando, voy preguntando, ay, ay!
Si allí mora algun alma
Que murió amando, que murio amando."

"From grave to grave
I go asking, I go asking—alas!
If here lies any soul
That died of love, that died of love.

"Respondió me una, respondió me una
'De mujeres millares, de hombres ninguna,'"

"One answered me, one answered me:
'Of women—thousands, of men not one.'"

She sang it in Spanish, but Roundtree understood; and after that she would sing no more.

"I must go!" she said, suddenly drawing her cloak about her and looking around her with a shudder. "I must leave this terrible place!"

"All right," agreed Jess, throwing the door open for her; but as he stepped out he heard a faint sound—a rhythmic, metallic scratching.

"What was that?" he asked, starting back toward the jail window, but she clutched him by the arm and drew him back.

"It is nothing," she replied, "only some window shaking—but do not leave me alone. I am afraid, I do not know why."

"Well, come on, then," he said, and put his arm about her protectingly as they hurried out to the gate. "Shall I take you to the hotel?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" she protested, putting his arm gently away. "It is not of the night I am afraid. It is only of my life, and of all I have before me—and of you! Please let me out!"

She had hold of the gate and shook it in such a frenzy that he made haste to pass her out, but when he had turned the key her panic subsided and she lingered to talk through the bars.

"We shall never meet again," she said.

"But why?" he demanded. "Can't you see that I love you? A few hundred miles is nothing to a ranger——"

"No. This is the end—good-by."

She reached in through the bars and drew his face closer and then their lips met in a long, farewell kiss that went to Roundtree's head like new wine.

"Good-by, my tall ranger," she murmured in Spanish; and when he flung back the gate she was gone. The sky was inky black, overcast with racing clouds which threatened every moment to give down rain; but against the horizon the heat-lightning winked and flickered, giving a sinister illumination to the sky. He crouched and scanned the sky line, hoping to see her against the glow, but in those few short moments she had vanished completely—it might be, vanished forever.

He seemed to pass into a dream, from which he woke to find himself running and the night suddenly turned into day. The sudden rip of a lightning stroke revealed the landscape all about him, and Alicia was nowhere to be seen. The crash of thunder followed close, making the very earth tremble; and as he turned to look back a second flash lit up the sky and he saw the jail gate—open! Then his sanity returned and, remembering his prisoners, he raced back and slammed it behind him.

In the darkness the deserted courtyard seemed suddenly peopled with lurking men who had slipped in during his absence. He locked the gate and drew his pistol, placing his back against the wall for fear of a knife thrust in the dark. Then as a double stroke of lightning showed the space before him empty he rushed through the rain to the jail. Already in his mind he could see the trapdoor open, Talley killed and his prisoners gone; but when he burst in Talley looked up at him drunkenly and the dog hole was still closed and locked.

"Where are the prisoners?" he demanded, suddenly angry.

"W'y, cripes, they're right down there!" answered Talley indignantly. "Can't you hear that danged Mexican sing? They're drunk on that murdering champagne."

"Yes, and you're drunk!" accused Roundtree. "You're a hell of a ranger, and I'm not much better myself! But shut up—I want to listen for those prisoners."

Talley dropped back on his bed and above the roar of the rain Jess could hear the Mexican singing, the same song that Alicia had sung:

"Con el capo, tin, tin,
This night it will rain——"

Roundtree laughed the Mexican was intoxicated. And as he stood, listening intently, he heard Dave's complaining voice. His prisoners were safe, after all. But what of the forms with which the patio was peopled, the sly, lurking forms which had seemed to crouch in every shadow, ready to knife him and get his keys? He reached swiftly into his pocket, and when he felt the keys his heart suddenly leaped for joy. What would his captain say if he stepped in on them now and saw the empty bottles and the trays? Even the prisoners were drunk, and the outer gate had been left open; but Alicia was gone, at last.

He dropped down on his bed and lay listening to the storm and the creaking and slamming of doors, and once more the Mexican in his high falsetto voice began to sing "Con El Capo, Tin, Tin." He too had been listening to the alluring Alicia and now that she was gone he sang the songs over, rattling two sticks together like castanets. At last he dozed off and his high singing ceased, but still in Roundtree's mind the words ran on and he could not summon sleep:

"Now comes the spring,
Sowing flowers, sowing flowers - alas!
And the fields are painted
A thousand colors, a thousand colors."

What a beautiful love song it was! But what of that last verse which the Mexican in his cups had sung with such brutal exulting, being proud of the broken hearts behind him? Why was it that Alicia had sung it last of all and quit the jail in tears? The song had been sung to Dave! While she sang to the rangers he had been listening below and those were her last words, her farewell. Many women had died of love, but never a man. She had read his black heart, at last.

But before she had gone she had given Jess a kiss—through the bars of the gate, but such a kiss as he had never dreamed of, a kiss that had driven him mad. Did that mean that she loved him, instead? He had flung open the gate and raced out into the night, a madman, bereft of his senses. But where had she gone? Not back to the hotel, for the blinding flash of lightning had made the plains brighter than day. He had left the gate open—perhaps she had slipped back, to surprise him and reward him with a kiss. Perhaps even then she was outside his door. He rose up hurriedly, felt his pistols in their belt, and peered out into the night. The storm had passed, leaving the heavens clear except for the wind-swept clouds. Rain dropped from the roofs with a steady *spat, spat;* he could hear his horse snort in his stall; and then, as he stepped out he heard a rattle at the gate, and his heart gave a great leap, and stopped. Who else could it possibly be but Alicia?

The gate rattled again and something menacing in its challenge made Jess halt and crouch back against the wall. This was no woman's hand, sending a summons to her lover; it was the rough shaking of a man, perhaps seeking to lure him on and get him within reach of his gun. A flicker of lightning, hundreds of miles away, suddenly outlined the gate and revealed a man's form, caught and struggling on the spikes at the top. It was a prisoner, trying to escape. With a shout Jess rushed forward, his pistol raised to shoot; but the next flicker of light showed the man on the ground, rising up from where he had fallen. Aiming by point, Jess shot twice, stabbing the darkness with his pistol flare; but the prisoner had fled, leaving the gate jammed by his struggles; and with an oath Roundtree ran back to the jail.

"What's the matter?" demanded Talley, stumbling out with pistols drawn; but Jess darted past him and mounted up to the roof, still intent on getting his prisoner. He leaned over the low wall and strained his eyes into the darkness, and out in the night he could see a patch of white and the dim, moving figure of a horse. For a few aching seconds he stood poised, ready to shoot; then the heat lightning flickered up, revealed a man on the horse, and he shot before the lightning had died. Again the darkness, and by the next instant flash he saw his man reel and fall. But another man was there, swinging up as his horse dashed off. Jess fired after him into the

darkness, emptying one gun and drawing the other; but he had dropped down on his horse's neck like an Indian and as he galloped off he whooped back a laugh.

"Hey! Come down here!" shouted Talley. "Here's the Mexican—who're you shooting at?"

"Mysterious Dave!" cried Roundtree.

In the dim light of the courtyard Talley was kneeling by a window, every bar of which had been sawed away; and in the darkness of the Snake-hole the Mexican was shouting curses and jumping up and down with rage.

"*'On' está Dave?*" he shrieked. "Where is that son of a goat—that Dave Misterioso?"

"He got away," answered Roundtree in Spanish. "But I believe I just killed him, outside the wall."

"*Que bueno!* How good!" laughed the Mexican. "He climbed out on my shoulders and then kicked me in the face—son of a pig! I held him up while he sawed the bars, and yet he went away and left me!"

"Where did you get the saws?" demanded Jess; and the Mexican laughed while he cursed. "That woman of his brought them—in the wine. Si, señor, they were hidden in the bottles!"

"Damn a woman, anyway!" burst out Roundtree, starting to run for the gate; and laying hold of the jammed frame he gave the bars such a wrench that the door flew back on its hinges. Then with Talley close behind he rushed out into the darkness to where a pinto horse stood on the plain. It was Alicia's own horse, the black-and-white-and-yellow pinto on which she had ridden into Dragoon; and in front of it a human body lay crumpled up grotesquely, just as it had fallen from the saddle.

"I got him!" exulted the ranger, kneeling down to turn him over; but instead of Dave he beheld the face of Alicia, her lips and breast stained with blood.

To be continued in the next issue, out October 20th.

WHY TRUSTED MEN STEAL

LOSSES suffered by business firms through embezzlement by their trusted employees now are five times as great as they were fifteen years ago, according to statistics compiled by E. A. St. John, the president of the National Surety Company. He estimates the country's loss through embezzlement at from $100,000,000 to $125,000,000 a year.

Why do these trusted men steal?

Mr. St. John says that nineteen out of every twenty of them do not intend to steal—in the beginning. They borrow from their employers—without their employers knowing it—and expect to pay it back before they are found out. Then they lose the money in speculation—or something else happens—and they are unable to make good on their good intentions.

From the experience of his company with a quarter of a million embezzlers, Mr. St. John thinks that the increase in this form of financial crime is caused by:

Widespread disrespect for property rights and law, caused partly by the World War.

Doctrines of anarchy and bolshevism, and misinterpretation of book knowledge.

Envy, resentment and bitterness, caused partly by ostentation of the wealthy class and also by a widespread belief that the opportunities for acquiring wealth are unequally allotted.

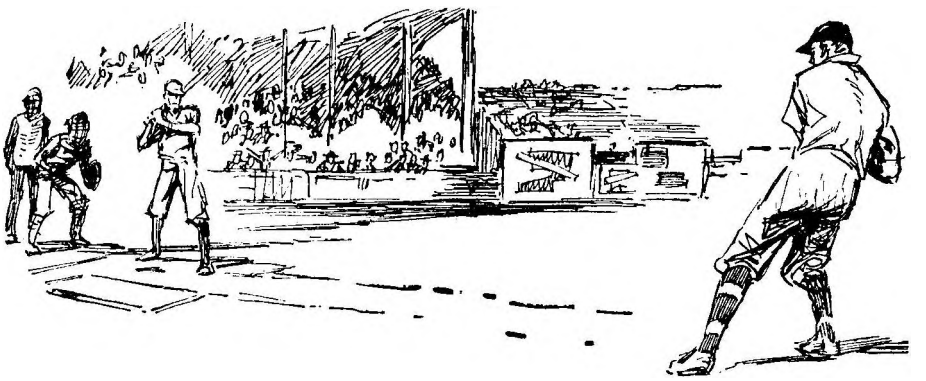
A desire for luxuries beyond the individual's earning capacities.

Many salaries too close to the starvation line.

Unemployment.

The carelessness of employers in not checking records of new employees and in not auditing accounts frequently and carefully enough.

And, most important of all, a fundamental change in the world's ideals and increased opportunities for financial crime due to the increased complexity of modern business.



The Bugs Battery

By Howard R. Marsh

Author of "Not a Dude Ranch," "Liberty and the Pursuit of Gold," Etc.

Perhaps those desert-trained baseball marvels were crazy—but maybe they weren't so foolish at that.

SHEEP, thousands upon thousands of them, covered the desert's face. They surged in gray waves through the regularly spaced creosote bush and sage; wethers, ewes, yearlings and lambs stirred the alkali dust with their crowding feet and ladened the air with their pungent odor. As far as the last rise of the foothills the gray flocks extended; where one ended another began. The herds of Herman Grassle, wool grower, were working their way northward after the spring shearing, up to the feed and water of Mono region.

Across the winding desert road the animals piled, completely blocking it and bringing the gray roadster of Fred Banning to a halt. For a moment the car seemed about to be buried in the gray waves. The blethering sheep piled back on each other as they do when frightened, those behind pushing forward, those ahead doubling back in a smothering heap.

"Hi!" yelled Banning, tooting his horn. "Hi, there!" He was in no mood for delay. It was the afternoon of April's last day; the ' out season opened May 1st, and the mou. in streams around Lone Pine were still sixty miles away. Banning, ex-major-league manager and now baseball scout for the world-famous Terriers, had been watching the Pacific Coast League in action; already he had designs on two infielders with the San Francisco Seals and a pitcher of the Los Angeles Angels. Then the lure of casting flies in the snow-fed streams of the High Sierras yanked him from his duty. He had picked up Sam Crossford and the two of them had raced across the Mojave Desert as rapidly as the law and the twisting sandy roads permitted. And now, a few hours from their destination, they were blockaded by sheep!

"Get!" shouted Banning, bucking the muddled animals gently with the car bumper. "Beat it! Clear the way!"

Sam Crossford, red-faced, genial, an outdoors man who had been a major-league star for a generation and still wielded a wicked bat in the Los Angeles Industrial League, grinned at Banning's efforts.

"Easy, Fred," he cautioned. "They haven't any sense, those fool sheep. Give the dogs time"—he motioned to four collies which were barking and nipping the sheep frantically—"and they'll clear us a way."

"Yes," Banning snapped back, "about to-morrow noon. Where in thunder is the herder?" He bucked ahead again, then seeing that the smothering pile-up of gray fleeces was becoming serious, jerked the car to a halt, opened the door and swung **out.**

"Where you going?" demanded Crossford. He was enjoying the situation immensely, enjoying the hot sunshine, the limitless stretch of sand and creosote with the snow-tipped mountains in the distance, enjoying the joke of being blockaded by blethering sheep. Even the alkali dust which irritated throat and nostrils, the heavy sheep odor, were a part of the joke.

"After the herder," answered Banning. "To untangle these damned sheep! The fool's probably asleep somewhere and letting his fool animals spoil a good fishing trip."

"Don't get lost," warned Crossford, lighting a cigar and leaning back in the seat. "Better men than you, Fred, have died of thirst around here." But Banning was already striding through the ankle-deep alkali sand and hip-high sheep flock in search of the shepherd. Crossford closed his eyes to ease them from the desert glare. The sharp barking of the dogs, the *naa-aa* of the frightened sheep and the suckling rasp of their feet made a medley of sound which was strangely lulling. He dozed.

He awoke abruptly. Strong hands were shaking him. He blinked dazedly, then saw Fred Banning leaning over him. Banning's lean brown face was wet with perspiration; his mouth was half open and his eyes bulged.

"What is it?" demanded Crossford, still heavy with the heat and interrupted sleep. "Good heavens! Fred, what's the matter? What's happened?"

"Come with me for the love of Mike!" ordered Banning, his tongue racing excitedly. "Damnedest thing I ever saw, bar none!"

"What? Where?"

"Come on! Quick!"

Crossford slid out of the sticky seat and to the ground. Across the stretch of sand, dodging sheep, boulders and greasewood, he followed Banning. For a quarter mile he tagged along, wondering at his companion's strange excitement. Only when he was almost breathless and thoroughly tired did Banning stop.

"Sh-hh!" the leader warned. "Sneak up quietly!"

Still too surprised to protest, Crossford dropped to his hands and knees and crawled across the sand after his companion. Once or twice he muttered energetic oaths when spines from cholla or pancake cactus sank in his hands and knees. It had all ceased to be a joke with him.

The two men were at their destination. From the last fringe of greasewood they stared down into a dry wash, a fifty-foot cut in the desert floor, paved with washed, sun-whitened stones.

"There," whispered Banning, pointing into the wash. "See 'em?"

Crossford looked. Below, standing out clearly against the white sand and whiter stones, were two men. Not ordinary men they were, nor engaged in any usual desert occupation. One of them was abnormally tall, grotesquely tall. Close to seven feet he was, and mostly arms and legs; a V-shaped man, broad at the shoulders and narrow at the hips. His legs seemed to extend three fourths of his height and his arms dangled to his knees. His brown face was framed in a uniform two-inch mat of bleached hair, his eyes were small and blue, his ears almost hidden in the thick yellow hirsute.

His companion was the Jeff of the picture—a short, squat, pudgy fellow, a barrel with a round, heavily black head resting on it without the usual intercalary neck. His eyes were as large and black as his companion's were small and blue. He, too, was unshaven and his face was as black and hairy as an ape's. But it was his ears which attracted immediate attention—great ears which projected from his head like sails, enormous, loose and flapping. Both men apparently wore just three items of clothing—a red woolen shirt, bleached blue-white overalls and thick cowhide boots. Since Rivera y Moncada drove the first sheep into Alta, California, in 1770, the desert had probably never seen two odder herders.

Strange as the men were in appearance, their occupation was even more strange. The tall herder was pitching a baseball to his companion, pitching with an intentness which was laughable. His long body coiled up, the baseball touched the ground behind him. Then suddenly he straightened and his arms seemed to unsnarl as he waved them violently. The ball shot through the air and into his companion's thick mitt with a resounding smack.

"What do you call that? What do you call it?" The thin, squeaky voice of the pitcher carried to the two watchers. "I s'pose that was a ball, too!"

"Ball two," bellowed the catcher and his roar reëchoed along the wash.

"Oh my God!" shrilled the pitcher. "Ain't nothing a strike? You thief! You sheep stealer! Ain't nothing a strike?"

"Pitch," ordered the man with the flapping ears, tossing the ball back. "Ball two, strike one."

Again the gangling herder wound up his arms and legs; again they straightened with a snap. But this time, a second's fraction after the motion had ceased the ball started. It seemed to float through the air, so slowly that every revolution of it could be seen. For a moment it suspended itself, then dropped into the catcher's glove.

"What do you call it? What do you call it?" shrilled the pitcher.

"Ball three!" came the answering roar. "Too high."

"Oh my God!" wailed the tall herder. "Right across the plate! You lie by the clock, you thief!"

"Pitch," ordered the catcher-umpire. "Else I'll forfeit the game."

Above, in the sand and cactus, Sam Crossford shifted uncomfortably. His hands and knees smarted from cactus spines; his throat was dry and irritated by the alkali. "Come on," he said to Banning. "I've got enough of this burlesque! Yell to 'em to get their sheep."

"Squat!" whispered Banning tersely.

"But what about the fishing?"

"Fishing be damned! Did you see what he puts on the ball? Speed like Walter Johnson's and a slow ball that looks like a balloon. Curves, too, that jump like a rabbit. Who in the devil do you suppose he is? The reincarnation of 'Rube' Waddell?"

"Don't know and don't care," Crossford said, getting to his feet. He cupped his hands to his mouth. "Hey, down there! Come up and get your sheep off the road!"

The two men in the dry wash paid no attention. The pitcher was coiling up again. "Hey!" shouted Crossford, thoroughly angry, "we'll ride over your damned sheep!"

The herder-catcher turned, walked slowly to the edge of the wash and looked up. "Shut up!" he roared. "It's the ninth inning, bases full, two out and ball three. Shut up!" Then he stalked back to his position.

Sam Crossford was too flabbergasted to do anything else but shut up. His lips formed the soundless words, "Ninth inning! Two out! I'll be damned!" He turned to look at Fred Banning. But that major-league scout, like a hound on a scent, was halfway down the miniature precipice to the dry wash. Crossford lowered himself over the edge and slid after his companion.

When he reached the bottom he heard the pitcher again. "There," he was shrilling triumphantly, "he's out. Another scoreless game! I showed you!"

"Yeah," taunted the catcher, shaking his head and loose ears belligerently, "but you blamed near forced in a flock of runs." He turned to Fred Banning, who was almost beside him. "What you want?"

"I want to watch that bird pitch," Banning declared decisively. "Name's Banning," he explained. "Fred Banning, baseball scout for the famous Terriers. Who's the pitcher?"

"Him? 'Dink' Lasceredemiotus."

Banning gulped. "We'll call him Lasker," he decided. "Who's he pitched for? Ever played any league games?"

"League games?" echoed the squat catcher. "Say, he's pitched 'em for eleven years."

"Where?"

"Why, right here on this desert. Every day, most, for eleven years. Pitched 'em to me."

"But who against?"

"Well, kinda against me, too. I'm the umpire and I call the balls. He has to strike out three men every inning—twenty-seven men, ain't it?—before the game is over. If he throws one easy or straight I calls it a hit. To-day he was good. He didn't give no hits, only walked four and they didn't score."

"Who didn't score?" demanded the bewildered scout. "Where's the other team?"

"That's what I'm telling you. I'm the other team, too. I keep track of the easy balls that are hits, and the wild ones that walk the men, and the strikes. Dink, he can't keep track of nothing. He ain't got no head, but he sure can pitch. 'Most as well as I can catch."

"Yes," agreed Banning ingratiatingly, "you're sure a good catcher. Will you have Lasker throw you some?"

"Sure. Dink! Hey, Dink, we'll play that last inning over again."

"Huh?" grunted the elongated pitcher.

"We'll play that inning over again."

"Naw! That was too hard work. We'll play the first inning over again. I didn't walk none in the first inning."

"See?" the catcher asked Banning. "He's weak in the topknot. Me, I'm the brains of the battery. Now you get back of me and I'll show you how I catch."

Banning didn't watch the catcher, but he studied every move of the pitcher. Lasker had stuff, worlds of stuff. His fast ball shot like a white streak, his curve broke quickly. Inshoot, out, drop and a queer hop ball he threw with the same bewildering coiling and unspringing of his long body. And the slow ball was different from any Banning had ever seen. After the pitching motion had stopped the ball started. Such a thrown ball, mingled with the fast ones, would be almost impossible to hit, Banning knew.

"Let's see how you throw that one," he challenged the pitcher, walking up close to his side.

"Yeah." The lanky herder rested the ball in the palm of his hand, his fingers doubled behind it. Such fingers! Close to five inches long and unbelievably muscular; wonderful sheep-shearing fingers. "Like this!" Lasker made his motion slowly; he coiled and uncoiled; his arm flipped out and stayed straight, but the ball was still in his hand. Then he snapped his fingers outward, gave a queer propelling motion with his wrist and the ball floated to the catcher's glove.

"A knuckle ball," decided Banning, "but actually thrown with the fingers. A wonder!" He turned to Crossford for confirmation; that individual was standing in gaping astonishment.

"Let me show you how I catch," insisted the bulky herder. "Here! This is foul-tip practice."

"Is what?"

"Foul-tip practice." The catcher took his place behind a five-foot smoke bush. "Now some fast ones, Dink!" he ordered.

Through the bush Lasker flashed the ball, again and again. It hit the branches and shot off at tangents, but each time the catcher's glove shifted to meet it with lightning rapidity.

"You're some catcher," agreed Banning after a dozen such trials. He was increasingly respectful to the "brains of the battery," the fellow with the big ears. Undoubtedly the man could catch. "Can you bat?"

"Three times at bat a day for eleven years," boasted the catcher. "Can I bat? I can hit anything Dink's got. My average for eleven years is better than one hit a day. Want to see?" He made a motion toward a hickory club that lay on the sand.

"Not now," Banning decided. "Say, would you two fellows like to play regular baseball for money?"

"Naw"—hesitatingly. "Guess not."

"Why not? How much do you get paid here?"

"Well, Herman Grassle only gives us sixty dollars a month, and we could get more from some growers. But Herman, he gives us new baseballs every month and new gloves right after shearing every year. See?" He held up his catcher's mitt, a cheap affair sold for schoolboys. "A new one every year after shearing. So we stay with Herman."

"If you'll come with me I'll give you a dozen new gloves," promised Banning, "and at least two hundred dollars a month."

"A dozen new gloves?" repeated the herder. "And new baseballs?"

"Every day."

"Hear that, Dink?" the catcher asked. "New balls and new gloves. Will we go?"

"Naw," the V-shaped herder decided. "Who'll take care of the sheep?"

"We'll fix that," promised the baseball scout. "When do you see your boss?"

"The chief herder comes along every three days with new bread," was the reply. He'll be here day after to-morrow."

"You tell him you're quitting," ordered Banning. "I'll be along to see him, too." He turned to Crossford. "Rather worth a gamble, isn't it?" he demanded.

"Rather," agreed Crossford. "Never saw such stuff in my life. That's what practice does, and a freak physique. Eleven years! Good Lord, think of it! Probably three hundred days a year. And all the time trying to get better. Yep, Fred, it's worth a big gamble. If he can't field worth a thin dime and never swung a bat, he'll still be the biggest find of the decade or I miss my guess. Don't let him get away!"

"We ain't going with you," blurted out the catcher.

"Why not?"

"Because you-all just talk about Dink. You don't talk about me."

"Why—why," stammered Crossford, "you're so good that we don't have to talk about you. You're too good to discuss."

"All right, we'll go with you," decided the catcher.

"Naw, we won't," interjected Pitcher Lasker. "He ain't said nothing about fresh bread every three days and a bottle of licker after shearing. Naw, we won't go."

Fred Banning reached high up and patted the herder's shoulder. "You just come along, Lasker," he promised, "and we'll give you whatever you want to eat and drink. See?" He pulled a roll of bills from his pocket and waved it up in the air before the man's hairy face. "This much every day."

"You take care of our sheep?" demanded Lasker. Some thrill of adventure was heating his little brain. "Yeah, we'll go, eh 'Stub?' "

"Then I'll meet you and the chief herder here day after to-morrow," promised Banning. "We'll fix it with him. Crossford and I are going up to Lone Pine to fish and we'll pick you up on our way back. Right-o?"

"Yeah."

"Yeah. Only we'll not be here. The sheep are movin' fast. We'll be fourteen miles up the valley by day after to-morrow."

Back on the road Banning and Crossford found that the dogs had cleared a lane. The car started its way northward. The two men in it sat silently. They were too busy with their own thoughts to speak. That scene in the dry wash; the gigantic, grotesque pitcher and the hairy but vain catcher with the saillike ears; the seriocomic baseball game; the wonderful uncoiling of the pitcher's body; the floating slow ball—of these they thought, but it all seemed too unreal to discuss.

Sam Crossford broke the silence at last. "Fourteen miles in two days," he said. "Seven miles a day, driving fast. Sheep aren't very speedy, are they?"

II.

"Now you two fellows just get on the running board," ordered Fred Banning two days later, "and lean back against the fenders. Sorry we haven't room inside."

He had completed his deal with Chief Herder Nicolo Litchell for the release of Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi, a deal which had started with threats and profanity on Litchell's part and concluded amiably when a thick roll of bills changed hands. After the passing of the money it suddenly occurred to Litchell that he could get a couple of Mexicans in Cottonwood Cañon to watch the sheep and that it would be criminal to stand in the way of the brilliant baseball future of Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi, the desert-trained battery.

"One on each side of the car," Banning commanded, "and hang on to the top stanchions for the love of Mike. These desert roads twist and squirm like a rattlesnake and——"

"We'll walk," Dink Lasker declared firmly.

"Walk? For the love of——"

"Got to take our *cayaques,*" the elongated sheep-herder insisted. "Worth a sight of money and we can't get no good job without 'em."

"Take your *cayaques?*" echoed Banning.

"He means their packs," Chief Herder Litchell explained. "Both he and Ossi own their own outfits and burros. He wants to walk so's to take them along."

"What's in 'em? Why do they need 'em?"

"Well, there are two burros, two frying pans, two stew kettles, a cat to keep mice and pack rats away from their camps, and —oh, yes, both the boys have their own collies. Good dogs, too. I'm afraid you'll have to let the boys take their outfits, Mr. Banning."

Fred Banning turned to Sam Crossford, his face a study of hopeless perplexity. "What'll we do, Sam?" he begged. "We can't take their damned *cayaques* and we can't pass up this crazy battery."

"Buy 'em," the rotund Sam Crossford suggested. "Buy their outfits! You've bought everything else in sight, anyway. Buy 'em and leave 'em."

Banning gulped. "Sure," he said, and reached into his pocket for more money. But it developed that there were parts of the herders' outfits which would not be sold; to wit, two favorite collies, one yellow tomcat which was sure death on mice, and one greasy iron stew kettle which in some mystic manner seemed to add just the right flavor to a well-mixed stew of mutton, potatoes, salt pork, garlic and lentils. The burros and the remainder of the outfit were

passed up regretfully—and for a price. But the prize possessions must be taken.

"I wouldn't go nowheres without my dog Gyp," Dink Lasker declared. "He near knows more than I do. And Yellowbelly Cat, she won't let no mice get into my boots nor chew the bread. I takes Gyp and Yellowbelly Cat or I don't go."

"Yeah," chimed in the flapping-eared Ossi, "and I take Basco as my dog and I take the kettle. Stew wouldn't be nothing without it being cooked in that kettle, eh Dink?"

It ended with two collies, one huge cat and a kettle being inside the little roadster beside Fred Banning, while Sam Crossford joined Stub Ossi on the left-hand running board. Dink Lasker balanced them on the right. Toward Tehachipi Pass and Los Angeles the car started. The collies licked Banning's face, the cat thrice escaped and had to be recaptured, the iron kettle pounded the floor and Banning's shins. Perhaps the baseball scout found consolation in the belief that he was carting to civilization two of the greatest baseball stars of the decade. Sam Crossford, groaning and aching on the running board, apparently had no such consolation and no hope for the future. At least he blasted his future and mortgaged himself continually and eternally to the devil by his oaths. He cursed Fred Banning, Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi singly and together; he cursed the stones in the road, each and every twist of the car, the desert sun and the interminable miles. He ended by cursing the game of baseball, and any time Sam Crossford cursed baseball Sam was not normal.

Los Angeles at last; an anything-goes-here, back-street hotel with a sleepy-eyed clerk-porter-elevator man who put Dink Lasker, Stub Ossi, the two collies and the cat in one room, and Fred Banning and Sam Crossford in another, all the time voicing his suspicion as to the sanity of the whole outfit. Banning and Crossford were too tired to care; Ossi and Lasker too confused by the city noises and sights.

"Hard as bricks," Crossford complained, feeling of the bed. "Criminy, Fred, you've got us in a mess."

"That bunk's too soft," Dink Lasker was declaring to Stub Ossi at almost the same minute. "Put the dogs in it and let's sleep on the floor. Do we take off our boots?"

Crossford and Fred Banning slept; Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi listened to the night noises of the city and were already homesick for the cry of the coyote. If they had known the way, if they had possessed the requisite courage, two hairy, grotesque sheep-herders, one with flapping ears and the other with man-high legs, would have stolen away from the noisy city, back to the peaceful immensity of the desert. Lacking the courage and the knowledge, they called their dogs and rubbed them behind the ears. That was comforting to men and collies, and brought sleep at last.

Outfitting the two herders next day called for a maximum of patience, but it was accomplished at last: Inconspicuous gray suits which partially concealed the abnormal shapes of the men, cloth caps and soft shirts. Stub Ossi refused to wear a collar or necktie, insisting rightfully that he had no neck, and Dink Lasker declined garters because they made his long legs itch. Neither man would relinquish his cowhide boots for shoes, but both submitted to shaves and hair cuts without a protest. The tonsorial processes left queer white rings around the centers of their faces and emphasized the redness of nose and forehead. And now the saillike ears of Stub Ossi seemed bigger and limper than ever.

"If the Carnegie Medal people pass me up this year," declared Fred Banning when the shopping was finished, "I'll award myself a pair of overstuffed suspenders for consummate courage."

"Consummate craziness, you mean," Sam Crossford answered, "and the prize should be free tuition in a lunatic asylum for you."

"For the love of Mike, Sam, you won't desert me now?" Banning was almost tearful in his plea. "I'd never get those two birds across the continent alone."

"No, I'll not desert," Crossford promised. "Every time I think of quitting I remember Lasker's slow ball and his control and his awful speed. Then I know it's my duty to baseball and to my old manager, 'Toots' Barr, to help you deliver these two nuts to the Terrier ball park. So come on!"

The trip to the East was continual torture for both Banning and Crossford. The two ex-sheep-herders were like children, ill-bred, spoiled children. Every object on the California Limited was investigated, discussed and wondered about. "Ain't that a funny-looking woman across the aisle?"

Lasker would shout. And, "Why does the whistle blow? What's the light for? Is that a policeman in the blue coat? Ain't it time for chuck?"

Food interested Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi greatly; not variety of food, but quantity. Three times a day they roared into the diner; three times a day they ordered ham and eggs, coffee and ice cream; three times a day they created near riots by the manner in which they pushed the food into their mouths. And all the time a drum fire of questions: "Ain't that man cross-eyed? Is this Chicago? Wonder how Basco and Gyp and Yellowbelly Cat like the baggage car? What we stopping for?"

Two things didn't impress Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi: distance and speed. They had known the immensity of the desert, the limitless horizons, and compared to that all distances paled to insignificance. As to speed, the sensation aboard the fastest train wasn't half as thrilling as the jolting, breath-taking careening of a goaded burro. Time, too, meant nothing, for on the desert time merges with space into a meaningless name.

The four men arrived at the metropolitan home of the great Terriers the morning of the fourth day. Manager Toots Barr was at the station to meet them, anxious to see the great battery which Fred Banning and Sam Crossford had personally conducted across the continent. Pain and disgust chased each other over Manager Barr's face as he studied the party: Fred Banning, thin and nervous, with a hunted look in his blue eyes; Sam Crossford, whose ordinary rotundity and good nature had visibly withered during the ordeal of the past week; and finally the two great baseball "finds."

"Hello, Toots," called Banning from his position in the group which included Dink Lasker, Stub Ossi, two collies and a yellow cat. "You look fine."

"You look like the devil," grunted Barr, "and Sam looks worse. Where are your ball players?"

"Why, right here. Meet Dink Lasker and Stub——"

"I said ball players," the freckled manager of the Terriers bit off. "Where are they?" His little eyes were studying the gigantic, long-legged figure of Dink Lasker, and the neckless, floppy-eared Ossi.

"Right here. Meet——"

Manager Barr turned his back. "I'm not running a circus side show," he said. "And I'm not associating with lunatics like you and Sam who'd wish a couple of freaks on the world-champion Terriers."

Dink Lasker strode forward belligerently. "Talking about me?" he demanded, towering above the squat little manager of the Terriers. "Talking about me and Stub?"

"No, no," interposed Fred Banning quickly. For a moment he saw all his efforts wasted. "He's talking of Sam and me. Toots, come here! Come over here!" Something in Banning's voice caused Manager Barr to obey. There was a short conference, gesticulations, argument. Then, "Come on, boys," Banning called to the ex-sheep-herders; "we're going out to Terrier Park to show the manager how good you are."

"Ain't it time for ham and eggs?" objected Dink Lasker. "I ain't goin' till I have some chuck. And Gyp's hungry, too."

An hour later the party, including two dogs and a cat, one disgusted ball-team manager, two hopeful old-timers and two sullen sheep-herders arrived at Terrier Park. Baseballs and a mitt were produced. Dink Lasker took his place in the pitcher's box with Stub Ossi behind the plate. Back of the catcher was Manager Barr, his freckled face still wearing an expression of pained disgust. That expression disappeared quickly, was wiped off by a new expression of wonderment and joy.

The long body of Dink Lasker coiled and the ball touched the ground in back of him; then, like a rattler striking, he straightened and threw himself forward. Smack! the ball was in Ossi's glove. Again—this time a sharp-breaking inshoot; then a hop ball and an outdrop, each one over the center of the plate.

"Show him the floater!" begged Fred Banning, dancing with excitement. "The floater!"

The same snap of body and arm, a tenth-second delay, then the ball drifted toward the plate and dropped gently into the glove of Stub Ossi.

"What about it?" shouted Fred Banning. "What about that one, Toots?"

The manager of the Terriers sucked his lips, squinted his little eyes, pounded his hips with his hands. Words failed him. Then: "Pretty good if it ain't a balk," he granted grudgingly. "But we're going to

have a devil of a time finding suits for these birds." That meant, of course, that Manager Toots Barr was tremendously impressed and meant to put the desert battery under contract at once.

On the way to the clubhouse he expanded. "Seasoning? Say, those two birds need years in a minor league. Their faults stick out all over 'em. I suppose they can't field and know damn' well they couldn't hit a balloon. But that pitcher! Say, he's got something. And the catcher can hold him, too. Three years in the minors would make a real battery out of 'em, but——"

"But what?" queried Banning.

"I can't send 'em to the minors. We need 'em now. Watched the papers lately? The Terriers won the pennant last year, you know. Here we are back with the same team this year and we've dropped the first eleven games in a row. The papers are panning us frightfully; but the owners are just as bad; I'm almost out of my job. It's the pitchers, of course. Clarke and Liebneck and Burt Hinckley can't lift their arms, so sore; Beesman's in bed with tonsilitis, Norcabbage home with a dying wife. Every first-string pitcher and two of the second string out of it. Good old Sid Pelham's been pitching every other day, but he's all in. I've been sitting up nights, waiting for you to come with your wonderful battery. And now I've got to use it, though Heaven knows what'll happen. It's a desperate gamble, but I intend to use that long-legged giant, Lasker, in the box this afternoon. I'll pitch him to Roy Sims."

"I'm afraid not," Banning replied. "I'm afraid Lasker won't pitch to any one but Ossi. And you'd be foolish to try it, anyway. No catcher you've got could hold Lasker without knowing what curve was coming. Signals? You might just as well try to teach sheep to count as to try to teach Lasker signals. He couldn't remember one, two, three. Take my advice. Otherwise you'll have trouble."

"I'll have trouble anyway, but—say, Fred, either your freak battery will make us the most talked-of team in all baseball this afternoon, or else the laughingstock of the country."

III.

"Batteries for 'day's game, Lasker 'n' Ossi for the Terriers, Wadsworth 'n' Gimble for the Panthers!" The cocky little umpire thrust out his chest, gazed belligerently at the mob in the stands, then stooped and brushed off the plate. "Play ball!"

Out on the field ambled Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi. Dink's costume fitted him many sizes too soon; the trousers came barely to his high knees, part of his shirt tails showed, his feet obviously hurt in shoes too small. He towered above the other players like a lighthouse above the waves. Facing him was Stub Ossi, his big black head sunk between his shoulders, legs bowed and great ears projecting loosely from his head.

One look at the new Terrier battery was enough for the fans in the stands. A roar went up, increasing every moment, a roar of mirth, ridicule, disgust. "Oh my gosh!" shouted a patron in the top row of the bleachers. "Look at the bugs battery!"

"Bugs battery" it was; the name was 'aken up, repeated, shrilled and shouted between gales of laughter. The noise increased as Lasker coiled up, touched the ball to the ground behind him and flashed it forward over the plate. Such a motion, such an awkward unbalancing of his body! "Lookit the toe dancer!" shrilled the stands. "Steero, the contortionist!" "Don't break in two!" "Who's taking tickets to the side show?" "Hey, Toots, where'd you get the bean pole?"

In the center of the diamond Dink Lasker was paying no attention to the hoots and catcalls. He was listening only to the bass roar of Stub Ossi behind the plate: "That's the way, old-timer. Remember what I was telling you on the train. Just pitch 'em like you did on the desert! Thata-boy! We're in the league now, old-timer! Plenty of ham 'n' eggs! Thata-curve! No one walks to-day and there ain't goin' to be no hits! Wait a minute! Wait, there! Call off the dogs and wait until some one gets in the batter's box!"

Steve Walker, lead-off man for the Panthers, stepped to the batter's position and faced the elongated ex-sheep-herder from the Mojave Desert. Walker was grinning. The crowd yelled gleefully; on the bench Manager Barr bit his finger nails and Fred Banning shut his eyes. Only Dink Lasker seemed unperturbed. Twenty-seven men to strike out; that's what Stub Ossi had said, and here was the first one.

"Let her come, Dink, old-timer!"

Walker, at the plate, saw in front of him

a bewildering entanglement of long arms and longer legs, then a sudden and grotesque unsnarling and a white streak coming straight at him. Walker ducked.

"What was that? What was that?" sounded the shrill voice of Dink Lasker, and the crowd mimicked him with, "What was that? What was that?"

"Strike one!" bawled the umpire.

Stub Ossi nodded his head, until his ears flapped. "That's it, old-timer! Strike one! Now strike two!"

The grin had left Walker's face when Dink Lasker wound up again. He watched the desert man's long arm, saw it uncoil snakily, had a hazy impression of a ball hurtling toward him. He swung wildly.

"Strike two!" called the umpire. Now the crowd cheered Dink Lasker. But he was oblivious to encouragement and ridicule alike. One man was facing him; twenty-six others would follow. The sooner they were out the better. He crouched, looked over his shoulder at Stub Ossi, then threw himself awkwardly forward.

"Str-r-rike thr-ree! You'r-r-re out!" burred the umpire, and Steve Walker walked disconsolately back to the bench.

Across the field Manager Toots Barr was scolding Fred Banning. "Why didn't you tell him not to put 'em all across the plate?" he demanded. "Now they'll be set for the ball and knock it a mile. Why didn't you tell him to throw a few wild ones once in a while?"

"Tell him?" echoed Banning. "Say, you can't tell that fellow anything. And we'll see if they hit him!"

They saw. And the crowd saw. Three Panthers, including the heavy-hitting "Lud" Ludlow, struck out that inning, struck out on nine pitched balls. The crowd roared its approval of Dink Lasker, hailed him affectionately, shouted, "Hat! Hat!" But Dink Lasker stood stolidly in the pitcher's box until Stub Ossi led him from the field. Manager Barr was waiting.

"Cut it out!" he ordered. "Don't try to strike 'em all out! You won't last three innings!" Manager Barr knew he had a find, knew that the grotesque, long-legged sheep-herder from the desert was one of the greatest pitchers baseballdom had ever seen. And as a wise manager he didn't want his new star ruined in a single day. "Ease up, Dink!"

"Ease up?" repeated Lasker. "That was easy enough. And now just twenty-four more to strike out! Say, where's Gyp?"

"What's the matter with the floater, Dink?" questioned excited Fred Banning. "Forgotten it? Say, watch me and every time I stand up here at the bench serve the batter one of your floaters."

"Sure." Dink Lasker was agreeable but absent-minded. "How's Gyp getting along?" He wandered away under the grand stand to where his collie was tied. Five minutes later Stub Ossi found him there and led him back to the pitcher's box.

Those who have followed the history of the Terrier ball team for the past few years will never forget that game Dink Lasker pitched, just as they will never forget his huge, awkward figure in the center of the diamond, coiling and uncoiling while the umpire called strike after strike. Even today the wonderful floater which he pitched is a byword, a finger-snapped ball which the umpire was half inclined to call a balk and before which the Panther batters almost broke their backs. A second figure in the picture the fans will never forget—the lop-eared, squat Stub Ossi, without mask or protectors, picking the ball out of the air behind the plate.

"Wordy" Wadsworth, pitching for the Panthers, was a worthy foe to the bugs battery. A crafty old hand at the game, he conserved his strength, pitched to each batter's weakness, and set down the Terriers almost as rapidly as Dink Lasker struck out the Panthers. It was a great battle, inning after inning, a battle which kept the crowd in the stands roaring and Manager Toots Barr biting his finger nails to the quick.

"Something's bound to bust!" he kept muttering to Fred Banning between bites at his fingers. "Something'll bust sure!"

In the seventh inning it seemed that his gloomy prediction was about to be fulfilled. Until then no Panther had reached base and there had not been a semblance of a hit, scarcely a difficult fielding chance. Then the Panthers changed their attack. Steve Walker, first man up, bunted. It was a difficult feat, even though he knew the ball was probably coming over the plate; he felt a glow of satisfaction when he met the ball fairly.

The ball bounded weakly toward the pitcher's box. Dink Lasker, overbalanced from his throwing effort, made a lunge for it. He missed the first grab, got his huge

feet tangled and sat down on the ball. Frantically he grabbed for it. The crowd roared at him. At last he found the elusive baseball. But that was all. He sat there, staring stupidly at it while Steve Walker raced to first base.

"Never mind that, old-timer," roared Stub Ossi, coming to the center of the diamond and helping Lasker to his feet. "Just one hit to-day, old-timer!"

But Dink Lasker was mad; the hooting of the fickle crowd at his awkwardness had finally penetrated his thick hide. Characteristically his anger turned on Stub Ossi. He stalked into the box, turned and threw the ball over the plate before Ossi was scarcely in position. It was a wicked ball, with all the anger plus all the strength of Dink Lasker behind it.

"What was that?" shrilled Lasker. "What was that, you sheep thief!" Dink was yelling at Ossi because he was accustomed to vent his anger on his stubby fellow herder. "S'pose that was a ball, you ornery coyote!"

The umpire misunderstood the object of the epithets. He, too, was roiled. He'd show that pitcher not to bait an umpire. "Bail one!" he roared. The ball had flashed squarely over the center of the plate and he knew it; Dink Lasker knew it, and Stub Ossi knew it. But that didn't help matters.

"Oh my God!" shrilled Lasker. "Ain't nothing a strike?"

"Another word and the clubhouse for yours!" barked the umpire.

Manager Toots Barr appeared on the scene. He led the umpire aside; he explained as gently as his excited condition would permit that Dink Lasker was crazy and that what he said didn't count. Anyway, he was swearing at his catcher, not at the umpire. Then the manager went out on the diamond and preached to Dink Lasker, begged him not to talk but to pitch; pleaded with him, cursed him, coaxed him. Lasker fingered the ball stolidly. All right, he wouldn't talk, but it was a hell of a league where a man couldn't talk. Now on the desert——

The game was resumed. Walker took a long lead from first base. Now was the time to take chances: no use trying to bat in runs against a pitcher like this Dink Lasker.

"Throw to first!" roared Stub Ossi. Wham! the ball came flashing over the plate.

"Strike one!"

With the pitch Steve Walker made a dash for second base. Behind the plate Stub Ossi watched him. He knew that in such a place a catcher should do something, but throwing to second base was a trick he had never practiced on the desert. In the end he tossed the ball back to Lasker. "That's the way, old-timer! Strike one!"

Again Manager Toots Barr appeared on the scene. He explained with epithets, gestures and example that one of the duties of a catcher was to prevent the opposing team from running wild on the bases. Stub Ossi nodded silently. Now he knew.

Again, with the uncoiling of Dink Lasker's arm Walker made a dash, this time to third base. Whack! The ball thudded into Stub Ossi's glove. "Strike two!" roared the umpire, watching Walker streak to third base.

But Stub Ossi's mind was functioning now, functioning rapidly if incorrectly. He seized the ball and threw it high and gently to—the second baseman. That surprised ball player came running in to meet the throw and whipped it to third.

"Safe at third!" called the field umpire, as Walker reached the base standing up.

The crowd was wild. It peered, it groaned, it hooted. Manager Barr swore, danced, threatened. "Watch him!" he shouted to Stub Ossi. "He'll come running home on you. Tag him out!"

Ossi nodded again. His big ears flopped. He was mad clear through; whatever he did was wrong. And Dink Lasker was mad; he realized that Ossi had made some bad mistake.

"You double crosser!" he shrilled from the center of the diamond. "You rattler!"

"Shut up and pitch, you side-winder!" ordered Ossi.

Then the epithets flew between the two herders.

"Bergers!"

"Boregeros!"

"You muttering Basque!"

"You phoby skunk!"

"Pitch," roared Ossi, dancing up and down, his ears wabbling loosely. "See if you can pitch!"

Dink Lasker's long body coiled up; he peered angrily at Ossi over his shoulder. Just at that moment some jeering fan in

the grand stand shouted a devastatingly humorous remark at Stub Ossi:

"Say, you catcher, pin back your ears so we can see some of the ball game!"

That masterpiece of wit and the roars of laughter which followed it was too much for Stub Ossi. Down went his glove; he doubled his fists and whirled toward the grand stand, murder in his eyes.

Here was Dink Lasker's chance. He saw Stub Ossi's broad back—an easy target. He unsnapped; the ball shot through the air, over the plate and caught the belligerent catcher fairly in the middle of his well-filled pants.

"Strike three!" barked the umpire. The batter raced to first base as the ball bounded from Ossi's back toward the Terrier bench; Steve Walker ran home from third with the first run of the game.

There followed one of the riots for which Terrier Park is famous, only this time the fight was between members of the same team. Stub Ossi and Dink Lasker met each other halfway. Fists flew; one voice shrilled epithets while another roared replies. Around the two fighting herders danced the Terrier ball team, their manager and some of their supporters, all helpless to separate the furious combatants. It was resourceful Fred Banning, of course, who finally brought peace. "Ham 'n' eggs!" he shouted. "Ham 'n' eggs! Chuck! Chuck! Most time for ham 'n' eggs!"

The words seemed magical. Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi stopped fighting to listen. "Just finish the game," explained Banning, mentally giving devout thanks for the inspiration, "and we'll have the biggest plate of ham 'n' you ever saw!"

That settled the fight. Both ex-sheep-herders now had a common goal: to finish the game as quickly as possible and get their chuck. They still shouted epithets at each other; they still glared, but they played ball. Pitching for the promised ham and eggs, Dink Lasker struck out the next two men while the third weakly popped to the shortstop. The Panther on base stole second and third easily enough, but he scarcely dared steal home on a pitcher who threw with the speed of Dink Lasker. The run that Steve Walker brought home that inning on the missed third strike was the only one of the day for the Panthers.

Stub Ossi, hooted and jeered by the fans, had his chance to redeem himself in the eighth inning. Not for nothing had he practiced eleven years battling against the curves of Dink Lasker, compared to which the pitching of Wordy Wadsworth was nothing. Ossi rapped a sharp two-base hit to left field. That blow, delivered by the squat desert man with the saillike ears, seemed to unnerve the great Wadsworth. True, he struck out Dink Lasker, who merely stood at the plate staring at the ball. But the next three batters hit safely. Crafty old Wadsworth seemed to have lost his cunning; perhaps the strain of pitching against a gigantic, simple-minded iron man from the desert had worn him out. He walked another man, then muffed a bunt on a squeeze play. Before the inning was over the Panther pitcher walked dejectedly from the box, four runs already scored against him.

The game ended that way: Four runs for the Terriers, one for the Panthers. The first victory of the season! Howling fans demanded salutes from Dink Lasker; sport reporters crowded forward to interview him; photographers snapped pictures from all angles; small boys gazed worshipfully; Manager Toots Barr reached high in the air to pound his shoulders; Fred Banning, pale-lipped but smiling, trod the air with an "I-told-you-so!" expression on his thin face.

Stub Ossi broke in on the joyousness of the occasion. He had thought of a new epithet, the Mexican word for utter rascal, and he shouted it at Lasker: "Bah! Bribon!"

"Sheep stealer!" retorted Lasker, whirling in rage and advancing on Ossi. "You're a hell of a ball player! Tried to lose my ball game for me. I'm goin' to get a gun and shoot you to-night! 'Fore God I am!"

Manager Barr, Fred Banning and Sam Crossford wedged rapidly between the two men before they came to blows. "Let's have our ham 'n' eggs," Banning shouted. The words had their usual magical effect. The two ex-herders glared at each other and then turned rapidly toward the clubhouse.

Halfway there Dink Lasker stopped. "Most forgot Gyp," he explained striding back to the grand-stand basement.

"Hurry along for the chuck!" shouted Fred Banning. Then he threw an arm across the broad shoulders of Stub Ossi and spoke pacifying words.

In the clubhouse the reporters crowded

around Manager Toots Barr. "Where'd you get the bugs battery? Who are they? What's their history?"

"Never mind where they came from," retorted Barr, "but they're the greatest battery which ever hit organized baseball! Just leave it to old Toots Barr to pick up players when they're needed." The little freckle-faced manager smirked with self-satisfaction. A moment later he was serious again, in conference with Fred Banning.

"That battery already has earned ten thousand dollars for the Terrier owners," he said. "And they've kept me my job. Can't you see the headlines? 'Toots Barr Unearths Bugs Battery;' 'New Stars Bring Victory to Terriers.'" Suddenly he was glum. "But one game doesn't win the pennant," he mourned. "And who'll I pitch to-morrow?"

"Easy," retorted Banning. "You'll pitch a long-legged sheep-herder named Dink Lasker."

"Yeah," Barr scoffed. "Ruin him for good."

"Listen, Toots. That bird has pitched a full nine-inning game every day for eleven years on the desert. He'll be ready and r'arin' to go to-morrow. He'll be sore if he can't play. And he'll pitch just as well as he did to-day; maybe better."

"Can he do it?" queried Manager Barr peering up thoughtfully from the shoes he was unlacing. "Can he stand the gaff? That's what's worrying me. Golly, I'd like to pitch him and——"

"Then do it! Toots, you aren't dealing with an ordinary ball player now; you're dealing with an iron man who has pitched day after day for eleven years. Put him in there and——"

"Where's Dink?" It was Stub Ossi who interrupted. He was fully dressed in his gray suit and obviously anxious about his fellow herdsman. "Seen Dink anywhere around?"

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Banning, worry twisting his face again. "Last I saw of him was under the grand stand, looking for his dog. You don't suppose we've lost him, do you?"

"Go find him!" Toots Barr ordered. "I've got a lot to do. Call all the newspaper boys and tell 'em that Dink Lasker will pitch again to-morrow; then order every temporary stand we've got put up and the grounds made ready. Say, there'll be the biggest crowd in Terrier Park to-morrow that we've ever had and——"

But Fred Banning and Stub Ossi raced away. Both of them were worried to the point of sickness about the missing herdsman.

Under the grand stand, striding up and down in a search of every nook and corner, was Dink Lasker. In his hand he held the frayed end of a rope. His face was knotted with grief, his eyes childishly big with pain.

"Can't find Gyp," he mourned. "Heah Gyp, Gyp, Gyp! Heah! Can't find Gyp!" He stared at Fred Banning and Stub Ossi without really seeing them. "Heah Gyp! Come on, Gyp! Don't suppose some one has stolen my Gyp, do you?"

Banning looked for an immediate resumption of hostilities between Dink and Stub Ossi, but he was agreeably disappointed. Lasker was too stricken to feel anger and Ossi was softened by the sorrow of his fellow herdsman. The three men searched every section of the great concrete basement; they whistled, called, questioned the ground keepers. In vain; there was no Gyp.

Then, "I know where he is," suddenly shouted Stub Ossi, inspired. "He's with Basco, of course. Broke away and ran back to the hotel. The porter's keeping Basco and Yellowbelly Cat. Gyp beat it back there. Sure. That's it!"

"Think so?" questioned Dink Lasker. Already he was smiling. "I'll betcha you're right, Stub. Desert dogs are just like desert men, ain't they? Kinda stick together, huh, Stub?"

"You bet!" The thick arm of Stub Ossi went around the waist of Dink Lasker. "Say, Dink, you pitched a great game to-day. Sure you did."

"No better'n you caught," replied Dink graciously. "You're a swell catcher, Stub."

In the background Fred Banning grinned. But he didn't grin for the next half hour, when he trailed two rapid-striding desert men, one in a scanty baseball suit and the other without cap to conceal huge flapping ears, across the city to the hotel. Nor did he enjoy the attention which was given him as trailer of the two celebrities whom street urchins pointed out with shrill cries, "There he is! That's him! Both of 'em! The bugs battery!"

Gyp, fortunately, was at the hotel and jumped to meet his master. "There," said

Dink Lasker, "he's all right. Now let's have ham 'n' eggs!" And into the dining room he strode. The management didn't protest against his baseball suit; the value of the advertising was too evident.

"Anywhere you boys would like to go to-night?" asked Fred Banning at the table. "You've got to be in early because you're going to work to-morrow's game, and in the morning we'll want you to fool around with grounders and throwing to bases. But if there's anywhere you'd like to go——"

"I'd kinda like to see the place where they bring all the sheep," confessed Dink Lasker.

"The stockyards? It isn't any sight at night."

"I'd like to see it just the same. Sure I would. And I'd stay out until eight o'clock or so if you'd take me."

"The stockyards it is," conceded Banning, glad to be let off so easily. And the stockyards it was, but so obviously disappointing that Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi were content to return to their beds by the appointed hour of eight.

"Say, Mr. Banning," Stub Ossi said as he turned to bid the scout good night at his door, "me and Dink's been wondering about a little money. I heard Mr. Barr say we had earned ten thousand dollars to-day and I wondered if——"

"What do you want it for?" demanded Banning suspiciously.

"Oh, just to get some things we've been talking about." Ossi glanced slyly at Lasker out of the corner of his eye. "Just some things for back home."

"Sure that's all? Not railroad tickets, now, or——"

"Naw. Honest to God. Just some things Dink and me's been thinking about. Some things for Gyp and Basco, mebbe. Could we have——"

Fred Banning opened his pocketbook. In it was his last pay check and two hundred dollars in cash. "Here's six hundred dollars, boys, and I'm so darned pleased with you I'll turn it all over if you'll keep out of trouble. Barr hasn't fixed your salaries yet but I'll see that he calls this a bonus for to-day's game. All right? Good night and don't get into trouble!"

"Sure not," agreed Ossi and Lasker together.

They shut the door and immediately plunged into excited conference. They were still talking at midnight, when the early editions of the morning papers were shouted on the teeming streets. Those papers promised the Terrier ball fans the treat of their lives for the next day. They pictured Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi as supermen; described their origin in South America or India, according to the imagination and favorite country of the particular sports writer. Blazoned across the front pages were tributes to the "bugs battery;" photographs and fancied interviews with Lasker vied with thrilling descriptive adjectives; no words seemed adequate to tell the strange and brilliant performance of the two men from the wilds.

Yes, Terrier Park would be filled to overflowing the next afternoon, crowded with fans wild to see the great "bugs battery." But up in hotel room No. 208 two grotesque sheepmen knew nothing of the papers or the fans and cared nothing. Their brains were concerned only with a brilliant plan for the future.

IV.

At nine o'clock in the morning Toots Barr sent a bell boy up to call Dink Lasker and Stub Otti; by nine five a posse was searching for the two desert men. Yes, they had left, apparently without a word. But probably they were just looking around town; there was consolation in that thought. But not for long.

The night clerk, muddle-headed and sleepy, was roused from bed. "Sure," he said, "those two guys legged it downstairs about six o'clock. They cashed one of your checks, Mr. Banning, and told me to say 'Good-by' for them and——"

"Good-by?" echoed Fred Banning. "Oh my gosh! Then they *have* beat it! Boys, separate! Beat it to every station in town and see if they've taken a train. I'll have a talk with the police captain and he'll flash word to his men. Then get into your cars and comb the streets. Lord, it doesn't seem that two such funny-looking ginks as they are could keep out of sight long!"

But Banning was mistaken; the two herders were not found that morning. And in the afternoon, when a howling mob of fans in Terrier Park demanded the bugs battery, the bugs battery was still missing and Fred Banning, Sam Crossford and a dozen aids were searching every corner of the city, questioning every guard at the stations.

Manager Toots Barr, sick at heart and not much caring if the fans murdered him as they threatened, delayed the game for half an hour in the vain hope that Lasker and Ossi would appear, and then sent old Sid Pelham into the box. As it turned out, the fans got their money's worth. Pelham, ridden and goaded by the bleacherites, pitched as if his life depended on winning, as perhaps it did. Aided by flashy fielding and the desperate attack of his teammates, he was victor in a thrilling eleven-inning game by a four-three score. It was the second victory of the season for the Terriers, and, as it turned out, an inspiration which carried the other Terrier pitchers and their mates into a consistent winning streak which eventually landed the pennant.

At six o'clock Fred Banning picked up a baseball extra on a downtown corner, hoping that he would find in it some news of the desert battery; knowing he would not. Apathetically he noted the result of the game, then resumed his search for Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi.

"Make the rounds of all the road houses!" he ordered his taxi driver. "Can't believe those birds would go in for that stuff, but I've often found missing ball players in such places. And it's the last chance. Good Lord, they must have crawled away and died!"

Five hours later Fred Banning was braced forlornly in a pitching, swaying taxicab. All the road houses within a radius of twenty miles had been visited; at none was found a clew to the missing desert men. Now he was racing back to the city hoping that in his absence—— Well, just hoping, hoping. Suddenly he was pitched from his seat as the car jolted and swerved in a desperate effort to stop. He picked himself from the floor to hear the driver swearing roundly.

"What the devil you fellows mean by driving a bunch of sheep down the road at night without lights on 'em? What? Damned near killed me and my fare! You brainless wonders, what the——"

Sheep!

Fred Banning peered into the darkness. There they were, a blethering gray mass moving slowly down the road, driven and guided by two collies. Behind, mounted on two scrawny, about-to-die horses were—— Yes, of course, naturally enough, there was the unmistakable long-legged figure of Dink Lasker and beside him the barrel-built Stub Ossi.

Banning wanted to cry, wanted to laugh, wanted to sing and talk. Most of all he wanted to talk. He was piling over the sheep in an instant, beside Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi.

"Hello boys," he said, and marveled at the naturalness of his voice. "Out for a little exercise, eh?" That was tact, of course. And more would probably be necessary. "We missed you to-day. Where'd you get the live stock?"

The bass roar of Stub Ossi came through the gloom.

"Hello, Mr. Banning. All right, Basco, at 'em! Stop 'em, Basco! At the stockyards. We bought 'em, me and Dink, with the money you gave us. Then we got the horses—ain't as good as burros but there weren't no burros—and hired a couple of trucks to cart us out of the city. Yes, sir. They're our sheep, sixteen of 'em; two wethers and the rest yearlings. Me and Dink are wool growers now. Ain't herders no more. Wool growers."

"But of course you're still ball players," suggested Banning. "We want you to win to-morrow's game for us. You'll be back by then, of course."

"Naw, guess not," came the shrill contradiction of Dink Lasker. "We ain't going back no more, are we Stub? "

"Naw," agreed Ossi, "we ain't goin' back. We are wool growers now and we gotta get our sheep to the desert in a hurry. Yeah, we do."

"To the desert!" echoed Banning. "Say, that's two thousand miles away." Suddenly he had a bright idea. "Listen boys, if you'll come back we'll ship your sheep out West for you. We'll get 'em there quicker than you can drive 'em. And when the season's over we'll buy you a real herd, two or three hundred sheep. Let's run these into some farmer's field and you come back to the city with me."

"Naw!"—shrilly.

"Naw!"—a bass bellow.

There was a finality in the two negations which made Fred Banning wince; he felt as if he were bumping his head against a stone wall, trying to dent iron with a piece of velvet. But he must, absolutely must, get his bugs battery to the city.

"Listen boys," he began to plead, "haven't we treated you right? Ham 'n'

eggs"—he lingered over the magical words—"and anything else you want."

"Some fellow told me to pin back my ears," complained Stub Ossi. There was no sign of weakening in his complaint; it was merely to show Banning that the desert men, too, had grievances.

"They called me a bean pole and bugs," added Dink Lasker. "Come on Gyp! Out of it! Gyp! Drive 'em!"

"Wait a minute!" wailed Fred Banning. "I'll buy you a thousand sheep. And every one in town thinks you are the greatest ball players that ever——"

"All right, Basco! Ahead! Drive, Basco! Say, Dink, you've got Yellowbelly Cat, ain't you?"

"But—but——" sputtered Fred Banning, dodging the milling sheep as once he had dodged them on the desert.

"Ain't no use trying to get us back, Mr. Banning," Stub Ossi declared. "Listen to Gyp and Basco yelp! Just crazy happy because they're back with their sheep. And that's me and Dink, too. Say, Mr. Banning, if you ever get the smell of sheep in your nose, and the dust of 'em in your eyes and the blethering of 'em in your ears, say, it makes me and Dink almost bugs, too. S'long, Mr. Banning. Come out on the Mojave and see us some time. We won't be herders no more; we're wool growers."

Fred Banning stood in the road watching the pitifully little herd of sheep progress; listening to the yelp of the dogs in the clear night air; sensing the contentment of Dink Lasker and Stub Ossi. Maybe the herders weren't so foolish after all and——

Anyway sheep travel only seven miles a day, he reflected. He could catch the herders easily in the morning. And he'd bring along Toots Barr and a bunch of silver-tongued orators and coaxers to help him turn the bugs battery back to Terrier Park.

Banning thought of these things; but the underlying conviction was that no persuasion could counteract the yelp of the happy dogs, the helpless blethering of the sheep and their pungent odor on the night air. He turned in the darkness. Down the road he could faintly see the huddled gray flock and back of it two grotesque figures mounted on scarecrow horses. He waved his hand.

"Good-by, bugs battery!" he muttered as he turned toward the taxicab. "And maybe not so darned bugs after all!"

More stories by Mr. Marsh in future issues.

ANOTHER OIL-WELL DRAMA

JOHN HAYS HAMMOND, chairman of the Federal fact-finding coal commission, went against the most complicated and colossal job in the history of modern diplomacy when he undertook with his colleagues to make peace between the coal miners and operators and at the same time turn the trick so that coal would sell at a price pleasing to the dear public. But that is not all he does. Being one of the most obliging men in the world, he is forever being called on by people who want to make use of his name and fame as a mining engineer.

One day recently a friend of his from Virginia breezed into the Hammond home in Washington waving his hat in one hand and a bottle in the other. "Here, Jack!" he exploded. "I want you to help me! I'm about to be a millionaire—just like you! I've struck it rich on my farm. I've struck oil! Look here! Look at it!" He brandished the bottle under Hammond's nose. "There's a sample of it. Isn't that oil? Tell me. You're a mining engineer. Say! Haven't I struck it rich?"

Hammond modestly admitted that he couldn't analyze oil samples by looking into a glass bottle. "But I tell you what I'll do," he promised the future plutocrat. "I'll send your bottle, sample and all, up to New York and have it analyzed for you."

The shipment was made, and every day for a week afterward the impatient Virginian called on Hammond or telephoned him, inquiring what the analysis had showed. On the eighth day the report came by wire. Hammond read the telegram to his friend over the phone. It said:

"Find no trace of oil. Your friend has struck paregoric."

The Story Craigin Missed

By Holman Day

Author of "The Moon of Mischief," "Battling for Betty," Etc.

A story of the North Woods where Romance does not show herself—excepting to her friends.

IT was like lunching in a hot oven, between the penning walls of the Foxhole chasm that noonday, but Craigin's guide was minding the fire hazards of the July drought; furthermore, Fire Warden Zenas Teague had overtaken Craigin and his guide at Foxhole pull-out, on their way down from the north, and had something to say about the matter of a cook blaze under the trees.

Craigin was demanding his pannikin of hot tea, a thirst quencher approved in the woods.

"Wait till you get to Prophet Paul's ovens," commanded Teague, exulting in his authority.

It was necessary for all wayfarers to make a carry past the roaring torrent of the Foxhole.

Halfway down the carry road, which curved along the face of the granite cliff, the guide eased off the canoe he was carrying bottom up over his head. He shrugged his shoulders, chafed by the thwarts, and shook his head violently, scattering drops of sweat. Here and there, beside the path, were small fireplaces of heaped stones, ovens contrived by the solitary who dwelt at that spot in a hut stuck against the wall of the cliff like a sparrow's nest in a chimney. The guide busied himself at one of the ovens and Craigin sought shade but could not find it.

The sky was as unrelenting as hot brass and the air wavered and shimmered against the sun-scorched, perpendicular wall of stone; the inaccessible water which roared past the foot of the cliff merely tantalized thirst.

"Him up there—that's Prophet Paul—he built these ovens so folks would stop here for a snack and take some of the edge off'm his lonesomeness, so I reckon!" explained the guide, breaking fagots over his knee while Craigin impatiently waited for his draft. "He's a good old chap. He has talked many a woodsman out of bad habits!"

The city man was too nearly suffocated to be particularly interested in anything right then. But he squinted his eyes and peered up at the person who clung by his toes to the face of the cliff and was pounding a steel chisel with a mallet. How anything except a lizard could endure to flatten flesh and blood against the sizzling granite on a day like that was beyond Craigin's comprehension, as he surveyed with indifference the old man in rusty garb.

As a matter of fact, Craigin had settled into a state of general indifference regarding all matters in the North Woods.

He was a writer of fiction. He had come up there looking for plots and color. So far as he could discover, all the points of picturesqueness of the woods had been flattened out by modern practicality, just as the forest trails had been made into ugly and prosaic roads under the treadmills of steam log haulers.

Herds of stupid Polanders and Finns were sawing down trees and gobbling grub in camps. No plots were suggested by those stolid steers who made up most of the woods population. And all the forest aisles were placarded by warnings against fire, tree maiming and trespass; at every turn were posted game laws; there were curt notices that this or that stream was closed to fishing. Everything seemed to be tagged and ticketed. All creative enthusiasm was killed in him by the unutterable dullness of life up there, as he had observed it. He was hurrying home to New York in order to recover from the torpor into which he had been plunged.

The fire warden came toiling along under the glistening shell of his upturned canoe; he was no more interesting than some of the other hard-shelled bugs that were dragging themselves around over the rocks. He put off his shell and gave the old man on the cliff a lazy hail.

"I'll say as how one of your texts up there fits this dry spell damn' fine, Prophet Paul," the warden declared after a critical inspection.

Craigin looked in order to corroborate; he realized more fully how profound had been his apathy when he noted now, for the first time, that the man on the cliff had chiseled crudely many biblical texts into the granite.

"He has been at it all the years he has lived here," the warden told Craigin. "That one about fire is a good warning."

He pointed and the other read: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?"

"Better come down off'm your perch, Prophet!" Teague advised. "Else you'll get into the class of that crazy fellow who thought he had fresh fish for brains and didn't dare to stand out in the sun for fear the fish would get fried. Maybe it doesn't exactly fit your case, but it's my warning, anyway!"

It was merely another sample of the dull wit of the woods, as Craigin had experienced it, and he returned only an indifferent smile to the warden's grin.

The chiseler on the cliff paid no heed; he went on with his work.

Teague winked at Craigin; then he made circles with his forefinger at the side of his head. "They must be spinning in his nut —else he wouldn't spend all his time chopping out Bible texts. But I'll say this! Crazy or not, he can preach a helluva good funeral sermon. I heard him one time when a timber jack was killed by a jam in the Foxhole."

"Is he a parson—or was he, I mean?"

"Search *me!*" Teague tossed his arms and canted his head in a gesture of disavowal. "Nobody knows anything about him except that he has been here a long time—and minds his own business—and keeps darn still about what he did before he settled here. Hullo! There comes Boss Jimmie White of the Tulic Company! Reckon I'll have a chat with him about down-river news, if he's stopping for his snack."

He left Craigin and went to meet a stalwart young man who came up from the south and set his canoe off his shoulders.

The man who was seeking plots and color in the woods sipped his pannikin of tea and munched his sandwich, standing up. The rocks were too hot to provide a comfortable seat.

Craigin found the scene particularly and dismally dull, like all other affairs in the woods!

He beheld an old man in rusty garb chiseling a Bible text on a granite wall. Two other men. Teague and White, were mumbling what was apparently idle gossip while they dug food out of their duffel bags; Teague was asking what White had bumped up against in the city in the way of fun and business; the field boss, so it seemed from the questions and replies, had been on a visit to Tulic headquarters. He was telling about his promotion to be general manager of the Tulic operations in the North Country and was describing the new type of gasoline log haulers he had ordered.

The writer who had sought plots in the woods was further depressed; he found inexpressibly aggravating this gabble about new machinery which would further wreck the forest and its romance. He knocked out his tea leaves against a rock and tossed the pannikin to his guide. "Let's be hik-

ing, Baxter! I want to get out of this godforsaken stifle of body and spirits as soon as I can manage it."

Therefore Craigin hurried away with his guide down the carry road. He did not look back when the voices of men were raised a bit. He turned a corner of the cliff and was glad to see the placid water below the frothing Foxhole, promising an avenue along which he could hasten on his way toward the city where something really did happen once in a while! Possibly, at the end of about three more hours, Mr. Craigin would have revised his views regarding the prevailing staleness of North Country affairs.

II.

The voices rasped and were raised to a higher key.

"Even if you have been promoted, you ain't a big enough man to call me a liar, Jimmie White!" blustered Teague, leaping up and shaking his fist.

White was squatting beside his tea pail, in which he had brought water from the pool at the pull-out below. His face was creased deeply with malevolence, his eyes blazed. It was not mere anger of the moment; it was not a personal quarrel with the twaddling warden who daily lugged gossip on his rounds. It was the breaking out of furious fires which had been banked; there was plainly much behind the young man's flaming rage.

"I'm telling you my sister wouldn't be taking any such advantage of my being away, Teague! If you want to twist that remark into my calling you a liar, go ahead!"

"You're opening an argument now!" stated the fire warden, a bit mollified. "But your first crack was to call me a liar, straight from the shoulder!"

"I couldn't believe what you said. I don't believe it now. Your tongue is always wagging!" But White flung his hand against the tea pail which was bubbling on the fire and sent it reeling and splashing over the edge of the carry road; mere speech was not relieving his wrath. "Dorothy White deals squarer than that with her brother!"

The chisel of Prophet Paul came tinkling along the side of the cliff; he dropped his mallet, too. He began to clamber slowly down; the men below were too much absorbed in their own affair to pay any attention to the recluse.

"I supposed perhaps you were hurrying back to be at the wedding to-night," pursued Teague—but he declared it with an impish inflection.

"I'm not expected in Suncook for several days!" White, in his anger, was making an incautious admission. But he was finding this report so incredible! "I wrote to Dorothy, telling her I'd been held up in town. And you dare to stand there and tell me she's to be married this evening?"

"I do! Folks can't hide their plans for a wedding in Chesuncook village, can they? License applied for five days ago—about the day you left, wasn't it?" More of that bland and furtive taunt!

White leaped toward his canoe. "By the blue gods, we'll see whether there's to be a wedding or not!"

Teague made a leap of his own. He planted all his brawn on the canoe when White started to lift the craft.

"Just a minute, Jimmie!"

"Get off my canoe!"

"Put down your fist, Jimmie!" advised the big warden, himself a man never backward in a woods fight. "I'll have to lick you, boss or not, on top of the rest of the grief that seems to be troubling you!"

Prophet Paul had descended to a shelf of rock just over their heads. He intoned solemnly: "'A wise man feareth and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth, and is confident.'"

"A good text, Prophet!" cried Teague, and paid no further attention to the old man.

The warden put up a forefinger and wagged it at White. "Listen, Jimmie! You need right now a little fatherly advice from me, seeing as how your own father ain't on earth to give it to you. Ever since I've known you, you've acted like a damn' fool about your sister. She is too nice a girl to be kept under thumb the way you have held her."

"You infernal old hoot owl, do you think I'm going to stand here and let you preach at me?"

"Somebody ought to have done it a long time ago, Jimmie," declared Teague resolutely. "Even one of Prophet Paul's funeral sermons might have helped some."

The prophet above them quoted solemnly: "'He that is soon angry dealeth

foolishly; and a man of wicked devices is hated.'"

White glowered up at the man on the ledge. "This is no affair of yours, old fool!"

If the man below had been less angry he would have noted that the strange emotion now working in the hermit was showing itself to be no mere preaching meddlesomeness; there was no sign of lunacy in that earnest old face which the long white hair and beard made venerable.

"It is the business of anybody who wants you to stop making a ding-swingle jackass of yourself," insisted the unintimidated Teague. "You have beaten up half a dozen likely young chaps, just because they showed how much they admired your sister. And she has simply been pleasant and nice to everybody, making no choice and never gallivanting. And now she has picked a man any girl would be pleased and proud to catch."

"I told Frank Benson to keep away from my sister!" raged White.

"I reckon so! It has been your regular style. But what can you hold against a young fellow who owns a sawmill and a thousand acres of good timber? Tell me that!"

"It's a damnation insult!" raved White. "Sneaking over something behind my back!"

"Considering the stand you have taken all along, and judging you by your present state of mind, your sister and Benson are showing good judgment in not inviting you to the wedding—you'd fit about as well as a quill pig in a lady's pillow! Your sister loves Benson down to the ground! Everybody knows it! This will be a happy day for her if you don't go up there and spoil it by a devilish row!"

The heat of that cliff-walled oven beating on him! The flame in his breast! The hot fury which always had been roused when any man looked love at Dorothy! White had never been able to account to himself for the mad jealousy which tortured him. In his bitter shame he had tried to hide that unreasoning jealousy; but in his ire he kept showing it for all the world to see! Obliged to make his way with men by dint of force and fists, his passionate nature always threw off the fetters of self-control.

"You'd better stay here and cool off!" stated the fatuous Teague to the man who was already driven half mad by the oven's heat.

"Get off my canoe!"

Then from the prophet above on the ledge of the cliff! "'Many waters cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it.'"

A prating dotard on the cliff—an insolent meddler perched on the canoe!

The woods boss, as usual when he was opposed or taunted, gave full rein to his frenzy.

He kicked the complacent Teague full in the face with a hobnailed shoe.

The warden fell off the canoe and sprawled on his back, inert and unconscious.

The old man leaped down from the ledge and stood in front of White when the raging boss had lifted the canoe to his shoulders.

"You have murder in your heart! You shall not go!" The recluse flung up his arms.

The maddened White, wasting no time on this frail opponent, tipped down the point of the craft and tilted at the man in the path, knocking him flat. Stepping over the prostrate prophet, White snarled, "What business is it of yours, how many I kill to-day?" He rushed away.

The old man's head had flailed with a thud against the granite. After a few moments he rolled over and roused himself from his lethargy. Then he scrambled along to Teague and shook him into partial consciousness.

"Go after him! Stop him!" the prophet wailed. "He says it is no business of mine. God knows it's my business!"

The warden pulled himself up on his haunches. He wiped blood from his battered face with the flat of his hand and inspected the smear across his palm.

"I say you must go—stop him!" adjured the old man, beating his fists on the warden's back.

"I'm going, going all right enough!" growled Teague. "I'm going down river and swear out a warrant! I'll have Jimmie White behind the bars for doing this to me!"

"I know his nature! He's headed north to kill! He must be stopped. They must be warned!"

Teague got upon his feet and staggered weakly. "You talk like a fool! Me over-

take Jimmie White, by paddling? It can't be done. And I couldn't do anything sensible with a man of his stripe, even if I did overtake him, unless I killed him first and talked to him later through a spirit medium!"

With the same indifference shown by White, the warden pushed the recluse out of the way, got the canoe on his shoulders, after a tussle with it, and departed with a slumping gait down the carry road.

Prophet Paul divided despairing glances between the two men while they remained in sight—the mad-brained meddler rushing north, the surly warden departing with his slow stride to invoke the slower aid of the law.

The hermit's countenance revealed emotions deeper than the apprehension of a mere, mediating outsider.

He was agonized by the imminence of tragedy.

He gazed up into the inverted caldron of the blistering sky. "God, Almighty God, Thou hast comforted me here in my lonely life! Give me Thine aid this day so that the son may not do even more evil than the father before him!"

However, the prophet manifestly was not leaving all the task to Divine interference; he prudently secured from his hut a revolver before he started to climb the mountain. The trail which he took led to the Holeb fire station on the granite peak. The path was ledgy and steep and skirted dangerous depths. There were iron ladders fastened against certain sheer cliffs; the rungs blistered his hands; but he persevered; he made all possible haste.

He was nearly spent when he stumbled across the little plateau on which was perched the lookout tower.

Lute Spencer, hired by the Tulic Company for this private station, sat on the ground in the shade of the tower, wholly absorbed by a story in a tattered magazine. He blinked stupidly at the old man when the latter wavered weakly on his legs, wholly out of breath and half fainting, stuttering meaningless words and making frantic motions.

At last Spencer understood.

"The hell I will!" he blurted, after a pig grunt of obstinacy; he settled back against the wall of the tower. "Report Boss Jimmie White on a rampage? Nothing doing, Prophet!"

"You shall do it!"

"Look a' here! He has been made general manager of the Tulic field work. News was helioed to me two days ago from our station on Squaw. Do you think for a minute I'm laying out to get fired from a good job?"

"He means to kill Frank Benson!"

"Because Sister Dorothy is all set to marry Benson, eh? Well, that news was helioed to me, too! I can't bother with your message. This station is used to report fires! It don't mess up in gossip," he added with scant regard for consistency in his various statements. "I'm letting family fights alone, understand?"

"*I* understand! But it is something *you* don't understand! Yet all men know what *this* means!" The hermit pulled out a revolver. "You will helio to Squaw so that the warning may be relayed to Chesuncook village." Spencer did not move. "I say you will do it!" repeated the prophet with menace. He fired and the bullet chipped the ledge at Spencer's feet. "By Almighty God, I swear you will limp to the job with the next bullet in your leg!"

Plainly, the frightened Spencer was convinced that he was in the presence and power of a lunatic; there had never been absolute confidence, in the region, regarding the sanity of the strange hermit at Foxhole. Furthermore, the heat of that sun might well addle the brains of any man who had been exposed to it!

Spencer scrambled up, muttering; when he entered the station the old man followed closely, his weapon in his hand.

They climbed the ladder which led to the platform where the heliograph instrument was located, Spencer leading the way. He had resigned himself to obey the vagaries of this lunatic; it was in the back of the lookout's head that he could countermand the message a bit later and square himself by an explanation which would avert White's vengeance.

Spencer pulled the swathing covers from the instrument and set his hand on the key of the heliograph mirror.

Swinging on a cord from a brace of the heliograph's support was a sheet of cardboard in a frame; on the card was printed the Morse code of dots and dashes.

The prophet, standing at Spencer's back, reached and yanked at the framed card, breaking the cord. "I will dictate the mes-

sage. I will check up by watching your hands. If you muddle the dots and dashes, Spencer, I'll most certainly bore your leg with a bullet."

That system made slow work of it, when the Squaw lookout had flashed his signal of attention.

"And add for your own sake," directed the hermit, after the message of warning had been mastered and the O. K. from Squaw received, "that unless the man on Squaw faithfully relays every word, your life is in danger."

The alarmed Spencer attended to that injunction with an alacrity not concerned with the interests of the others. "Benson will get the word that White is coming! You needn't worry about it," he informed Paul. "Watch the flashes! Squaw is letting us in by a reflecting mirror."

The old man, holding to a safely tactical distance from Spencer, menaced with his weapon and studied the card—and was assured.

Then he teamed Spencer back down the ladder and out of doors. Keeping his gun in his hand, he sat down with the lookout, both of them in the shade. "You may go on with your reading, sir! I'm staying here for a time, to make sure of your good faith."

"You have jacked me out of my job—that's what you've done!" blustered the Tulic man, his crafty plans spoiled. "What the blazes do you care what happens to Benson or White or his sister?"

"That's my affair!" returned the recluse with stiff dignity. "It is not to be talked about. Nor do I care to have any more talk of any sort with you. That's why you'd better go on with your reading."

An hour of silence followed; then the old man rose. "I thank you for a service, though it was granted unwillingly. I will tell James White how I forced you to obey me. Good day to you, my friend!" He walked with dragging gait to the edge of the cliff and clambered down out of Spencer's sight.

The latter looked back in his magazine to discover the name of the author of the story he was reading. Ordinarily Spencer did not interest himself in an author's name. "I've got a good mind to drop you a post card, Mister David Dewolf Craigin, whoever you be!" declared Spencer, talking aloud after the fashion of persons who live alone. "It looks like you might get a plot for a whole book up this way."

Then the lookout went up into the tower and helioed to Squaw, asking for news. Squaw's mirror winked back Chesuncook's report: "Benson and Dorothy White, not waiting for any marriage ceremony, had started down river in a canoe."

"That's their best play," Spencer told himself. "Benson knows how! All he's got to do is to figure on the time Jimmie White is probably making, hide along the way in one of the dead-water logans, let Jimmie thrash past and then hustle down river to a parson. He'll be doing that because there ain't anything sensible to do except that!"

It was a natural conclusion; Spencer knew the region and the barriers which it opposed to flight except by the waterways.

The old recluse of the Foxhole had his own wisdom in the matter, too. He scrambled down the side of the mountain and toiled up the carry road to the pull-out place above the wild water. He waited until a canoe came sweeping around the bend of the river. It was Benson's; the fugitive was paddling with all his strength; he had a passenger in the bow.

Prophet Paul broke from a sapling a green branch and stood at the water's edge and waved the leafy bough as a signal of amity.

"I sent the warning!" he called when Benson swung the canoe and headed toward the shore.

The old man extended his trembling hands to the girl when Benson drove the craft's prow far up on the shelving shingle. Strange emotion was ridged in the prophet's seamed face; in his deeply set eyes glowed queer fires. A convulsion of the muscles shook him when he steadied the girl as she stepped from the canoe.

"You have time——" he began, looking past her to Benson who had leaped into the water and was lifting the craft.

"Time! We haven't a second to spare!" cried Benson, shouldering the canoe and striding ashore. "White is following us close behind, I'm certain! We overtook some Tulic bateaumen before we sidetracked the canoe in a logan. I saw them too late! I simply had to hurry along past them! They have met White and told him, of course!" He spoke from under the canoe while he was hurrying to the carry road.

"Come, Dorothy, dear! We must make our best try for it!"

"With all the strength that's in me, Frank!" she promised. "Until we are married—until Jimmie can be reasoned out of this madness—you and he must not meet."

"Yes! I'd rather keep on as I am, playing this part of a coward," he told her bitterly. "I can't harm your brother! And God knows I want to stay alive for your sake!"

They were walking out of earshot of the old man.

He peered under his hand. The river above was clear of any craft.

He hurried and overtook the couple. They did not halt nor did he ask them to stop. He ran ahead of Benson and went on, his head turned back over his shoulder.

"I am an ordained minister of the gospel, sir! You have your legal papers, as I have heard to-day. I suggest a strange thing! But if you are a husband you have the right to protect your wife against all the villainy of men, even to the shedding of unworthy blood! I will marry you one to the other as we go on. Come forward, Dorothy White!" he summoned. "Walk beside this man whom you have chosen!"

She obeyed. In that exigency, realizing the full value of the old man's suggestion, neither Benson nor the girl offered any word against the plan.

Therefore, in suchwise, a man and a woman were married in the strangest fashion ever known even in the North Country where the ways are not the ways of the rest of the world!

"'What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder,'" said Prophet Paul, choking over the words.

While Benson walked on, blinking tears from his eyes, the recluse asked the wife to take the legal papers from the pockets of Benson; the latter's hands were needed for the balancing of the canoe. Dorothy obeyed.

With a bit of a pencil, using his knee for a support, the prophet scrawled his certification in the blank provided. The couple had not halted. He stumbled along after them and thrust the papers into the girl's hand.

"God go with you and extend over you His mercy and His protection."

He turned abruptly and hastened back to the pull-out place. He was none too soon.

Standing in his canoe and digging deeply his paddle into the frothing water, came White.

Prophet Paul stood on the shore, the only figure in sight. The newly wedded couple had disappeared around the curve of the carry path.

"You shall not land on this shore! You shall not pass!" shouted the defender of the way of retreat.

When White drove his craft doggedly and insolently on, the man on the shore fired; it was a shot of warning and spat into the water at one side of the canoe.

White whipped out his own weapon and replied with a shot plainly intended to kill or maim. But the unsteady canoe was moving and Paul had hastily made a tree his shield.

"I can kill you, where you are, out there in the open, James White! You know it! And I will kill you, as I'd shoot a mad dog, if you try to pass!"

White emptied his revolver; the bullets kicked bits of bark out of the tree behind which the old man stood.

"'What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder!'" muttered the defender. He stepped out and sent a bullet shrilling past White's ear. Then the old man shrieked words which caused the pursuer to heed and halt.

"There's devil's blood in you, James White! It's the blood of a hell renegade, your father! Make one more move toward the shore where I stand and that blood will poison this river, from the hole I'll drill in you. Go! Go quick! As I think of the evil blood of your father I have hard work to keep my finger off the trigger."

The shore was closed to White, that was plain! His quarry was on the way to the put-in pool below the Foxhole. He dipped his paddle, spun the canoe around and started for the jaws of the chasm where the white torrent roared over the jagged ledges.

The man on the shore opened his mouth and then he set his lips in a grim line. He had lived long years beside the gorge. No man had ever run the Foxhole in a canoe. He had preached four funeral sermons over victims who had been ground by the slavering ledge teeth of the roaring demon of waters. This surely was suicide! But the

hermit kept back speech, narrowed his eyes and gazed on the adventure like one who was willing to have Fate deal vengeance to the son of a man for whom the prophet had expressed his hatred.

Once again the old man hurried up to the elevation of the carry road, this time to be present at death, not marriage, as his judgment told him.

King of rivermen though he was, Jimmie White could not hope to prevail over the unconquered Foxhole!

The observer trotted along, peering down into the frothing torrent.

Out of the smother of the first leap which the river made into the gorge, White appeared. He was overboard, clinging to the thwarts of the canoe which was canted on its side. The deep water, halted by damming ledges below, seethed in slow eddies and White took advantage of them. He worked his way to the end of his canoe, after he had raised and tipped it to dump out some of the water; he forced down the end like a seesaw, got astride and floundered into the craft. His paddle had been secured to his wrist by a thong. He kneeled in the canoe and steadied it ready for the rush of the water below.

As one who knew all the conditions and moods of the Foxhole during the succession of the seasons, Prophet Paul understood that White had a certain advantage in this period of the drought. The river was low; the Foxhole was obliged to show its most dangerous fangs; such exposure rid the place of some of the hidden dangers. But there were plenty of perils ahead of the adventurer whose plain and desperate intention was to intercept the fugitives at the put-in pool.

The hermit, spurring his energies with a desperation of his own, overtook husband and wife while White was negotiating the murderous falls known as The Devil's Corkscrew.

"I kept him from landing!" panted Paul. "The man has gone mad! And a madman may do what another man cannot!"

"We must reckon on his getting through," said Benson; he set down the canoe and looked up hopelessly at the walls of the chasm. Then his gaze turned to the river. "Look! He has made the Corkscrew!"

Riding on galloping surges which flaunted white manes, the canoe, still upright, disappeared around an outthrusting of the cliff.

"Dorothy, terrible as it will be, I must meet your brother!" declared the husband. "If he wins through he will come rushing back up this path."

The girl shuddered; she, too, found the prospect hopeless. They were hemmed by river and cliffs; Benson was too exhausted to attempt retreat by the way that led to the north.

"You must wait here, my dear wife," commanded the husband. "There's no other way for it—I must go forward alone."

"More of fury—more of force!" declared Prophet Paul. "Up yonder I tried it on my own account. I have only driven a man to utter lunacy and have made matters worse. Fists and bullets cannot give you peace, Frank Benson! This affair shall be settled in another way. You must remain here with your wife. I shall go alone to James White."

The hermit was carrying his revolver in his hand. He flung it far out into the roily flood of the river.

"Good heavens, you foolish old man!" gasped Benson. "You have thrown away the only chance of getting the better of that lunatic."

"I am not going down there to fight against that man's body, which is stronger than mine! I have tried it and failed. I shall conquer his soul! And only when that has been done can you have peace, now and hereafter."

He started away down the carry road.

Benson made a move to follow; his wife caught his arm and restrained him.

"This is only more lunacy!" Benson declared. "They have always said his wits are shattered! Now he proves it!"

"No, Frank! There is some strange force in that man's eyes! It has thrilled me to the depths of my being! I don't understand! It must be that he sees more clearly than we do! What he said about my brother proves it! Jimmie's soul must be conquered! And how can peace for any of us be won by bloodshed?"

"But what other way is there?" demanded Benson. In his agony of doubts he shouted after Paul. The old man halted and turned to face the couple.

"I cannot let you go alone on my affair!" cried the husband. "You are too old —too weak! If White comes out of the

Foxhole alive, how can you hope to stand up against him?"

"My weapon is The Truth! With it I will fight conscience and a man's soul! With the help of Almighty God I shall prevail!" The hermit strode out of sight.

"There you have it! Only folly!" mourned Benson.

"No! I say it again, Frank! That old man, whoever he may be, has a power which you have not, in this case! I know it! You must stay here with me, as he commanded."

He sat down weakly on the upturned canoe.

She sought to divert his thoughts from what threatened in the gorge below. "Who is that old man? What have you heard about him?"

"Only that he came here many years ago. He has never talked about himself."

She plucked the papers from his breast pocket; she had put them back there after the recluse had signed his name. She read that name aloud. "David Wayne, ordained minister of the gospel."

"That is more than he has ever revealed to anybody else, I'm sure," stated Benson. "But it means nothing to me."

"Nor to me, of course!" She replaced the papers in his pocket; he would not lift his listless hands to take them. "But I believe in that old man's honesty. I know we are truly married!" She kneeled beside him. "Take me in your arms, my husband! And we'll wait here together."

III.

Around and around in the giant eddy at the foot of the Foxhole drifted White. With arms flung over the wreck of his canoe he was supported so that his face was barely above the brown flood. The face had been battered by the ledges; he was only partially conscious; more by instinct than by will he held to his clutch on the wreck. Once in a while he made a spasmodic effort with his legs to thrust himself out of the tug of the eddy. He had not strength enough to persevere.

Prophet Paul came down to the edge of the pool and gazed at the man who swung in a circle in this slow carrousel of flotsam from the gorge. In the tangled débris was a timber-jack's pike pole. The old man waded out and secured it when it drifted within reach. Up to his shoulders in the torpid flood he waited. After several efforts he managed to twist the screw point of the pole into White's shirt and carefully drew him into shoal water. By using all his strength Paul dragged the victim upon the beach and set about resuscitating him; but first the hermit pulled White's gun from its holster and threw it out into the pool.

A few minutes later the two men sat on the shore, facing each other.

With solemn gaze the old man inspected the young man. No longer was the advantage on the side of youthful vigor. White's strength was sapped; he crouched, arms limp, bruised in body, too weak to lift himself to his feet.

The man whom the rivermen knew as Prophet Paul was transformed at that moment from the humble recluse into a figure of commanding dignity and compelling authority. His long white hair and beard framed a countenance at which the young man blinked wonderingly, finding it new and strange. Not now could any man, gazing on that face, think or intimate that the hermit of the Foxhole was afflicted with wandering wits. He spoke with the manner and the diction of one who had swayed minds from the pulpit.

"James White, I did not allow you to die out there in your weakness. As we sit here now, I am the better man in the matter of muscle. But you will get back your strength of youth very soon. I have not saved you from death to renew the fight of body against body. But I'm going to strike hard at your soul of a man!"

He went on, after an impressive pause.

"Only a little while ago I spoke to you of your father. I had made my vow never to open my lips on that matter. I do it now in a crisis where justice forces me to speak.

"Your father stole from me my wife. She carried away our baby girl. She mothered you—the infant your father took from your true mother. And now you can understand better what has meant the insane jealousy with which you have been struggling through life!"

"Why didn't my father tell me?" muttered White, wagging his head stupidly in his weakness.

"He had no virtues in him," retorted the hermit sternly. "But perhaps he did have some sense of shame about exposing to his son such villainy! Though I was a min-

ister of God's gospel," he went on bitterly, "I followed them into these woods—to kill that man. But while I waited for my opportunity, the woods breathed honesty into me! And I have kept on living here to be near my daughter and to continue in the presence of that everlasting honesty which God has put into His out of doors, if man will only perceive it. Now, by that God Whom I have named, the son shall not repeat the crime of the father—theft of a woman from a man who loves her!"

"But if Dorothy is not my sister, I have a right to love her!"

"She is my daughter, James White! Rather than let her mate with you, a man who plainly has in him the devil's nature of Aaron White, I will tell all the story to my girl—though I have vowed an everlasting silence for the sake of her peace of mind—that she may still honor a mother whom Death has purified! James White, is your soul still battling against righteousness?"

"How can I give her up when I love her so?"

The old man rose. He struck his fists together above his head. He was fairly transfigured; he denounced with the eloquence which was a part of his calling. "Damn you for a cowardly whine like that—and may God forgive the oath! How much have I given up, James White? The companionship of my daughter! The blessed satisfaction of having her look love at me and call me father! I shall go alone to my grave in a cavern in those cliffs—and she shall never know. Clean the blackness from your soul, son of Aaron White! You shall do penance for his sin! For, hark ye! I have married this day Frank and Dorothy, one to the other! For you it is no longer a matter of a man's way with a maid! She has chosen well her man and to him shall she cleave, her father blessing her choice. By the Lord on high, you, the son of Aaron, shall not covet another man's wife! I am fighting for the happiness of my child. I have said I would not use force. But if I have not yet beaten down into the dust your unregenerate soul, I will go back to the means you better understand!"

He picked up the pike pole with which he had brought White to the shore. He poised it like a lance, its steel point close to White's breast. "That which saved your life shall take it, James White!"

The man who crouched on the shore made a feeble effort to crawl away from the menacing weapon but his strength failed him. He put his hands to the battered face and wept with the abandon of a child.

There was a veritable majesty in the demeanor of the old man as he straightened in the consciousness of victory won. Then he lowered the lance—he dropped it on the ground.

Sympathy replaced the hard lines in his countenance. He kneeled beside White and put an arm about the young man's heaving shoulders. "It's proving a tough tussle for both of us, my boy!" Now the recluse was gentle, soothing with homely speech—a comforting old saint, dealing with the stricken youth in the spirit of loving kindness. "If the folks who start out to do wrong in this world would only stop a minute and think on what other poor creatures who come after them will have to suffer on account of that wrong—life would be less of a dreadful muddle! Come! Let me give you my hands to help you up!"

The hermit insisted until White stood on his feet.

"You have been through hell and close to the gates of death to-day, Jimmie! And now, at last, you're more of a man—*aren't* you?"

"I hope so—I believe so!"

"Then grasp my hand in the spirit of the new man that you are! It's our pledge! Everlasting silence! Dorothy must never know!"

"It's only a square deal for her! She's a good girl! I have paid my father's money debts—it's up to me to pay this one!" declared White with convincing sincerity. "My God, how I have shamed her and myself this day! Her wedding day! It will always be remembered that her brother—for I must keep on being her brother——" His voice failed him.

The old man called a warning word to White.

A half dozen canoes came frothing toward the pull-out; the paddlers were hurrying with might and main.

Fire Warden Teague was first on shore and the other men followed him.

Teague halted and surveyed White's bruised countenance with interest, ire, and satisfaction, all displayed in a series of shifting expressions. "Huh! Got yours some way, did you?"

"I don't want to talk about it," said White.

"And I haven't got time to talk about it," said the warden. "There's a fire reported on the Hazlitt lot! I have turned back with the boys. I'll settle later with you, Mr. Jimmie White!"

The hermit whispered quick words to the Tulic boss.

White stumbled after the departing warden and grabbed the latter's arm. "Help me along, Zene! I'll be able to keep up with you! Bear a hand. Please! I have a reason."

The warden plainly did not relish this companionship, considering the status of affairs between the two, but apparently he could perceive a reason in the natural desire of the Tulic manager to get to a woods fire. He pulled White along.

The recluse scrambled ahead of the hurrying men.

He was in the van when the party came full tilt around the turn of the carry road, in sight of the place where Benson and the girl were waiting. The two rose and confronted the new arrivals and were amazed and apprehensive.

"It's for the sake of James White—and the new soul that's in him," murmured Prophet Paul, reassuring the couple. "I have promised him—so another and a happier word may be carried north by these men to clear away all ill talk!"

He whirled about and raised his arms.

"Wait, you men! There's to be a wedding!" he proclaimed.

"Jeemro Hezekiah!" squalled the fire warden, struggling to get out of White's clutch. "Do you think we're going to hold up here for a wedding when——"

But White clapped his palm over Teague's mouth.

The astounded men of the warden's party set down their canoes.

In those surroundings, with wedding guests who shuffled their feet against the ledges, impatient to be on their way toward duty, Benson and Dorothy were married for the second time that day. As they gazed on White's contrition they understood better the prophet's tactics.

Once again, solemnly and with a meaning that struck to James White's heart, the old man intoned. "'What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.'"

White turned from his handshake with Benson, after tenderly embracing Dorothy. The woods boss knew his region! "Men, spread the news that Jimmie White is almighty glad to have his sister married to a man like Frank Benson. I thank you for holding up here, as you've done. Now come on! We'll fight that fire!"

The men went tramping up the carry road.

"Do not ask me to explain," pleaded the recluse when Benson put questions. "I found the decent man in James White, that's all! Go on your way toward peace!"

He helped Benson to shoulder the canoe. The wedded twain departed, headed toward the city and their honeymoon.

The girl kept looking back at the lone figure standing in the carry road. Her eyes showed the doubts and the bewilderment which struggled in her.

"There must be a strange story in that old man's life, Frank! David Wayne! It's a good name. Perhaps I have heard it before. It seems almost as if I had!"

Then she turned her face to the front and beheld the smooth waterway below the riot of the thunderous falls. The river promised a placid journey from that place on! She gazed down on the churned waters of the Foxhole and found a comforting augury in the calm river beyond.

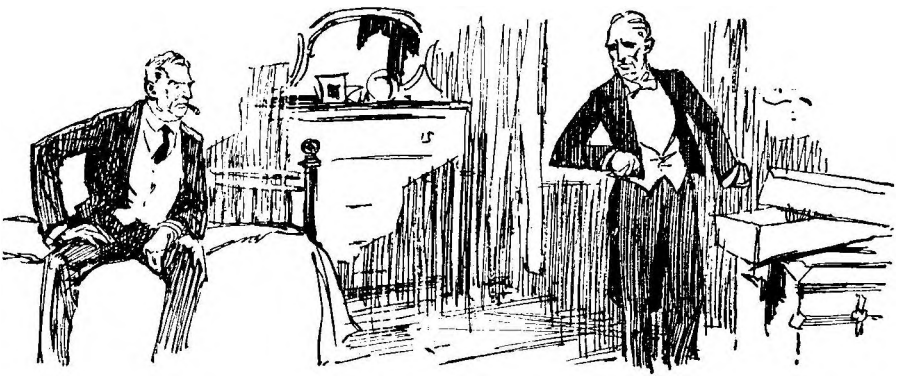
Passing Prophet Paul's hut, Teague drew White's attention in comradely fashion to the texts on the cliff. "And that's a helluva good one, Jimmie, for a dry time! 'Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?'"

"Yes, it is a good text, Zene!" admitted White. Then he set his lips tightly and hurried on.

A little later David Wayne, minister of the gospel, stood at the foot of the cliff and gazed up at that text through tears. He said in faltering tones: "Speaking to You, God, speaking as a poor, puzzled human father to the Father of all—I hope I have done right in keeping myself and all the rest of it from my good girl, forever!"

He struggled up the steep slope to his hut, went in and shut the door.

More stories by Holman Day in early issues.



To Every Dog His Day

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "Bill Stuart—Fighting Man," "The Country of Strong Men," Etc.

You have heard of the cat that came back. This is the story of "The Dog" that came back, in the nick of time, to those inimitable old reprobates, "Skookum Bill" Hutchins and Sam Dobbs. The Dog was just a stray piece of property, forty miles from nowhere, alleged to be a silver mine. It belonged to Bill and Sam by right of discovery and numerous innocent perjuries. It hadn't any kind of pedigree and mighty few points, and the partners didn't know, themselves, why they kept it in leash. But they did. And in the end they had no cause of regret. We may not have another opportunity of addressing you on the subject of this really superb contribution to the literature of humor and adventure, and so we offer you our congratulations now. We congratulate you because, as you start this story, you are opening the door that leads to one of the best and funniest experiences you ever had in your life.—THE EDITOR.

(*A* ***Complete*** *Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THE SILVER DOG.

"SKOOKUM BILL" HUTCHINS and his partner old Sam Dobbs were placer men, first, last, and most of the time between. They sought placer gold in country that had been prospected and in country that had not, with a preference for the latter. Sometimes they were afoot and sometimes they had pack horses; but their favorite means of transport in a country which had navigable or near-navigable waterways was a slim, sixteen-foot Peterboro' canoe. It was their headquarters and base of supplies. When navigable water failed they cached it and went inland, packs on backs, following nameless creeks lost among equally nameless hills.

Truth to tell, their ceaseless quest had profited them little in the years. Now and then they had struck rich pay dirt, but never in quantity. It had never been their luck to find a large placer field—to sit tight on "discovery," and watch late comers scramble for what was left. The day of the big placers of the North, such as Wild Horse, the Cariboo, the Fraser Bars and the Yukon seemed to be over. But gold, placer or in place, has the habit of confounding all theories, geological, mineralogical, and even logical, by being where it is found. So they never abandoned hope. Indeed, old Dobbs held the interesting

theory that the longer they played in hard luck the closer they were to a change of it. But Bill did not theorize. Bill was a low-brow. He was a big, handsome brute, possessed of phenomenal strength, endurance, and ferocious reckless courage on occasion; but his mental activities did not keep pace with his physical. He had seen enough of all kinds of prospecting to believe that luck has played the greater part in most original discoveries; and his belief in his own luck and his partner's was that both were consistently rotten and likely to remain so or to get worse. He had developed the grimly scornful pessimism of the man who has never got the breaks of the game.

Now, though Bill and Sam were placer men as has been said, during a boom that resulted in a myriad of silver-lead wildcats in which much good Eastern money was sunk, they had so far fallen from grace as to prospect for these lesser metals. With the result that they had staked several claims, and one in particular, a showing of silver-lead ore.

"We want," said Dobbs when they came down to record, "to call her the 'Sheen Darjaw.'"

"The 'Sheeny'—what? the mining recorder asked.

"Not 'Sheeny'—'Sheen,'" Dobbs corrected.

"How do you spell it?" the puzzled official asked.

"We don't," Dobbs admitted, "but we thought you could."

"Does it mean anything?" the recorder asked. He was accustomed to freak names, but this beat him.

"Sure it does," said Dobbs. "Old Joe Laviolette come along when we'd found her, and when we was sorter stuck for a name he says to call her the 'Sheen Darjaw.' He couldn't spell it, because he can't spell nothin'. But he says it's French for 'Silver Dog.'"

"Why don't you call it that?" the recorder suggested.

"The other sounds more classier," Dobbs maintained.

So after consultation with dictionaries the mineral claim "Le Chien d'Argent" was duly recorded in the names of William Hutchins and Samuel Dobbs. But they both referred to it as "The Dog."

The Dog was high in the hills, nearly forty miles from anywhere; and it was unlikely that "anywhere" would ever approach it more closely. There was no road within twenty miles of it, and not even a pack trail. It was the haunt of mountain goats, whistlers and ptarmigan. It came up for air for three months in the year and was buried in snow the other nine. But the partners, though they let other claims go by default, clung to it—they themselves could not have told why.

The continued possession of a mineral claim before the grant thereof involves the performance of a certain amount of development work annually—or at least an affidavit that such work has been done. The partners preferred this latter and lesser evil. They had never visited the claim since they had recorded it, and the sole work on it was their original prospect hole. But they made their affidavit annually without twinges of conscience; an affidavit, as those who know most about it are aware, being a handy legal device to bridge the gap between the sad fact and the fact as it is sought to be established, which is sometimes a yawning one. Between affidavits the partners seldom thought of the claim, save when occasionally as a matter of honor they entered verbal contests with other claim owners as to the potential value of their respective possessions. The gentleman with a passion for accuracy who defined a mine as a hole in the ground owned by a liar, quite failed to do justice to the Silver Dog. It was not even a hole; and it was owned by two liars. Bill was a good rough-and-ready performer; but old Sam Dobbs was a finished artist.

The partners, after a wild boom petered out and Eastern investors got back a measure of sanity but no money, never really hoped to sell The Dog; because in their opinion any one who would be willing to buy it would also be under the restraining influence of a keeper. And so they were amazed, incredulous and suspicious when some years later they received an offer for it.

They had come back to the Portage to refit and regrubstake after some months in the field. Their summer had been fairly profitable as they reckoned profits. That is, they had struck pay dirt on a small, obscure creek, and by hard work they had cleaned up nearly eighteen hundred dollars. The worst of it was that the pay seemed to be confined to one spot that looked like

an old eddy of the creek but was now dry, with a few feet of sand and gravel over bed rock. The rest of the creek didn't pan more than colors. They worked out the old eddy, and through their grub—and, what was more important, their tobacco—simultaneously, and came down to the Portage, gaunt and hungry and fly bitten, and with a most enviable thirst. Contrary to their custom, however, they did not go on an extended spree, though they took steps to assuage the thirst aforesaid.

"There's a winter comin', Bill," said old Dobbs with an owlish wisdom superinduced by overproof rum, "and we don't want to blow all our stake now. Maybe we can get more before she freezes up, and then we'll go to the outside where we can get some action on our stack. It'd be foolish to waste our substance on the poor grade of riotous livin' there is here." When sufficiently inebriated Dobbs' speech showed the effect of excellent early training quite forgotten at other times. "To have fun on the outside," he continued sagely, "we got to have money. So we better go easy now. We don't want to be caught like them Foolish Virgins."

"What did they catch 'em at?" Bill asked with interest.

"I'm shocked at you, Bill," his partner reproved him solemnly. "Where do you expect to go to? Didn't you never hear tell of the Wise Virgins?"

"No," said Bill, "and I thought you said they was foolish."

"There was two sets of 'em," Dobbs explained; "foolish and wise. And we'll be wise."

"You're some wise guy!" was Bill's justifiable comment. "But if you mean you want to save up for a good bust this winter I'll go you. When we finish what hooch we've got we're off it till we come in again. That suit you?"

" 'S what I been tellin' you," said Dobbs. And on the heels of this praiseworthy arrangement came one Ambrose J. Duffy, a mining man who had been cruising in the vicinity. Duffy met Dobbs in the company's store, evinced interest in The Dog, and desired to know its price.

"He's crazy," said Bill when Dobbs told him.

"If he's crazy enough he might buy her," Dobbs returned.

"Did you give him a figure?"

"Fifty thousand."

"You're crazier'n he is," said Bill. "Does he look like a pilgrim?"

"No, he don't," Dobbs replied. "He looks like a darned hard proposition."

"What did he say when you asked fifty thousand."

"He just laughed," Dobbs admitted, "and told me to round you up and he'd see us tomorrow. But he's been up to the claim, and if he wants to buy it, it must be because it's worth something. So we don't want to be suckers and let her go too cheap."

"No," Bill agreed thoughtfully. "There's no road to it, and not even a pack trail; and it's so high up it's halfway to heaven. But if there's real money behind this Duffy them things don't matter. Maybe he's got something we don't know."

But on the morrow Mr. Duffy, who was a hard-featured gentleman with a cold-blue eye and did not in the least resemble a wandering mental case, proceeded to table his cards in disconcerting fashion.

"I know what you're thinking," he said, when Dobbs again spoke of a trifle of fifty thousand. "You're thinking, same as all you fellows think, that your claim must be worth big money if anybody wants to buy it, and you're wondering how high I'll go. Well, I'll tell you. I'll give you five hundred dollars cash, and not one cent more. And I'll tell you why I'll give that much. Because I can sell it again to people I know for eight hundred or a thousand. That's my business—buying claims cheap and turning them over. My people will buy a dozen prospects on the chance of getting one mine. But you don't know them, and they don't know you, and they wouldn't deal with you if they did. In fact, if they did they wouldn't. So, far as I'm concerned, you can get fancy figures out of your heads. You've had this claim for years, and you've done no work on it, and you never will. You haven't the money to develop it, and if you want to hang onto it till you die it's all right with me. It's a fair surface showing, but it's too high up and too far back to gamble much on. And I don't have to have it. I can buy others I like just as well. That's my offer—five hundred, cash. Take it or leave it. And do it to-day, because I'm pulling out to-morrow."

"Now, look a' here, Mr. Duffy," Dobbs protested manfully, "you know as well as

I do that if a claim is worth anything at all it's worth ten thousand. And this here claim of ours has a wonderful showin'—simply wonderful. Why, the old Cœur d'Alene——"

"Five hundred," Mr. Duffy interrupted coldly.

"It's hell," Dobbs whined mournfully, "on us poor prospectors that goes out into the hills, endurin' all sorts of hardships, and takin' all kinds of——"

"Affidavits," Mr. Duffy suggested.

"Huh!" said Dobbs. "What you mean—affidavits?"

"One time and another," Mr. Duffy told them, "you fellows have sworn to a lot of development work that I didn't see any signs of when I was at your claim."

"If we did, it's there," said Dobbs with dignity. "We wouldn't swear to nothing but the truth, would we, Bill?"

"I sh'd say not," Bill corroborated virtuously. "It wouldn't be right."

"And after us makin' all them affidavits," Dobbs went on sadly, "to be offered only a measly five hundred——"

"Cash," Mr. Duffy pointed out. "And it's five hundred more than you were ever offered before, and likely five hundred more than you'll ever be offered again. I'm not going to dicker. Take it or not. And do it now."

"Oh, well," Dobbs gave up with resignation, "we don't want to do anything that 'd hold up mining development in this district. We're public spirited, me and Bill, ain't we, Bill?"

"For cash," said Bill.

"Sure," Dobbs agreed. "Public spirit depends a lot on cash—always."

When they closed the deal they found themselves possessed altogether of some twenty-three hundred dollars in cash. Obviously there was but one thing to do.

"No use waiting till the winter to go out," said Bill. "Let's go down to Vancouver, and then hit Seattle and Portland and Tacoma, and come back by way of Spokane. We'll salt about three hundred for a grubstake, and play with the rest. It's comin' to us."

"All right," Dobbs agreed. "Only I dunno about Seattle and so on."

"They're good live towns."

"There's too much drinkin' goin' on since they got prohibition down there," said Dobbs. "And they say you can't depend on labels no more. It looks to me like civ'lization is playin' out."

So they left their itinerary open until by inquiry in Vancouver they should learn how safe drinks were for democracy to the southward. And they themselves headed by stage for the main line of the Canadian Pacific railway. On the way Dobbs was thoughtful.

"We're going to do this right, Bill," he announced as the result of his lucubrations.

"What you mean?" his partner asked, mystified.

"It's like this," Dobbs elucidated. "Other times when we've went to the outside we've had a high old time sure enough, but we've blew our roll or got rolled inside a week. We've put up at dumps and bum hotels, and mooched around in joints and dives, long as our money lasted. And she didn't last long. This time I want to do it diff' rent. I want to travel in style, put up at the best hotels, buy us some good clothes, and be gentlemen among gentlemen, by gum!"

"I ain't no gentleman," his partner returned with distaste, "nor you ain't. And if you figure you can't lose your money quick among gentlemen you got another guess coming. I don't want to throw on dog with fancy clothes. I'm all right the way I am, and anybody that don't like my style can tell me so."

Anybody rash enough to do so would have found plenty of material for afterthought. But Dobbs clung to his idea, which undoubtedly held the charm of novelty. The best, he pointed out craftily, was none too good for them. Good hotels meant good food and soft beds, and comfort all along the line. In the end Bill allowed himself to be persuaded.

"All right," he consented grudgingly. "I can fly as high as you can. I'll go you—while our money lasts."

As a first step they got reservations on the Trans-Canada, the crack coast-to-coast flyer, and established themselves in a leather-upholstered smoker, which they had to themselves because their fellow passengers preferred the observation car. They sat in dual grandeur and eyed with scorn the flying panorama of mountain scenery. Admiring exclamations of tourists moved them to pity mingled with disgust.

"Makin' all that fuss about a lot of hills!" Bill snorted contemptuously. "If

they had to highball over 'em like us, they wouldn't be so stuck on them."

"No, you bet," Dobbs agreed. "Set there and watch us slide through," he apostrophized the mountain giants. "We got ye beat this time. Keep right on settin'—it's all you're good for."

"They say there used to be pay dirt in them Fraser Bars one time," Bill offered after a period of contemptuous contemplation.

"Back about '58," said Dobbs. "There was a rush there when the California diggin's begun to peter out. That's how come they found the Cariboo diggin's—spraddlin' out from the Fraser upcountry."

"I'd like to been in one of them old gold rushes," said Bill wistfully.

"And where'd you be now if you had been?" Dobbs asked.

The answer was obvious to any one who knew Bill and held orthodox views concerning the span of life and its hereafter.

"I mean," he said, "that them days the country was new and not prospected to a finish."

"Nor it ain't yet," said Dobbs. "We been places where I'll bet we was the first to pan."

"And what did we get out of it—them places?" Bill growled.

"We got a little now, anyway," his partner pointed out with optimism.

Bill lit a fresh cigar. "All the same," he said, reverting to the previous question, "I'd like to hit a good gold rush and get in on a good camp early."

"I was in on the Yukon one," said Dobbs, "and it didn't do me no good. I had a claim on Bonanza, and she wasn't turnin' out, and I let her go for a thousand and some flour and beans. Feller I sold to put down another hole, and struck scand'lous dirt. He took out a fortune and sold out for another. Me, I went off lookin' for new ground, but I never found none, and I got et alive by flies, and split my foot with an ax, and come near losin' my leg with blood poisonin', and like to died. That's what I got of gettin' in early and sinkin' a hole where I did."

"Shouldn't have sold," Bill commented.

"Is that so!" his partner snarled. "Do you think I don't know it? Do you figure you're tellin' me recent news or something?"

"Keep your shirt on," Bill advised.

"If there's anything gives me a pain in my neck," said Dobbs bitterly, "it's to have some wise pelican tell me where I've made a wrong play, after I've told him—rubbin' it in. Yah!"

He relapsed into gloomy silence, wherein he reflected sadly on the varied forms of amusement which that old claim would have paid for had he hung on to it. The Yukon rush had seen him in the prime of life. Now, unfortunately, he was going down the long hill. But while there is life there is hope. A man is as old as his arteries, and his were still reasonably resilient. The thought was cheering.

"I didn't mean to rub it in," said Bill apologetically. "I've done fool things myself. A man has to take a chance."

"Sure," Dobbs agreed, placated. "And," he added, "I might have struck something big. Them days we all thought there must be a mother lode somewheres, or a creek that'd pan fifty-fifty gold and gravel—if we could find it. We was all worked up. Crazy, if you like."

"Oh, I dunno," said Bill. "Couldn't blame you much, the way they were strikin' it. Mother lode, huh! And Too Much Gold Creek! Well, you never can tell. Maybe there is—somewhere. Where did all that gold come from? It had to come from somewhere."

"Sure it had," Dobbs agreed. "But that don't say it come from no big lode in place. A little gold scattered all over a big country all drainin' into one river, would wash down in time, and it had all the time there was since the beginnin' of the world. That'd be the way with the Fraser, but that don't work out with little creeks." He proceeded to enunciate a theory widely held by his fellows. "I b'lieve placer gold is mostly glacier gold. When they melted, the gold they'd ground up rubbin' along on rocks for millions of years just dropped out of their bellies, and the rivers and streams that run out of them washed it along till it caught in the bars. And that's reas'nable. Because you take any of them old gold creeks, and you go up her lookin' at the old workin's, and you come to a place where they stop, bang! because there's no pay above that. Now, if that pay dirt come from gold in place, there'd be gold ore there or thereabouts in the hills by the creek. And there ain't no such thing been found on no gold creek yet, and you bet they've all been prospected to a finish for

ore showin's. No, sir, the only placer-gold theory that'll hold water is that glacier theory."

Bill, who had heard it hundreds of times from Dobbs and others, and thought it at least as good as any other, grunted assent. One of the diner's crew stuck his head through the door.

"First call for dinner!"

"Hey, wait a minute," said Bill. "Say," he asked confidentially, "can you get us an appetizer?"

"It's against the law, now, gents."

"I thought this was the C. P. R.," said Bill, that corporation being popularly supposed to make its own legislation and a good deal of the country's.

"I mean it's against the rules," the servant of the great transportation system amended.

"Will this crack the rules?" said Bill, exhibiting a two-dollar bill. "Me and my partner."

Apparently it would, for after brief absence the member of the crew returned with first aid. He tyled the door during the ritual, and subsequently parted with a bottle of pocket design, for current coin. "Thanks, gents. If you want any more let me know," was his valedictory.

Dobbs licked his lips experimentally as they washed up preparatory to supper.

"That whisky has a kinda funny taste," said he. "Wonder what it is?"

"It's whisky," said Bill.

"I know," Dobbs admitted, "but it's funny. Lemme see that bottle again for a minute."

Bill, who had taken charge of it, shook his head.

"You don't want no more just now."

"G'wan!" Dobbs protested. "All I had was a couple of swallows. And, as the feller says, all two swallows make is a nest for more."

"You don't get two drinks, the size you take, on an empty stomach, not on this train."

"Do I look like a man that can't stand two drinks?" Dobbs demanded with outraged dignity.

"Anyway, you ain't going to act like one," Bill told him with finality.

Dobbs gave it up, and they made their way to the diner, where their rough garb and generally unrefined aspect caused them to be regarded with disfavor. But they secured a table, and proceeded to scan an elaborate menu card which confused them utterly. Bill discarded it in disgust.

"Listen, feller," he said to a supercilious and doubtful waiter, "this here list of muckamuck don't mean a thing to us. Me and my partner's been livin' on beans and sowbelly and deer meat and sour-dough bread for a whole year. So bring us all the green things you got, like onions and radishes and such; and then throw us up a square of white man's grub, startin' with soup and endin' with ice cream. Suit yourself, what's in between, but remember we want the best, and lots of it. Your rake-off will be half the bill, so make it big."

Thus stimulated, the waiter's supercilious attitude vanished. He brought them a meal which found favor, and hovered over them solicitously and wonderingly as they concealed it. Gorged at last, Bill made good his promise. Then they retired to their chosen lair in the smoker, where presently they were joined by a keen-eyed gentleman who had watched their food consumption with curiosity, and also had noted the size of the roll from which payment therefor had been made.

Bill, gorged and somnolent, was a total loss as a conversationalist. He dwelt in a Nirvana of tobacco, and said nothing at all. But Dobbs was quite ready to talk, and to tell his own and his partner's business to anybody. When he had done so it appeared that he and his partner had just sold one of a group of claims for one hundred thousand dollars, ten per cent down, and were on their way to meet some capitalists who desired an option on the remainder of the group. The stranger, whose name was Evans, turned out to be a mining man, too, on his way to Vancouver to close a deal. He spoke of several large transactions which were engaging his attention, and invited the partners to become better acquainted with him in his stateroom; an invitation which Bill refused, though its owner held out the inducement of liquid refreshments. But Dobbs accepted readily. As he rose to follow Mr. Evans, his partner called him back.

"You darned old fool," said Bill, "that ain't no mining man."

"Why, no," Dobbs admitted, "I guess he ain't."

"He's a tinhorn," Bill accused. "That's what he is."

"Oh, well," said Dobbs tolerantly, "it takes all kinds to make up a world. Some folks is prejudiced against gamblers, but I look at things broad, sort of."

"Well, don't you get drunk, and don't you play with him," said Bill, who knew his partner's weaknesses. Gambling was as the breath of Dobbs' nostrils when he had the wherewithal. At that, however, he was no mean poker player; and he possessed a certain manual dexterity and no scruples whatsoever. "You better leave me your roll," Bill advised, "and then it'll be safe."

"Leave nothin'," Dobbs refused indignantly. "You don't need to worry about me. I was born in a fox country."

The average individual who announces that he knows it all or most of it, is as grain ripe for the scythe. When it became late and Dobbs did not return, Bill began to worry. All their fellow passengers had retired, and Bill, having smoked himself to a standstill, was considering the advisability of hunting up his partner when the latter appeared, making swaying progress not altogether due to the motion of the train. He clutched either side of the door of the smoker with a steadying hand, and beamed benevolently on his partner.

"You ain't goin' t' bed, Bill?" he queried in slightly slurred accents of reproach. "Nightsh young yet."

"And that's more than you are," his partner told him. "You ought to know better."

"You ain't got the right angle," Dobbs returned. "Jus' 's you say, I ain't young—I ain't got much time left. So therefore an' 'cordingly, I got to hit her up every chance."

"Well, you've hit her," said Bill grimly. "After what I told you, you went and let that tinhorn get you drunk. And if you got drunk I'll bet you played; and if you played you got skinned. Lemme see your roll, you old stiff."

"Whose roll is she?" Dobbs asked with dignity.

"That's what I want to know," said Bill. "If you played with that guy, I'll bet she's his."

"I played li'l'," Dobbs confessed. "Jus' t' be soshbul. Couldn't refushe. Gen'l'man's game. Or 't least it was when it started."

"Didn't I know it!" Bill growled. "I'm going to find that guy, and make him come through, or take him to pieces. Come on, now, tell me where he hangs out and how he worked it. Was he alone, or not?"

"Friend of his," Dobbs admitted. "Nishe young feller. Real nishe young feller. Drinks a li'l' but nishe feller. Drinks. That's his failin'."

"A pair of 'em, hey," said Bill. "Well, I can handle half a dozen of them birds. Tell me about it. Go on."

"'S what we did," Dobbs told him. "Shtarted li'l' game. Gen'l'man's game. Played 'long easy an' careless. Good hooch, good segars. Everybody happy. Nishe Chrishun game, 'n' dollar limit, jus' like Sunday-school."

"Well?" Bill queried as his partner showed signs of running down.

"Something shot dollar limit," Dobbs confessed hazily. "Forget what. Limit all shot. Poor ol' limit. Gimme drink."

"You've had too much now, darn you," said Bill.

"Who wants this drink?" Dobbs asked cogently. "You or me?"

Bill, who knew that an additional drink sometimes temporarily cleared his partner's mental processes when obfuscated by alcohol, yielded. Dobbs gulped the liquor with a grateful shudder, and patted his partner on the shoulder.

"Good Shamaritan," he approved out of the early excellent training, remnants whereof were wont to rise trippingly to his tongue when sufficiently inebriated, and indeed were an infallible sign that he was fairly well glazed; "good Shamaritan had nothing on you, Bill. Jus' like him, pourin' oil an' wine into poor ol' partner, that fell among thieves that stripped him an' spitefully used him with four jacks."

"Four jacks, hey!" said Bill, on whom references to the kindly gentleman from Samaria were quite lost. "They cleaned you with four jacks, did they? What did they deal you against them, you old stiff?"

"I had three aces, queen, trey on the deal," Dobbs mourned, "and I cracks her wide open. And I upholds the three bullets and the lone queen, and draws one. And I catch another queen. Tha's good hand. Holdin' that, no full beats me. An' that nishe young feller that drinks, he draws one; an' I play him for two pair, or a four-card flush, which either simply ruins him against what I got, if he fills his hand. So I tilts him, an' he tilts me, an' he don't know enough to call me, because he's

drinkin' an' reckless. An' of course I don't call, because it's my duty as a older man an' a Chrishun to learn a nishe young feller like him it's wrong to gamble—'specially agin' an ace full. I'm learnin' him exc'lent moral lesson, only he has four jacks, an' she's labor lost. I ask you, Bill, what chance has moral lesson an' ace full got agin' four jacks?" And old Dobbs shook his head sorrowfully at the difficulties which beset the path of the moralist.

"Did you go broke against them?" Bill demanded, refusing to discuss the moral aspect of the transaction. "Was you sucker enough to bet your whole roll on a hand that any fours would sink?"

"Not that time, Bill, not that time," Dobbs replied. "Tha's jus' one hand. I'm foxy, Bill. I was born in fox country."

"If you ask me," said the disgusted Bill, "you was born up a mud creek when the suckers was running. Foxy! You wasn't foxy enough to quit, darn you!"

"Couldn't quit," said Dobbs. "'S my duty to show that nishe young feller it's wicked to gamble. An' besides, I'm behind. How you goin' to catch up if you quit when you're behind? Time to quit is when you're ahead."

"Only it works both ways," Bill snorted. "They quit when they got your roll. Sure! Why, you——"

His disgust and indignation found vent in virulent abuse. But Dobbs paid no attention. Fumbling in his pockets he produced a mass of crumpled currency of varied colors and denominations. Bill's diatribe was checked in mid-flow. Dobbs, having thus cleared the way, produced his original bundle, still tied with a buckskin thong, and apparently not in the least diminished.

"Holy Moses!" the startled Bill ejaculated.

"Quit winner," said Dobbs, "like I'm tellin' you. Born in fox country. Tha's me."

"It looks to me," said the amazed Bill, "like you was born in a horseshoe foundry. Unless," he added with sudden suspicion, "you've rolled somebody, comin' through the sleepin' sections."

"Ain't rolled nobody," Dobbs denied proudly. "I'm a Chrishun—or I was brung up to be. Early Chrishun, born in fox country."

"How did you do it?" Bill demanded. "Come on, now."

"'S Providence," said Dobbs. "You'd call it luck, Bill, but you're scoffer. 'S Providence, same as takes care of them Hebrew children in the lions' den. I'm innocent ol' prospector, an' I'm drunk. I'm easy prop'sition. So they're careless, an' drinkin' themselves, 'specially that nishe young feller. An' where Providence comes in, their cards is just ord'nary cards, like I got a pack of in my pocket. They ain't even usin' readers, because I'm easy."

"You cold-decked them!" said Bill.

"With the help of Providence, like I tell you," Dobbs acknowledged with becoming humility. "I iced her in the wash room. An' she went over big, for money. They paid me to get a peep at four kings. That made me winner, so I come away. Gimme drink."

Bill, slightly dazed by the mysterious ways of that Providence in which his partner reposed his trust, rashly handed him the bottle. Dobbs tilted it. Bill aroused himself to see the last of its contents transferring itself to Dobbs with the eager swirl of a sucking sink.

"I wanted one myself, you darned old hog!" he reproached him.

"C'm' on an' get some," Dobbs suggested. "Le's go back to that tinhorn an' that nishe young feller. They got lots. An' I'll trim them some more."

"They'd slug you, and I wouldn't blame them," said Bill. "You're going to bed."

"I ain't," Dobbs declared valiantly. His potations were beginning to have a cumulative effect. He sank into a seat, but his spirit was unconquered. "I'm goin' to sing. Sing about that nishe young feller." His voice rose in a mournful wail. "'Oh, where is my wand'ring——'"

"Shut up," Bill ordered, "or I'll handle you."

Drunk as he was, Dobbs recognized the gleam in his partner's eye. To be "handled" by Bill was equivalent to being run through a concrete mixer. And at this juncture a scandalized porter appeared in the doorway.

"Sorry, gen'l'men, but you 's 'sturbin' the passengers."

"It's this old stiff," said Bill. "But he's goin' to bed now."

"Yessuh," said the porter with relief. "Right this way, cap'n," he suggested to the songster.

"You 'Battlin'' Siki?" Dobbs inquired.

"Nossuh," said the porter. "Lemme help you, boss."

"Not Siki," said Dobbs in disappointment. "Whashoor name?"

"Well, suh," the long-suffering porter replied, "my full name is Jackson Jefferson Gordon, but mostly they calls me 'George.' Just lean on me, cap'n."

"'Gordon!'" Dobbs murmured, his head reposing confidingly on the white-jacketed shoulder. "'S good name. Scotch. No, gin. Jordan Ginn. Mean Gordon gin." A forgotten fragment of verse, sadly garbled, stirred in his brain. "'You're a better man than I am, Gordon Gin,'" he murmured humbly. "Look after me, Gin, and I'll stake you!"

And so, as Mr. Pepys succinctly puts it, to bed.

CHAPTER II.

HIGH, WIDE AND HANDSOME.

IN the morning Bill shook his partner out of the sound slumber common alike to babes who have listened to the bed-time stories of the cherubim and to their elders who have temporarily exhausted their capacities for sinning.

Dobbs made a sketchy toilet. He was tough as an old wolf, and his original copper lining lacked but few rivets. So he made a fair breakfast, consisting of country sausage, liver and bacon, hot cakes with sirup and two pots of coffee. Thus fortified he made for the smoker, where he whittled tobacco from a black plug and fired up an equally swarthy pipe. Two gentlemen who were mildly polluting the atmosphere with cigarettes, snuffed suspiciously, looked at each other, and having at last located the nuisance, glared at the unconscious Dobbs.

Dobbs' pipe, like its owner, had left youth behind. In a long and eventful career it had cremated many kinds of cheap smoking tobaccos and some of the edible varieties. It had incinerated the "quesnel" and "tabac rouge" of Quebec, and had soaked itself in the vital juices of these burned offerings. In times of tobacco famine it had burned various substitutes for the weed, such a kinnekinnick—which may be the inner bark of the willow or the leaf of a low-growing shrub, according to locality—and it had even consumed tea when nothing else was to be had. Thus it possessed a distinctive flavor which Dobbs considered stimulating or soothing as the case might be, and an equally distinctive aroma—to call it that. It was, in fact, a pipe from the great open spaces where men are inured to the more salient odors of tepees. It brought a breath of that great, virile outdoors to the atmosphere of the smoking car. And when Dobbs' nearest neighbor got a full whiff of it, it partially strangled him. He attempted diplomacy.

"Have a cigar," he offered tactfully.

Dobbs accepted frankly and put the mild perfecto in his pocket. "I'll smoke it later, if you don't mind," said he. "I like a pipe after breakfast. Mostly I smoke two or three. They kinda set me up for the morning. Then I can dally along on cigars and such till I eat again."

He drew in a huge draft of smoke, held it for a moment, and expelled it through his nostrils. His neighbor coughed again. Dobbs eyed him solicitously.

"Them cigarettes will get you yet," he said. "When I was a young feller nobody smoked 'em but dudes and them that was no better than they should be. Coffin nails, some called them, and they had other names. Doctors will tell you they're bad for the lungs and hard on the heart. And then—you'll excuse me for mentionin' it—they smell like hell."

"Holy smoke!" the victim of the gas attack murmured appropriately, awed.

"You'd ought to smoke a pipe," Dobbs advised serenely. "When you want a smoke you get it."

"To say nothing of when you don't want it," the second man observed sourly. "May I ask how long you have had that pipe?"

"I don't just know," Dobbs returned. "I've had her some years. Since before the war, anyway."

"Do you mean the Revolution, or the Civil War?" Number Two asked, ignoring more recent hostilities. Dobbs waved a tolerant hand.

"I mean the Boer War. I had her broke in nice, then. But that don't make her old. I remember a pipe my old man had, that belonged to *his* old man. He—I mean my gran'dad—smoked her for about thirty years, and when he died my old man smoked her for about twenty."

"Did they die young?" his neighbor queried caustically.

"Why, no, not what you'd call real young," Dobbs replied reminiscently. "My

gran'dad, he was ninety-two when he went home. My dad, though, he was cut off sudden by a team of colts he was breakin' runnin' away. He was only eighty-four when he was taken. Only for that, I guess he'd have lived to a ripe old age. The Dobbses are pretty tough."

"I believe you!" the inquirer agreed sadly, and took his departure with his friend.

The flyer had been laid out by a slide and a freight pitched in ahead during the night, so that it was mid-morning when they slid across the delta, crossed the broad, placid Pitt, and swung into the Vancouver terminus.

The partners were traveling light, their impedimenta consisting of a single battered bit of canvas-covered pasteboard of the telescopic variety, held together by an equally plebeian strap. They emerged on the foot of Granville Street and looked around.

"Now where?" Bill asked.

"Hotel Vancouver," said Dobbs.

Bill had seen the outside of this hostelry, but never its inside. It was, he considered, out of his class. Not that he especially desired to be of its class. Bill's democracy was of the malignant variety.

"Aw, what would we be doing among all them white-collared scissorbills," he objected. "Let's go down to Jake's, like we always done."

"We settled it that we wasn't going to do like we always done," Dobbs reminded him, and hailed a violently saffron craft, whose navigating buccaneer started his engine and regarded them with a companionable grin.

"Where to, boys?"

"Hotel Vancouver," said Dobbs. The driver grinned widely.

"Some old kidder, ain't you!" he said. "Spring some more on me like that. The meter's running all the time."

"And that's more'n your brain is," Dobbs retorted in offense. "When we want to hear funny cracks we'll pay to hear a real comedian, and not no open-air one, understand!"

"Why, you old——" the driver began. But Bill took a hand.

"Look a' here, feller," he growled, "you get gay, and I'll take you and your boat apart, see!"

The driver took a good look at Bill. "All right, bo," he said. "But tell me where you really want to go to."

Bill told him. So that when they reached the imposing hostelry specified by Dobbs, their hand baggage was increased by a very large and heavy parcel done up in a whitey-brown paper bag, easily recognizable by any citizen of B. C. as containing purchases from a government liquor store.

Bearing this baggage they strode past a majestic doorman. Bell hops shied from them as poor risks, and they made their way to the desk where, as their attire was not that of the average run of patrons, being not only years behind the mode but also much the worse for wear, the desk clerk quite failed to recognize in them prospective guests. He took a casual look at them, and came to the perfectly natural conclusion that they had been hired or desired to be hired by some guest in the logging or mining business.

"Do you want to see somebody?" he asked.

"We want a room," Dobbs told him.

"A room!" the startled official exclaimed.

"With two beds," Dobbs specified; for in these strange surroundings the partners felt the need of mutual support.

"For yourselves?" the clerk queried with a suspicious glance at the whitey-brown paper bag.

"What's wrong with us?" Dobbs snapped.

"Nothing—nothing at all," the clerk made haste to say, "but I'm afraid——"

"Maybe you think we can't pay for what we want," Dobbs suggested. "Well, we can." And he exhibited a handful of irrefutable evidence of their ability to do so.

"I'm sorry," the clerk told them, "but I'm afraid all our rooms are taken."

"You don't get away with no such bluff as that—not a little bit," Dobbs declared. "This here is a public house. You refuse us a room, and you'll start something. By glory, I'll hire the best lawyer in this town and sue your hotel for damages. And besides that I'll take care that every mining man and lumber operator on the Pacific coast hears of this. Just because we lost our baggage and had to come to town in the clo'es we've been wearin' out inspectin' a group of mines, you treat us like hobos. Why, darn you——"

"S-sh!" the alarmed official pleaded, for Dobbs' raised voice was beginning to attract attention, and the publicity he threatened

was most undesirable. "I didn't understand. I think we can accommodate you, gentlemen."

"That's better talk," said Dobbs. "I don't blame you so much, neither," he condescended to admit. "These clo'es ain't what we're used to, but as the play come up it was them or nothing. Soon as we get a room we'll get a new outfit."

With a scandalized bell hop in attendance they made port in a room that accentuated the incongruity of their habiliments. Dobbs dismissed the attendant with unexpected largesse and prowled around. He opened a door and made an interesting discovery.

"By golly, Bill, there's a bathtub goes with this room." He experimented with shining taps. "Sure enough hot water, and lots of it. I got half a notion to take a bath. Only," he added frugally, "I had one before we left home."

Bill arranged their liquid purchases where they were easily accessible, and Dobbs abandoned thoughts of an external bath in favor of inside irrigation. They had a modest reviver, and Bill lit a cigar.

"Now, what'll we do?"

"We'll go out and buy us some clo'es," said Dobbs.

"What's the matter with these?" said Bill.

"What ain't?" Dobbs returned. "You come along with me. Nobody's going to put it all over us on clo'es," said Dobbs.

So they laid a course which eventually brought them to an establishment that catered to the outward adornment of men.

"Now," said Dobbs to its presiding genius, "we want a whole new outfit, say two suits apiece, with underclo'es and overclo'es and boots and hats and the whole works from the skin out. We want 'em good, same as if they was made to order, and the shape folks wear 'em now—I mean solid folks, like bankers and leadin' gamblers. You know what's what, or you ought to, so rig us out."

They returned to the hotel in a taxi piled with freight, which they commanded the doorman to see bestowed in their apartment. After a visit to the barber shop they went aloft and unwrapped their parcels. There were many of them. Never in their lives had they possessed more than a fraction of the apparel before them, and never anything approaching it in quality.

"By gosh," said Dobbs with determination, admiringly regarding a union suit of cerulean blue, "by gosh, Bill, I am a-going to take a bath!"

When an hour later they descended to the lobby they bore no superficial resemblance to the two mountain rats who had entered it an hour before. They had fallen into good sartorial hands. Dobbs, clad in conservative gray, with a neat hair-and-beard trim, looked an elderly gentleman of affairs; Bill's splendid proportions were set off by navy blue with a faint hair line. Of intention Dobbs paused before the desk and regarded the clerk with a fixed stare.

"This is us," he announced. The clerk looked twice before he recognized them.

"Great Scott!" was his tribute.

"In future," Dobbs advised him loftily, "don't judge payin' guests by their clo'es. As Harry Lauder says, 'A man's a man, for a' that.' If any telegrams come for us before six o'clock have 'em sent special to the office of the secretary of the Board of Trade. But after that keep 'em here."

"What did you want to throw that bull about telegrams for?" Bill grumbled as they turned away. "We won't get none, and that guy will spot us right off for four-flushers."

"No he won't," said the resourceful Dobbs; "because we'll send ourselves a whole flock. You get enough telegrams, and folks think you're somebody."

"And what good does that do you," Bill scoffed, "when you ain't? You might as well cheat yourself playin' solo."

"You don't win on every bluff, of course," his partner replied; "but if you don't run one now and then you ain't got much sportin' blood."

"Well, what'll we do now?" Bill asked. "You got us all dressed up like a potlatch, but what fun do we get?"

"We'll hire a car and go for a drive to give us a appetite," Dobbs decided. "Then we'll eat, and go to a show, and then——"

Tactfully he left the rest of this enticing program blank, and beckoned to the driver of a modern chariot, who responded with respectful alacrity. Reclining in the tonneau, smoking good cigars, the partners felt at peace with a world with which ordinarily they were at loggerheads.

"And to think," Dobbs sighed blissfully, "that no time at all ago we was packing our outfit among them goldarn hills, over

windfalls and up creeks and gulches, eatin' sour-dough bread and fightin' flies!"

"And to think," said Bill, the pessimist, "that it won't be no time at all till we're doin' it again."

"By gosh!" his partner snorted indignantly, "you're worse 'n them old Egyptians that used to plant a stiff at table every time they sat down to a chicken dinner. You ought to get a job in a good, busy morgue. I b'lieve if you was in hell and got the chance of a day off to go swimmin', you'd turn it down because you'd have to go back."

"I only said what's so," Bill maintained.

"If everybody said what's so," Dobbs reproved him, "we'd be back in scalpin' days in jig time. Civ'lization is built up on not sayin' what's so; and pretendin' what ain't so is, and what is so ain't. And she gets along. You go to changin' that system and you pull out her props and she comes down on top of you like the walls of Jericho onto old Samson."

Subdued by this rebuke, Bill disclaimed any intention to destroy the social fabric.

"Anyway," said Dobbs, "we'll have a good time as long as our money lasts, and before she runs out maybe we can make some more."

"You can't make money in a town," Bill stated with conviction. "Not fellers like us, anyway. All we can do is to spend it."

"Oh, I dunno," Dobbs returned. "There's lots of ways of making easy money in a town if you got some to start with and have luck."

"And our luck's dead rotten," Bill stated.

"On our own job it is," Dobbs agreed, "because we know all about it, and the minute you know a game luck quits you. But did you ever notice the luck of pilgrims and beginners?"

"Did I!" Bill growled; for the outrageous and illogical good fortune of these lower classes is notorious.

"You take a beginner," said Dobbs, "that's so plum' ignorant that he'd call if he held four kings and an ace, and he'll hold 'em; and a pilgrim that'll get lost if he strays off a trail half a mile, he'll run onto rich dirt that practical mining men like you and me couldn't find in a million years. That's how things is in this world—all upside down and contrary as hell."

"Well, what about it?" said Bill who had observed these phenomena.

"Why," Dobbs explained, "back in the hills we ain't pilgrims—far from it—and so we ain't had no luck. But in town we are—sort of. This stayin' at good hotels and wearin' good clo'es is a new game to us, and so we're due for luck, like a woman that jabs a race card with a hatpin and picks a winner. I got a sort of hunch that things is goin' to come our way, and if I get a chance I'll back it with my roll."

"What I want to know," said Bill, "is what fun we get out of stayin' at swell dumps where we don't know nobody."

"We'll get acquainted," Dobbs predicted; "and we'll meet good people and not roughnecks."

Bill's spoken opinion of good people was unflattering.

"I'm a roughneck and so are you," he declared uncompromisingly, "and I'm glad of it. And if you think good clothes make any difference, you're kidding yourself."

"Money and good clo'es make a heap of difference in the stuff you can get away with," Dobbs returned. "You know it yourself. 'Money covers a multitude of sins,' like Solomon says, and you bet he knew."

Outargued but unconvinced, Bill growled formidably. An excellent dinner, topped by a good cigar, put him in better humor. They sat in the lobby and heard themselves paged as their flock of telegrams came in; and Dobbs swelled with pride.

"By golly, this is the life!" he declared. "And ord'nar'ly we'd be squattin' in a lean-to, over a smudge."

"And we wouldn't be wearin' collars, nor coats, nor tight boots," said Bill wistfully. But Dobbs did not heed.

"Puts you in mind of watchin' an ant hill," he observed philosophically as he regarded the shifting groups. "I've wondered what them ants was so busy about, and I wonder likewise about all these people."

"They got some place to go," Bill commented enviously. "And," he added after a moment, "there's some darn' good-lookin' women, too."

"Well, maybe." Dobbs' tone implied large reservation. "Women nowadays," he announced, "look sorter funny to me."

"What's the matter with them?" asked Bill, whose experience of the fair sex, both white and red, had been fairly extensive and occasionally stormy.

"Why, I dunno's anything's the matter with them," the older man returned.

"Maybe it's with me. I guess, maybe, I ain't up to date. But why a girl that the good Lord gave nice long hair, and ripe peaches to for cheeks, should cut off the one and fix up the other like one of them old clowns in old Barnum's circus, gets by me. It usen't to be respectable, nuther."

"Rats!" said Bill.

"Oh, I ain't sayin' nothin' against them," said Dobbs. "Times change—sure. I'm lib'ral minded. Only, when I was a young feller the preachers preached against shows where the girls wore more clo'es and less paint than women do in churches now."

"How do you know?" Bill queried rudely.

"Well, of course I ain't been to church much lately," Dobbs confessed. "But I used to go a lot because my folks made me. And later I had a girl that went. So I went. She sang in the choir. I was terrible fond of her them days, and I ain't never forgot her. Lily Thomas, her name was—or I think it was Thomas. It might have been Pringle—Violet Pringle."

"I thought you said it was Lily."

"Well, it might have been," said Dobbs. "Or Rosie. One of them flower names, anyway. I was plum' in love with her."

"Then why didn't you marry her?" Bill asked.

"I don't just remember," Dobbs confessed. "Something come up, I s'pose, and saved me." He shook his head meditatively. "She was a fine-looking girl, too."

"What did she look like?" Bill queried idly, blowing a smoke wreath.

"Look like?" Dobbs repeated, somewhat at a loss; for his recollections of the fair Lily, or Violet, or Rosie Thomas or Pringle were sadly blurred by her successors in his affections and by some forty years. But being resourceful and unhampered by fact he offered concrete illustration. "Why, she looked some like that girl standin' over there by the old feller."

The girl thus indicated was slight, dark, large of eye and possessed of a pretty expression of timid, appealing innocence. She stood beside a gentleman with a closely clipped white mustache who was engaged in lighting a long, thin, black cigar.

"Yes, sir," said Dobbs, satisfied that the young lady's appearance reflected credit upon his early taste in femininity, "that girl surely favors Daisy Trimble a lot."

"Some looker she must have been," said Bill with approval. Her elderly companion having got his cigar alight, they passed through the street door and disappeared. "Wonder if she's his daughter or his granddaughter?" Bill speculated.

"Maybe she's his wife," Dobbs suggested as a practical alternative.

"Wife!" Bill ejaculated, his sense of propriety shocked. "Why, she can't be more than twenty or so."

"Well!" said Dobbs.

"Oh, well, maybe," Bill growled. "Maybe her folks made her marry him. He looks as if he was well fixed. But it's a darn' shame."

"Oh, I dunno," said Dobbs. "If I was to get married—not that I'm thinkin' of it, of course—I'd want a wife a few years younger 'n I be."

"About forty years younger, I'll bet," Bill suggested.

"Well, David took a young wife," Dobbs quoted precedent.

"David who?" Bill asked

"Old King David."

"Them old European kings was a tough bunch," said Bill; "but the war cleaned up most of them. I think I've heard of this David. He was King of Greece, or Monte Carlo, wasn't he?"

"No, he wasn't," Dobbs replied. "David was a Bible king."

"Oh, that kind!" said Bill, losing interest. "Like Solomon."

"Solomon was David's son," Dobbs instructed him. Bill yawned.

"You sure got the family down fine," he said. "Solomon was a marrying man, too, from what I've heard. Well, let's get out of here and go to a show or something."

"Let's ask one of them bell hops where there's a good one," Dobbs suggested.

In the partners' terminology a "good" show meant the reverse. They went to an entertainment strongly recommended on the score of impropriety by a bell hop whose features and conversation argued sophistication; and they sat through the performance with growing disgust, not at its impropriety, but at its lack of it.

"Rotten!" was Bill's verdict when they reached the street.

"I sh'd say so," Dobbs agreed indignantly. "A plum' waste of time. And that bell hop said she was a good show! I don't know what's goin' to become of the youth of this gen'ration. Boys nowadays don't seem to know nothin'."

"What'll we do now?" Bill asked.

"I'm goin' to bed."

"You ain't feelin' sick, are you?" Bill asked in amazement.

"That show was enough to make me," Dobbs replied. "I had quite a session last night, and I need some sleep."

"See you later, then," said Bill, preparing to depart.

"You best rest up a little, too," Dobbs suggested tactfully.

"I will when I get to be your age," Bill reminded him cruelly.

"You mean *if* you do," Dobbs retorted with some asperity.

With misgivings as to his partner he returned to headquarters alone. The lobby was practically empty, but in a retired angle the elderly companion of the young lady who resembled Dobbs' lost love sat smoking another thin, black cigar.

Dobbs sank wearily into a chair near him. He was tough, but he was past his prime and pavements were not his native heath. He was really tired. He produced a cigar, but deciding that he wanted a real smoke returned it to his pocket and sought his pipe. When he got it going the smoke screen drifted across the nostrils of the devotee of thin, black cigars. The nostrils twitched, and their owner favored Dobbs with a deliberate inspection and, meeting his eye, nodded. Dobbs was a companionable soul, and this was the first human being who, having nothing to sell, had paid the least attention to him since he had struck the town. So he returned the nod, and ventured the safe observation that it was a fine night.

The ice thus broken, in the next ten minutes Dobbs learned that the stranger's style and name was Colonel John B. Shannon, that he hailed from St. Paul, that he was traveling with his daughter partly on pleasure and partly on business, that he was fond of fishing and not averse to a quiet game. On the other hand Colonel Shannon learned that Dobbs was a practical mining man of vast experience and considerable wealth, with large placer interests; and that he and his partner were taking a little holiday.

"Are you interested in astronomy, Mr. Dobbs?" the colonel asked after half an hour's pleasant chat.

"I don't know a whole lot about it," Dobbs confessed. "Of course I savvy the North Star, and how to get my bearin's at night, but that's about all."

"I was about to suggest," said the colonel gravely, "that we go up to my room and take a look at the heavens through a glass."

It was a new one on Dobbs, and when he got it he assented with enthusiasm. They took their observation, and another one to check it, and one to better acquaintance, and Dobbs went to his own quarters where he took a nightcap and turned in, a hive of bees humming comfortably and drowsily in his head.

He woke once, to see that Bill's bed was still empty. He grunted disapproval, but dozed off with a sigh. Later he was aroused by somebody shaking his shoulder and a blaze of light which temporarily blinded him. When he blinked his eyes open with emphatic curses the first sight they beheld was a police uniform.

"Wake up," said its wearer, "and tell me if you know this man. He says you and him have this room, but the night clerk wasn't sure about him."

Dobbs blinked again and beheld his partner. Save for antiquity, Bill possessed most of the charm of a ruin. He was hatless and collarless, and his coat was slit down one side as by a sharp instrument. One sleeve was completely gone, as was the shirt sleeve beneath it, revealing a beautifully muscled arm. A leg of his trousers flapped widely in a gaping tear. Blood and mud adorned his features, and his knuckles were cut and bleeding. One eye was entirely closed, and much of his facial epidermis was missing. Dobbs gazed sternly at the wreck.

"Never saw him before," he said. "He looks like a bum, to me."

"Oho!" said the cop savagely to Bill. "You will string me, will you! Well——"

"You darned old liar!" Bill admonished his partner.

"Why, it *is* you!" said Dobbs.

"I been run over by a car," Bill explained, with a horrible wink.

"Just one car?" Dobbs asked.

"As many as you like," said Bill. "Give this guy a ten-spot for me."

"What's the matter with giving it to him yourself?"

"Because I ain't got it," Bill confessed.

"I s'pose the car went through your pockets," said Dobbs with sarcasm. "You been rolled, have you? Well——"

"Shut up!" said Bill. "Give him the ten, darn you, and then be as funny as you like!"

"Give me your names and home addresses," the officer said. "I don't like this any too well."

"You'll like the ten better," Bill predicted; "and if he don't come through with it you better ring for an ambulance."

Thus encouraged, Dobbs came through. The representative of the law took his reward coyly.

"I'm taking your word that you was run over, see," he reminded Bill. "But if there's any comeback——"

"You needn't," said Bill. "You forget me and I'll forget you."

"Fair enough," the man in uniform admitted philosophically. "I got a rotten job, anyway."

"Now," said Dobbs when they were alone, "maybe you can talk without lyin'. Run over by a car, was you? Yes, you was —not. Where you been, and what darn' foolishness you been up to?"

"Where ain't I been?" Bill replied with the modest pride of a returned explorer. "By golly, Sam, you ought to been along."

"Not the way you look," said Dobbs. "Go on, and tell me."

The Odyssey of Bill's wanderings—to skip several cantos—included a casual meeting with a night-blooming stranger, who, alleging that he knew a place which never closed up, guided Bill thereto.

"There was a dance goin' on at this joint," Bill related, "and a mixed crowd—loggers, and dockers, and sailors, and Eyetalians and a breed or two. But except for a coupla fights, and a skirt that got sore and pulled a knife on some guy, everything was quiet as you could expect. I glommed a good looker, and we had a coupla dances and a drink or two; and while we're dancin' somebody bumps into us, and she catches hold of me as if she was tryin' to save herself from fallin', but what she's doin' is tryin' to nick me for my roll. I grabbed her wrist, and she had the money in her hand. Soon as she sees I got her, she squawks and slaps me in the face and hollers that I'm tryin' to steal her roll. And the house bully and half a dozen of the gang back her play, and of course I'm up against it."

"And serve you right," Dobbs commented virtuously but with the wistful envy of the old warrior. "And then I s'pose something started."

"Sure," Bill confirmed. "If I backed down, they were due to beat me up and throw me out, anyway. So I slammed the bully, and he went down, and I jumped on his face to make it binding, and waded in. Then somebody switched off the lights, and in a minute it sounded like the whole room was going to it. You know how it is when something gets going in the dark. I was afraid somebody'd slip a knife into me, and I guess somebody tried, judgin' by this coat, and tried again and got another guy, judgin' by a yell I heard. Then a gun went off, and it looked like things was goin' to get rough. And about then I got hold of a chair and begun to shovel my way out; and by the time it went to pieces I was into a back hall, and I ducked out into a yard and peeled over a fence into an alley and come away. And about time, the way the police whistles was goin'."

"Was that cop you brought here blowin' one?"

"This that I been tellin' you about was at the other end of town," Bill replied. "I bunted into that cop just a few blocks from here, and of course it had to be right on a corner and under a light, so he held me up and wanted to know. I told him I'd been run over by a car that kept right on goin', and where I was stayin' and so on. Of course he knew I was lyin', and I hadn't no money to show him I wasn't, so I had to bring him along. But he don't know nothin' about that rough-house, and if nobody was killed there won't be no trouble, and maybe not then if there was. I'm on velvet."

"You come near bein' on a slab, if you ask me," Dobbs told him. "The idea," he continued severely, "of you fallin' for a steerer for a deadfall like that. And then lettin' a girl roll you. By gosh, anybody'd think you wasn't growed up!"

"Is that so!" said Bill. "You don't think I expected to find no prayer meetin' when I went with that guy, do you? And anyway, the girl only got about fifty. I cached my roll before we went out to-night."

Dobbs was relieved.

"Don't forget you owe me ten, then," he said. "All the same, it was darn' foolishness. Look at your clo'es!"

"They ain't worth lookin' at," Bill admitted as he discarded the remnants of his

pristine grandeur; "but I can buy more. It helps trade." With which economic fallacy he laid him down to rest with a contented sigh, as one who in retrospect beholds a perfect day.

CHAPTER III.

MR. DOBBS PLAYS SOCIETY.

DOBBS, awakening, discovered his partner searching the pockets of the wreck of his raiment for salvage. The pitiless morning light striking Bill's features revealed a color scheme running to blacks and purples on a hamburger background.

"This suit is sure on the blink," Bill vouchsafed, meeting his partner's eye. "Lucky you made us buy two suits, or I'd have to lie up."

"You ain't thinkin' of goin' out with a face like that!" Dobbs exclaimed.

"If I ain't," Bill returned, nettled, "maybe you'll tell me what face I am goin' out with."

"You ain't goin' out at all," Dobbs decided.

"You watch me," said Bill.

"No, I won't," said Dobbs firmly, "You'll hole up for a few days. You ain't fit to be seen, and I ain't goin' to have my swell friends see you."

"Your—what?" Bill gasped.

"You heard me," said Dobbs. "While you was out hellin' around in dives, I got acquainted with that fine old feller that had the girl that put me in mind of that old girl of mine."

"Old King David, huh!" said Bill.

"She ain't his wife," said Dobbs; "she's his daughter. Shannon his name is—Colonel James B. Shannon."

"Colonels ain't much," Bill scoffed. "I met a general last night, myself."

"No wonder—the places you was," Dobbs retorted. "And you look as if you'd met a regiment. You stay in this room."

"How do I eat?" Bill asked.

"You get your grub sent up," said Dobbs. "They do it here if you pay for it. And it'll be worth it. You hole up, and you're a car accident; but you get walkin' around this dump the way you look now, and you'll lose a partner. I'm tellin' you."

Bill growled, but when he had taken a good look at himself he partially conceded the point. His attitude became more resigned when Dobbs brought him a morning edition containing a breezy account of a very rough-house on Vancouver's Barbary Coast, which had furnished a couple of ambulance cases and a heavy load for a patrol wagon.

"Good thing I gave that cop ten," he observed.

"You?" said Dobbs in accents of strong interrogation.

"Oh," said Bill. "Thanks for reminding me. Here's ten, Sam."

"Don't mention it," said Dobbs. "It's a pleasure to get it back."

"Don't I always pay you back?" Bill demanded in injured tones.

"'Most always—when I think of it," Dobbs acknowledged.

For three days Bill lived a hermitlike existence. Dobbs, swinging in some new orbit of his own, kept him company with increasing infrequency. Bill was bored. He insisted upon a plentiful supply of liquid solace, but he did not get intoxicated; principally because he knew that if he did he might give himself undesirable publicity. But at length he made up his mind to emerge from seclusion.

"I'm goin' out to-morrow," he announced emphatically.

"It's nice weather to be out of jail," said Dobbs. "I was sorter inquirin', and they say one of them fellers they took to the hospital may die."

"The feller that was knifed?" Bill asked.

"Well—no," said Dobbs. "The one that was hit on the head with something. They say it was a chair."

"They don't know nothin' about it," Bill stated. "It was a light chair, and it couldn't hurt no one. Why, it went to pieces on me about the third time I swung it."

"They say he had a thin-boned head," said Dobbs comfortingly.

"Then what business had he in a dump like that?" Bill demanded in aggrieved tones.

"No business," Dobbs admitted. "But, of course, there he was. Still, if you want to take a chance——"

"Oh, I'll lay low for a couple of days more," Bill growled.

Which suited Dobbs, who had invented the yarn of the thin-skulled gentleman.

"It may be playin' it low down on Bill," he reflected: "but, by gosh, if there's a hoodoo on earth it's a man that's always lookin' at the dark side of things! I ain't takin' no chances on him queerin' my luck

as she's runnin' now. And besides, I don't want him to horn in. He's a roughneck."

The roughneck, lying low from prudential motives, nevertheless had vague suspicions.

"Sam's a gosh-awful old liar," he said to himself; "but I got no way of checking up on him. And, of course, I *did* bust that chair on somebody. Well, if the guy gets over it, it may learn him not to go to places like them. He ought to thank me."

But he wondered what his partner was doing with his time. As to that, Dobbs was not communicative. To his partner's questions he replied that he was "knocking around." They had breakfast and night dinner together; but between these meals and after the latter Dobbs was absent. He came in late one afternoon when the marooned Bill was passing the time with a game of solitaire. The player had overlooked a card, and Dobbs extended his hand to indicate the omission. The hand was sinewy, the finger joints were enlarged by toil and rheumatism, and the skin was beginning to wrinkle like an old apple. But what attracted Bill's attention was a rosy smoothness and polish at the tips of the digits, which theretofore in all the time he had known his partner, had been of a distinctly dull finish.

"What you been doin' to your fingers?" he asked.

"Huh!" said Dobbs. "What you mean?"

"They're shiny," Bill pointed out, "and your claws is sort of pink." As he looked again a sudden suspicion struck him. "Well, by glory!" he ejaculated. Dobbs achieved something like a blush.

"Oh, that!" he said with affected nonchalance. "Why, I had 'em manicured, that's all. That ain't nothing," he went on as his partner wagged his head helplessly. "And besides," he added resourcefully," it's good for rheumatism in the fingers."

"It hardens the gums, too, don't it?" said Bill, recovering his powers of speech.

"Oh, well," said Dobbs, "I just had it done for fun, and to help the poor girl out. They don't work on salary, them girls, and this one was in hard luck."

"Workin' on you," said Bill, "she would be."

"It'll be easier next time," said Dobbs. "I've got into careless pers'nal habits with the company I've kept, but I'm going to have it done reg'lar now. You wouldn't believe who that girl's father was, Bill. She's a judge's daughter."

"This is good," said Bill. "Judge of what—booze?"

"Law judge," Dobbs told him. "One of the big ones. He died and didn't leave no money, so she had to go to work. It's awful hard on a nice-brung-up girl, Bill, to come down to prunin' claws off'n the public. She looked so sad when she was tellin' me, that I sure felt sorry for her."

"And you staked her to a little extra money," Bill guessed.

"Only a five-spot," Dobbs confessed unwillingly.

"It's a wonder she took it," Bill commented with irony.

"She didn't want to," said Dobbs; "but she's educating her young brother to be a lawyer like his dad."

Bill gave it up. That afternoon several large packages had arrived addressed to Dobbs. Plainly they contained more clothes. Bill had thrown them on Dobbs' bed.

"What'll we order for dinner to-night?" he asked.

"Why," said Dobbs with a trace of embarrassment, "you order what you like. I'm goin' out to eat with some folks. They asked me. You won't mind, Bill?"

"Course not," Bill replied.

"I guess I better be gettin' ready," said Dobbs.

"Well, I'll have a drink, too," said Bill.

"I meant get dressed," Dobbs explained.

"Well, you are dressed, ain't you?" said Bill.

"I got some new clo'es," Dobbs returned, "and I'm goin' to wear them." And he took his bundles to the bathroom.

Even then his meaning did not dawn on his partner. Hence when Dobbs emerged some time later Bill gasped; for the old prospector was arrayed in conventional evening garb, in which he vainly strove to appear at ease.

"Well, I'll be damned!" Bill croaked feebly.

"How do I look, Bill?" Dobbs asked.

"Look?" Bill breathed. "Look! Have you got a job as a waiter, or have you just gone crazy?"

"Can't I wear evening clo'es if I want to?" Dobbs demanded.

"You can," Bill admitted freely. "And day clo'es; and night clo'es."

"Then what's biting you?"

"Nothing," said Bill. "Oh, no. Not a darn thing! I want a photo of you, that's all. To take back with us. To show you, when we're up some blasted creek fightin' flies and down to coffee and beans. And I s'pose where you're goin' now is out to some café with that 'judge's daughter.'"

"I ain't goin' with her at all," his partner protested. "I'm havin' dinner with Colonel Shannon and his daughter. He's int'rested in minin', and he knows a lot of big minin' men. We got a sort of a deal on, maybe."

"Where do you get off at, runnin' with a money bunch on the shoe string we got?" Bill scoffed.

"How much do you think we got?" Dobbs asked.

"Maybe fifteen hundred—if you've paid our bills."

"What would you say," Dobbs asked further, "if I told you we got pretty close to seven thousand—cash?"

"I'd say you were a liar," Bill replied promptly. "And you are, anyway," he added as saving time.

"All the same," Dobbs told him, "that's what we got."

"You're crazy," said Bill.

"If you ain't no crazier 'n I am," Dobbs retorted, "you'll do. You know what I was sayin' about luck. Well, sir, I had the right hunch. My luck's been plum' silly. I been out to where the ponies run, three times since you've been holed up, and I can't pick nothin' but winners. It's a fact. And I've just put all I win one day down the next, and I win again. And I bought some oil stock at ten cents a share; and I don't have her two days till there was a report they'd brought in a gusher, and the stock went up like one of them airyoplanes, and I cashed in. You can buy her now for three cents, but I sold out at eighty. And last night I went to a place where there was a wheel. She was a squeeze, of course, and crooked as anybody could want; but there was a guy playin' her heavy, on the colors, on a system he had. So I play her light, sorter copperin' his play, but not so's to look like it and make anybody sore. And it win me eight hundred. A few more winnin's and we'll be on velvet. And then you watch the pile grow, because when you ain't got no roll much you can't make much of a winnin'; but when you can stack in a thousand or so at a crack you win accordin'."

"Or lose," said Bill.

"You can't lose when you're in luck," Dobbs returned confidently, "no more'n you can win when you ain't. The minute luck turns I'll quit. But till she does I'll treat her like a rich bride."

"You ain't lyin'?" Bill queried.

"So help me!" said Dobbs. And he took himself off to his engagement.

Bill, left alone, was slightly dazed. It was just possible that his partner was telling the truth. Dobbs, when he had it, was a daring gambler, and with a run of luck—well, anything might happen. A shoe string might be run up to a bundle, and old Sam Dobbs was just the man to run it, if he got the breaks. Seven thousand dollars! It was typical of the relations of the partners that it never occurred to Bill to doubt that he had a fifty-per-cent interest in Dobbs' winnings; just as Dobbs would have had a like interest in his, if he had had any. Still, Bill was not quite convinced, because such luck was outside his experience. His mental engine was not geared for high speeds. It pounded along well enough at an average road gait, but when he tried to speed it up it was apt to overheat and knock. So, after a vain attempt to coax a few extra revolutions from what whisky there was left, he gave it up and went to sleep. But he woke up when his partner came in, which event occurred in the neighborhood of three o'clock in the morning. Bill looked at his watch and was properly scandalized.

"Nice time to be gettin' back!" he growled.

"Well, I ain't brought no cops with me," Dobbs retorted.

No adequate retort occurred to Bill. To his utter amazement his partner lit a cigarette.

"Don't you smoke that camel's hair in here!" Bill said when he had recovered his power of speech. "I'd as soon camp by a dead horse." Dobbs dropped the offending importation in an ash tray, whence it sent up a steady stream of incense. "Put the damn' thing out, can't you!" Bill snapped. "This ain't no harem. If you want to smoke, smoke tobacco." He himself relit the stump of a cigar which he had abandoned as a lost cause some hours before, drew the acrid poison into his lungs, ex-

pelled it with a grunt of satisfaction, and felt better. "Nice time to be gettin' in," he repeated, but more amiably.

Dobbs dug up his pipe, filled and lit it. "For a fact, this does taste better," he admitted. "Maybe it *is* a little late for night before last, but it's merely the shank of this evenin'." He proceeded to divest himself of his festal regalia, and chastely clad in a union suit of the color of April skies perched himself cross-legged on his bed. "What made me so late," he explained, "me and the colonel got into a little five-handed game with three strangers."

"Lose much?" Bill queried.

"Goldarn it," said Dobbs with irritation, "ain't I told you that luck's comin' to'rds us on the jump? You go makin' cracks like that and you'll queer it. No, I didn't lose. If you want to know, I win seven hundred dollars."

"Yes, you did—not!" Bill snorted.

For answer Dobbs produced currency and two checks making up this grand total.

"Checks!" Bill sneered. "Strangers' checks in a poker game! You poor sucker!"

"Them checks is good as the wheat," Dobbs informed him. "The men that made 'em are big lumber op'rators from down in Washington, and them checks is just chicken feed to them. There was pots tonight with five hundred in them, and me and the colonel come out ahead. He's a grand poker player. I'd have win more, myself, only it's just a friendly game. And besides," he added more convincingly, "nobody was drinking much."

Bill, awed, merely wagged his head.

"Before we hooked up with them fellers," his partner informed him, "me and the colonel was talkin' business. It's this way, Bill: The colonel has all kinds of money, and he's into mines heavy—him and sev'ral more St. Paul men. It's a syndicate. They got money enough to develop anything they want to, but they figure there's more in just turnin' properties over."

"And they're dead right," Bill approved; for development of the average mineral claim is a gamble.

"That's what I say," Dobbs concurred. "So far they've kept clear of placer prop'sitions, both dredging and hydraulicking, because they've never got hold of the right men with placer experience to report on such. They could get experts, of course, but they've got no use for them. And that's where their heads are on level again; because you know as well as I do that all them yellow-legged experts have is a big bluff and a bigger expense account."

"That's all," Bill agreed, for like most of their kind they held the genus mining expert in utter contempt. "Most men that have gone broke minin' have gone broke because they listened to experts with big development schemes and no horse sense. Of course," he admitted, "they call it right now and then, but that's accident."

"They get paid for bum guessin'," said Dobbs; "but none of them ever found anything by themselves. And as for placers, the big ones has been found where the experts said there wasn't no gold at all. And nobody ever found gold where an expert said it ought to be. Now, we're practical men, Bill, and the colonel knows it. Or he knows I am, and I've told him about you. And he wants us to work in with him —to look over placer propositions for his syndicate."

"What placers have they got?"

"They ain't got any yet, because as I told you they had nobody they could trust to report on 'em. They want to be in shape to handle 'em when they come up, that's it. You take the old Cariboo diggin's, like Williams Creek and Stout Gulch, and there's outfits workin' them again by modern methods, and there's plenty more chances. Them old gold creeks hasn't always run where they're runnin' now; and it's men like us, with an eye for country, that can see where the old channels used to be, that they want. And, besides them old creeks, they got a notion that there's new placers to be found still."

And then they were off to a flying start, for the confirmed placer man is long on faith, and his creed is belief in undiscovered placers. Both had data to back it up, in their individual experiences. Dobbs, taking off his boots one night in camp, had found gold amid the mud adhering to them; but though he had gone back over his trail or endeavored to do so, he had never found where it came from. Bill had found gold in the stomach of a mountain sheep, presumably obtained from some "lick." And then there was the case of a dead man, a Chinese as nearly as they could guess, with a poke of coarse gold by his side in a lonely camp far from any known placer. All these instances they now related with detail.

"The country ain't more than scratched yet," said Dobbs. "And, apart from rich ground, we've struck lots that it wouldn't pay to work by hand, but with a hydraulic outfit, and a giant to slice down the banks, it'd be different."

"What would they pay us?" Bill asked practically.

"It didn't come up just that way," Dobbs replied. "You see, I made a sort of a bluff that we had money when I met the colonel first, and his idea was that we'd ought to come in on the syndicate—put up our own coin and take our share of the profits."

"That's what you get for bluffin'," said Bill. "You get called, and all you got to show is a busted flush."

"But we got some money now."

"Then you weren't lyin'?"

"Course I wasn't. But I guess we ain't got enough. Profits on our little pile would be small and it'd look like chicken feed to them fellers. Still, if my luck holds——"

"You hang on to what you got," Bill advised. "Why couldn't we sell 'em some placer claims?"

"We ain't got none," Dobbs replied; for the partners regarded the formality of staking such ground as they found as superfluous. When they found pay they worked it and kept its location to themselves. And as they prospected from choice in out-of-the-way places this had worked very well.

"Well, we could get some," Bill pointed out. "There's plenty of ground that wouldn't pay us, that would be a good hydraulicking proposition. We could put in some properties like that."

"The way the colonel puts it up," said Dobbs, "is that with our own money in with them we'd have more interest than if we was just workin' for them. And we'd have more say, of course. That's reas'nable, when you come to think of it. He says it shows our bony fidos."

"Our what?" Bill asked.

"It's French," the linguist explained; "and it means you're dealin' off the top of the deck and not holdin' out nothin'."

"He ain't French, is he?" said Bill. "Because since that Frenchman tried to kill me that time up the Coppermine I'm off them for life."

"'Shannon,'" said Dobbs. "That's Irish."

"Well, an Irishman *did* near kill me one time," said Bill. "There's one thing, though, about them Irish," he added in reluctant tribute, "they take to killin' natural."

Dobbs forbore to comment upon the respective homicidal merits of the Gallic and Hibernian races.

"The colonel told me about one or two deals he's made. There's big money in the game, unless he's lyin'."

"Maybe he is."

"What would he lie to me for?"

"What did you lie to him for?"

"That's diff'rent," the casuist replied. "He don't need to run a bluff, because you can see he's solid; and he ain't a pilgrim by a darned sight. He knows a lot about the old camps, and the men that were in them maybe thirty years or so ago. I know them myself, so I know he ain't lyin'. He was there when he was a young man. Wait till you have a talk with him."

"You can steer me up against him tomorrow," said Bill. "If that thin-headed guy ain't dead by this time I guess he'll pull through. And anyway, I ain't goin' to stay holed up no longer."

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE LADY.

THE next day Dobbs introduced his partner to the colonel in the lobby, and stood by for a time, much as a trainer putting an imperfectly trained animal through its paces, apprehensive lest Bill should make some "break." Then he went off to attend to his own affairs, leaving them together.

Bill, though inferior to his partner in cunning, was wise enough in his own way, and it did not take him long to decide that Colonel Shannon knew a good deal about mining and mining camps. Not that he paraded this knowledge. On the contrary, he spoke with reservation. But there was not the slightest doubt that he spoke from firsthand knowledge and not from hearsay.

"You were mining yourself, them days?" Bill asked.

"Everybody was," the colonel replied. "But I made my money—what I have—a good many years later in wheat and real estate. It's only in the last few years that I have been actively interested in mining, and then I got into it by accident. Some of us had to take over a mine to protect

ourselves, and we managed to sell it at a profit. Then we thought we saw an opportunity to make some money by taking up an option, and we made money on that. Gradually we got into the game. You understand that we do not work mines—or rather we prefer not to. We buy properties to sell again. So far we have steered clear of placers, mainly because we have had nobody associated with us who knew much about them. But I believe there is money to be made in them."

"Dealing in them, or working them?"

"Either way. We should prefer to turn them over. If we decided to work any given placer we should of course want to be reasonably sure that we had dirt to warrant putting in a dredge or hydraulic outfit, as the case might be. And for that matter the same would apply to any proposition we took up with a view to resale. We don't want to unload worthless properties bought cheap. That is not our policy. We never touch anything that hasn't at least good indications of value. Naturally we can't guarantee anything, and the risk is the purchaser's, but we give him the best deal we can."

"You're different from most mining men," Bill told him from his experience.

"Well, I may be a little more scrupulous," the colonel replied with a chuckle. "Now, you understand our general policy. You and Mr. Dobbs made your money in placering he tells me."

"We've made a little that way," Bill admitted truthfully. "If you know anything about placering yourself, I don't need to tell you it's a gamble."

"Hand placering undoubtedly is, because nothing but rich ground will pay. But when you have an outfit to handle dirt in quantity you can get a profit from stuff that wouldn't pay to pan by hand."

"Only you have to have a lot of that kind of dirt, or it don't pay to put in an outfit."

"Very true," the colonel nodded. "Mr. Dobbs has told you of my suggestion?"

"About us workin' for you?"

"About coming in with us," the colonel corrected.

"He mentioned it," said Bill, "but I don't think we've got enough money loose. We're sort of tied up."

"That's too bad," said the colonel regretfully, "because on the profits we've shown up to date it is a very good investment. We've made money."

Bill believed him. There was nothing flamboyant about the colonel. He was solid. "Just the kind of an old bird," as Bill put it to himself, "that for all you know owns a couple banks or a railroad and keeps his mouth shut about it." But Bill, though he approved the colonel, had the hard common sense which dislikes to put money into anything over which its owner has not immediate personal control. He was skeptical by nature, and he had not the gambling spirit of his partner.

"We couldn't put in much, the way we're fixed now," he said.

"Understand me," said the colonel, "it isn't that we need more capital. We have plenty of money for our operations. I made the suggestion to Mr. Dobbs, because somehow I gathered from his conversation that you had money looking for investment, and we should have been delighted to have had two gentlemen of your experience associated with us. It's just the combination we've been looking for. I had no definite amount in mind, but I thought you and your partner might perhaps put in enough to give you an active interest—some nominal sum —say, ten thousand each."

"We ain't got no such money as that," Bill replied. "Sam talks a little big now and then, 'specially when he's had a few drinks. When you talk in ten thousands you're out of our class."

"Well, it's probably my mistake," said the colonel. "But we need somebody who knows placer propositions. Would you and your partner consider an offer for your services?"

"What sort of an offer?"

"Something like five thousand a year."

"We might," said Bill, who had never hoped to receive half of it; "but we'd have to talk it over first."

"Of course," the colonel agreed. "No hurry. Ah, here comes my daughter." He rose punctiliously and Bill awkwardly, to receive the brown-haired vision who approached them. "Patty, my dear, permit me to present Mr. Hutchins, Mr. Dobbs' partner."

Bill, engulfing Miss Patty's slim hand in an enormous paw, was ill at ease. She belonged to a stratum of the gentler sex above and outside his experience. She was brown of hair and of eye, and as trim and sleek

as a tuned racing craft. Plainly, her life had been easy and sheltered. Bill, whose life had been just the reverse, regarded her with the wondering admiration a scarred, hard-eyed fighting dog might possibly feel for a gentle, silky coated, house-broken pet.

Miss Patty, retrieving her hand which Bill from nervousness seemed inclined to retain permanently, hoped that he had quite recovered from the unfortunate car accident.

"I've heard so much about you from Mr. Dobbs," she went on. "He has told me of some of your wonderful adventures."

Bill, recalling several of the more salient of these, turned a dull red; but he found some reassurance in the thought that not even Dobbs would have the nerve to relate them to a lady.

"You don't want to believe all he tells you," he said. "He makes up a lot of yarns."

"Oh, but I hope he didn't make these up," said the girl. "Isn't it true that once when he had broken his leg you hauled him for days on a toboggan, and wouldn't leave him though you were both starving?"

"Oh, that!" said Bill, blushing. "That didn't amount to much. We was a little shy on grub, maybe, but it was only a matter of time till we run into a deer."

"And what about the time you risked your life to save the squaw and her baby from the forest fire?"

Bill's credit items had never kept the recording angel busy, whatever might be said of the debits. Bill's treasures laid up on high were notably few; and he was rather ashamed of such as there were, as flaws in an otherwise consistent record.

"Sam must have got that all wrong," he stated. "It wasn't much of a fire, and I run onto the klootch and her kid pretty close to a little lake; so we all went into it and stayed in the water till things cooled off. Nothin' to that. Most times them klootchmen is plenty able to look after themselves."

To his relief Miss Patty offered no further illustrations, but engaged her father in conversation concerning the purchase of a car, the burden of her sire's defensive argument being that she had a perfectly good one at home.

"But you promised me a new one if you sold that old mine."

"And I haven't sold it."

"You've practically sold it. Don't be a piker, dad."

The colonel groaned. "You see where my money goes," he said to Bill.

"Good place, too," the latter offered daringly; and his sinful heart knocked when the young lady blushed charmingly and threw him a glance of approval.

"Well, I'll have a look at the bus, but I won't promise anything," the colonel stipulated for terms of honorable surrender. "Dine with us to-night, Mr. Hutchins, you and Mr. Dobbs."

"Oh, do!" Miss Patty invited.

"Thanks," Bill stammered with sudden shyness. "But——"

"Seven o'clock," the colonel cut him short, and departed with his daughter.

When Bill saw Dobbs an hour later he told him of the invitation.

"By gosh, there ain't much time," said Dobbs. "Come on, and we'll get you a suit."

"Suit?" Bill queried.

"Dress suit," said his partner, "like mine."

"My clothes are jake," Bill protested. But Dobbs held contra; and as man born of woman knows no mental anguish more acute than to be clad as his fellows are not clad on any specific occasion, Bill yielded. And that evening he endued himself in conventional attire, in which he loomed vastly, and felt but half clad.

"I feel like a darn' fool," he growled as he regarded the general result in the mirror.

"That's to be expected," said his partner.

"Huh!" said Bill.

"I mean you'll get used to them clo'es after a while," Dobbs explained. "Everybody in society wears 'em. You'd feel more like a fool not doin' it."

"There's no pockets in this darn' coat," Bill complained, "and they're cut off where the pockets ought to be. There's no place to put things."

"You ain't supposed to pack freight in this rig," his partner instructed him. "About all you need is a handkerchief, and you shove that up your sleeve."

"I do like blazes!" said Bill, who felt his manhood insulted by the suggestion. "I wear her in my hip pocket with my tobacker, like I always do. What I kick at more, there's no vest pockets you can carry cigars in."

"You don't need to pack cigars with you," Dobbs assured him, "because there'll be lots. These clo'es is all right when you get used to them. They set a man off."

"Off what?" Bill wanted to know. But Dobbs did not reply. He regarded his own reflection, both front and side elevations.

"They sort of suit me," he said with satisfaction. "Say, Bill," he added after further silent contemplation, "about how old would you take me to be—if you didn't know?"

"Old enough to know better," said Bill.

"No, honest?" Dobbs insisted. His partner took a good look at him.

"Seventy-eight," he said, "givin' you the best of it. How old was King David——"

"Go to hell!" said Dobbs. And relations were slightly strained when they went to dinner.

It was a very good dinner, of a variety and sequence outside Bill's experience. He got through it somehow, though the multiplicity of adjuncts to the ordinarily simple business of eating bothered him, and he was very conscious of his raiment.

"How handsome Mr. Hutchins looks in evening clothes," Miss Patty whispered to Dobbs. "But you mustn't tell him I said so."

"I won't," Dobbs promised with sincerity. "I hope he behaves himself all right, and I guess he will. I warned him."

"Warned him?" the girl exclaimed.

"Bill means well enough," said Dobbs condescendingly, "but he ain't had no social training. He's a roughneck. You'll have to overlook a lot."

"Why, he seems very nice, indeed."

"You don't know him," said Dobbs darkly. And he was disgusted when, after this warning, the young lady proceeded to get on very friendly terms with his partner, and after dinner paired off with him.

Bill, who was accustomed to return hospitality as soon as he could, suggested a show for all hands; but the colonel was not in the mood.

"You young folks go," he said. "We two old fellows will have a quiet smoke and a chat."

"Why, you ain't old, colonel," Bill urged hypocritically. "I don't believe you're as old as Sam."

"I thought he was some years my junior," said the colonel, looking at Dobbs, who favored his partner with a baleful glare.

"He thinks anybody over forty's old," he said. "And I *am* over forty," he confessed candidly.

"Of course you ain't as old as you look," Bill consoled him.

He departed with Miss Patty, and thoroughly enjoyed himself during a performance and a subsequent supper. It was his first experience of social equality with a girl of her sort, and his behavior might have served as a model for a Launcelot, Galahad, or Chesterfield. When he returned the young lady to the protection of her natural guardian, he sought his own quarters, where he found his partner smoking gloomily and inclined to be huffy.

"Saw a good show," said Bill. "You ought to been along."

"Huh!" said Dobbs.

"But I s'pose you enjoyed yourself more, chinnin' with the colonel."

"You don't s'pose nothin' of the sort," Dobbs returned sourly. "But the way he put it I couldn't help myself. I sure hope you behaved yourself with that girl."

"What do you take me for?" his partner demanded indignantly.

"You might say something raw and not know it," Dobbs suggested. "You ain't what I'd call refined."

"Are you?" Bill asked justifiably.

"I was brung up in a Christian home," Dobbs stated with some pride.

"Yes," said Bill. "And look at you!"

"It's the bad company I've kept," Dobbs retorted. "But all the same I know what's what."

"You know more what ain't what," Bill told him. "Where do you get off at, you old stiff, pullin' that stuff on me? I tell you I didn't make no breaks at all. I watched myself."

"I'll bet you did, if you didn't," said Dobbs. "You're a pretty tough proposition, Bill; and you want to remember that girl's a little lady, and plum' innocent. And also we want to stand in with her old man."

CHAPTER V.

THE LUCK OF OLD MAN DOBBS.

BILL'S experience of the fair sex, though extensive, had been confined to ladies who differed radically from Miss Patty Shannon. But though he had never heard the dictum concerning the under-the-skin sisterhood of "the colonel's lady and Judy

O'Grady," he had that general idea. He admired Patty Shannon immensely, and she did not seem averse to his society. She allowed him to take her to a couple of "shows," and to show her Vancouver's scenic beauties from the quarter-deck of the most gorgeous car he could hire. Bill was no short sport, no cheap skate. In his experience, if you liked a girl you blew your money on her. He wanted to do the right thing, but he knew his own shortcomings in knowledge of social usage; and he took counsel with his partner, who had adopted a more tolerant attitude, apparently having given up whatever ambitions he might have cherished to emulate the author of the "Psalms."

"I'd like to buy her something, and I don't know what's right," said Bill.

"What was you thinking of?" Dobbs asked. Bill frowned.

"I guess she's got about everything already. But I might get her some di'mond dewdab."

"She wouldn't take it."

"Why wouldn't she?"

"Because she's a lady," Dobbs informed him, "and they don't take no presents like that."

"Well, I can't buy her no cars nor seal coats," Bill said ruefully. "The roll won't stand it. If that's what she wants she's out of luck."

"I mean," Dobbs explained, "that it ain't proper in society for a young lady to accept joolry and such from a gent outside her own family, without she's engaged to him. And that lets you out. You can give her flowers, though. Flowers is a good safe card, and accordin' to Hoyle."

"What good's flowers to anybody?" said Bill with contempt. "They're only cheap junk."

"You try buyin' some of the best brands, and see how cheap they are," said Dobbs. "And they don't last no time, neither. You keep a girl staked to flowers right along, and you need a bank roll. And they mean things, diff'rent flowers do. There's a language of 'em, same as Injun signs with sticks and broke bushes on a trail."

"Do you savvy it?" Bill asked with interest.

"Well, no," Dobbs admitted, "I've sorter forgot. But roses is a safe play. And besides flowers it's proper to give a girl candy, and maybe a book."

"What sort of a book?" Bill queried. "A cook book?"

"Cook book nothin'!" Dobbs snorted. "A poetry book."

"I don't know nothin' about poetry," Bill objected.

"Nobody with any sense does," said Dobbs; "but women like it."

"How would I know what kind to get?" Bill asked doubtfully.

"Poetry books for women run thin," the expert told him; "and mostly they got white-and-gold covers and the edges of the leaves is sorter rough like they needed trimmin'."

But Bill refused to take a chance on the poets, and put his weight on candy and flowers. He had his reward in what he considered an added friendliness on the part of the fair recipient.

The colonel, too, was friendliness itself, and though he did not again suggest that the partners should invest in the syndicate which he represented, it was settled that they should act for it when occasion arose by investigating and reporting on placer propositions. Naturally this tentative arrangement was subject to the approval of the colonel's associates, but he intimated that this was a matter of form. He was keenly interested in placers, and anxious to obtain information concerning the possibilities of territory which they had prospected.

"I wouldn't wonder if we could sell him a claim or two," Dobbs speculated to his partner. "He'd take our say-so for about anything."

"That's the hell of it," said Bill regretfully. "When a man ain't out to do you, but to give you a square deal, it don't seem right to trim him."

"'Specially when he has a daughter," Dobbs suggested.

"Go to blazes!" said Bill.

"Well, minin' 's minin'," Dobbs said. "But I guess it'd pay us better to lay low for a while and see that nobody else gets his money. There's always a lot of crooks with claims to sell."

The colonel gave ample evidence that he trusted them and regarded them as business associates when he requested their assistance in a deal he was putting through.

"He's buyin' a minin' property, and he don't want his name to show in the title," Dobbs explained to his partner. "He wants the transfer to be made to us, in our names,

and we'll pay over the money for him, and so on. And if he sells again, of course we sign the papers."

"No harm in that," said Bill. "If he wants us to be dummies it's all right with me."

And so the next day they sought the office of one George S. White, a mining broker who was acting as agent for the venders. The office was one of a rabbit warren of its kind in a dingy office building, and was somewhat sparsely furnished. But Mr. White himself was a businesslike man and he had documents ready, duly signed and witnessed, purporting to convey to the partners jointly one mineral claim known as the Lucky Kate. In return therefor they handed over a check for nine thousand dollars, drawn on a St. Paul bank, with which they had been furnished by the colonel. It was payable to their order, and all they had to do was to indorse it.

"Strictly speaking this ought to be certified," Mr. White told them as they scrawled their signatures. "I'd insist on it if I didn't know the colonel as I do."

"I guess he's good for nine thousand," said Dobbs.

"Or ninety, far as that goes," Mr. White nodded. "You're in his crowd, so I don't need to tell you anything about him. He's square, and he's lucky. He'll hold you right to an agreement, but he won't kick if you hold him."

"Minin' 's minin'," said Dobbs.

They handed the documents of title to the colonel, and received his thanks and an invitation to dinner. Twenty-four hours later they had a visit from Mr. White.

"About that Lucky Kate claim," he said. "I can turn it over, if you want to deal."

"For how much?" Dobbs asked.

"Fifteen thousand," Mr. White replied. "That's velvet of six thousand to you people, and I want ten per cent of it for mine."

"We'll have to see the colonel," Dobbs told him. And the colonel proved willing to take his profit.

"I was pretty sure that I could make a quick turn-over," he confided to Dobbs. "I have another deal in mind that ought to show a better profit than this. If I put it through I'll get you and Hutchins to act for us again, if you don't mind. White is handling this property, but he doesn't know where he can place it, and I do—or I think I do, and when I am sure I'll get you to help me. This is in confidence, of course. You'll be careful not to mention it to White."

"Me and Bill don't mention nothing," Dobbs told him.

"I know I can rely on your absolute discretion," the colonel nodded with satisfaction; "otherwise I should not ask you to be my business associates. I know I can trust you."

Nobody had trusted Dobbs for so long that he had forgotten what it felt like. It was a new sensation, and rather pleasant; especially when he thought of certain alleged placer ground in which the colonel seemed interested.

Attending to the colonel's mining deals might be casting bread upon the waters, but it brought in no immediate returns. For several days Dobbs had not played poker or the races, nor had he added to his treasures on earth. But he had not relinquished his stated determination to inflate the partnership roll to plethoric proportions. It now stood close to the eight-thousand-dollar mark, which Dobbs by a mental metamorphosis now considered merely chicken feed. He made up his mind to woo Fortune again.

A man may have implicit belief in luck as a factor in success when he has little of either; but when good fortune comes his way with sufficient frequency he is inconsistently apt to attribute it to his own efforts and shrewdness. Thus Dobbs, who had begun by reciting the credo in blind faith to the Goddess of Chance, now became apostate.

"I'm just gettin' onto this game, and I'm goin' to make a real killin'," he said to Bill. "You watch my smoke."

"And you watch your step," Bill advised. "I've heard you say that as soon as you know a game luck quits you."

"Luck don't control games in this town much," the sophisticated Dobbs replied. "Far from it, and otherwise."

"You've had the luck of a butcher's dog ever since we hit this burg," Bill maintained.

"I've been lucky—some," Dobbs conceded. "I don't deny it. But I've used my judgment, too. We'll go out to the races this afternoon, and I'll show you."

The exemplification cost him six hundred dollars. In no race did a horse of his choice even show.

"Luck was dead against me," he said sadly as they took their homeward way.

"I thought you was using your judgment now," Bill commented brutally. "It looked like it."

"You can't expect to win all the time," Dobbs excused himself. "I dunno's I'd want to. There wouldn't be no fun in it."

"I notice you kicked about that when you was winnin' steady," Bill observed with irony.

"I'll get this money back, don't you worry," Dobbs prophesied.

"You said," Bill reminded him, "that the minute your luck turned you'd quit."

"But it ain't turned," Dobbs maintained. "What's six hundred? Ain't I won close to six thousand? And I'm a-goin' to run her up to sixty. You watch me."

"I'll watch you sittin' in the Old Men's Home some day," Bill predicted.

He spent the evening in the pleasant company of the colonel and his daughter —especially the latter. When he went to bed there was no sign of Dobbs. Bill woke up when he came in, and heard him removing his garments in the dark.

"Why don't you turn on the light?" he said.

"Don't need it."

"Where you been?"

"Out."

Something in his partner's tone made Bill reach for the switch himself.

"You've been up to something," he charged when the light revealed Dobbs' countenance. "I'll bet you've been hooked up into a game."

"Well, s'posin' I have."

"How much did you win?"

"Not much."

"Ho!" Bill said with enlightenment. "So you lost, hey!"

"The cards sorter run agin' me," Dobbs admitted reluctantly. "Twice to-night I held pat hands, and nothing out against them. And when there was money up I was outheld. I was playin' in hard luck right along."

"How hard?" Bill insisted.

"Close to eight hundred," Dobbs confessed unwillingly.

"Great Sardanapalus!" Bill exclaimed. "That's fourteen hundred you've dropped to-day."

"I was outlucked to-night," said Dobbs, "but——"

"And just this morning," Bill cut him short severely, "you said luck didn't control games in this burg."

"In an ord'nary way it don't," said Dobbs. "But they watched me too close."

In times of tranquillity Bill was wont to trail along behind his partner, grumbling a good deal, but on the whole allowing himself to be led. But when things went badly wrong he arose and took command of the bark of their fortunes. He issued orders and insisted upon obedience. Now it seemed time to take a decided stand, and he proceeded to read the riot act to his partner in no uncertain terms.

"Your trouble is," he said, "that your head's swelled on you. You're beginnin' to talk as if you had something to do with what's only plain and fancy, crazy, damfool luck. Now it's quit you, and it's quit you cold. You've made a little stake, but if you keep on you'll drop it quicker'n you made it, and I ain't goin' to let you do it. So from now on you don't play no more races, nor no poker, and you don't buy no more wildcats of no kind, nor walk into no deadfalls. You're through—get me!"

And Dobbs, though he had reached years presumably of discretion, knew that he was. When it came to a show-down in partnership or personal matters Bill was boss whenever he chose to be. But he made a final plea for self-determination.

"Tell you what I'll do," he said as one who makes generous concession; "I'll just win back what I lose to-day, and then I'll quit. So help me!"

"You have quit," Bill informed him tersely. "To-morrow you and me are going to pool all our coin in one bank account, and fix it so's neither of us can get a dollar without us both signing for it. And that'll be fair, because I won't sign no checks for you unless I like; and you'll sign for me, or I'll darn' well know why."

And it was even so. When they left the bank after opening the joint account outlined by Bill, each had a hundred dollars in his pocket. And Dobbs assumed airs of virtue.

"Having money in a bank makes you feel solid, sort of," he said. "That is, if the bank is."

"This one is," Bill assured him. "A bank account is a fine thing for a rainy day." Dobbs looked up at the sky, which was leaking badly, and his eyes became wistful.

"Speakin' of rain," he said, "there's a horse in the fourth race to-day that's a reg'lar swamp rabbit. On a muddy track it's a sure——"

"Darn you!" said Bill, "didn't I tell you you were through?"

"Well, I was just mentionin' this," said Dobbs.

"You better forget it," Bill warned him.

But for Dobbs the cream was off the jug, life had lost its spice. He took a melancholy satisfaction in pointing out to Bill the next day that the "swamp rabbit" had romped home a seven-to-two winner on a slippery track.

"He wouldn't if you'd bet on him," Bill maintained. "And if he had you'd have dropped it on something else."

"How do you know I would?"

"I don't know you wouldn't," said Bill; "and that's good enough for me."

Dobbs reflected that you could do nothing with a guy like that. He had a suspicion that Bill was a hoodoo, a jinx; and for evidence to support this reasonable theory there was the circumstance that he had won consistently while Bill had been confined to his room, and had lost on the first occasion on which his partner had accompanied him. He told him so with some bitterness.

"Was I with you when you lost that eight hundred playing poker?" Bill demanded cogently.

"When anything starts your bad luck it just stays with you," Dobbs argued.

"Well, you remember it," said Bill.

Dobbs in his fallen estate wandered forth and discovered an illicit slot machine at the back of a cigar store, and fed money to its maw until it choked. And then he discovered that occasionally a dollar-limit game was played in the same precincts. It was puerile from his standpoint, but it was better than nothing. It was so much better that it presently cleaned him of all currency save one ten-dollar bill which he prudently decided to retain for tobacco and similar necessaries of life until his partner might reasonably be approached to join in another check.

"And he won't sign none for about a week, darn him, unless he gets drunk or something," he said to himself. "My luck is all shot. But she may come back."

A few blocks from the cigar store he entered a crowd which was clustered about the thrilling spectacle of a car which had skidded. When he went on he endeavored to ascertain the time, but found a difficulty in the circumstance that his watch was missing. Struck by a horrible suspicion his hand dived for the ten-dollar bill, lone survivor of a once-merry company. It, too, had succumbed.

Dobbs addressed his Maker in an impassioned plea for justice on Vancouver along the lines of action which destroyed cities celebrated in the Old Testament; but receiving no immediate response he seized upon a passing policeman as a possible if disguised instrument of divine justice.

"I been robbed!" he said. The information evoked but slight interest in the representative of the law.

"You don't need to date time from that, not in this town," he said. "What you been robbed of?"

Dobbs told him.

"Somebody must have been hard up," the cop speculated tolerantly. "You say you was in a crowd by that car? Where was you before that, and what was you doing?" And when Dobbs told him that, he exhibited a sudden lively interest. "You say there was a machine and a poker game goin' on back of that cigar store?" he demanded sternly.

"Sure there was," Dobbs confirmed; "but I wasn't robbed there."

"There's other folks besides you," the cop told him cryptically. "To think there's been a machine and a game runnin' there Gawd knows how long, and me not wise to it! It's awful!" And he shook his head sadly.

"Well, how about my ten-spot and my watch?" Dobbs reminded him.

"Oh, them!" said the cop, a far-away expression in his eyes. "Why, I guess you've lost them. Don't go into no more street crowds." And he moved majestically off in the direction from which Dobbs had come.

"No darn' wonder there's a crime wave!" Dobbs muttered indignantly.

He thought it over after he had gone to bed, and under the melancholy circumstances came to the conclusion that he was justified in replacing the vanished ten in the only practical way, namely, by a temporary loan from his partner without that gentleman's knowledge.

Bill's exhaust indicated a perfect sleeping mixture. His apparel was draped impartially upon a chair and on the floor on

the farther side of his bed. Dobbs slid out cautiously, tiptoed over, and possessed himself of Bill's nether garments. He slid his hand into the starboard pocket, and his fingers encountered a friendly wad of currency which he brought forth. Unfortunately a silver dollar which lurked concealed in its green depths seized this opportunity to escape. As it fell it hit the chair, and thence bounded malevolently to a steam coil which it struck with a clang. At the sound Bill awoke with the swift completeness of a wild animal, and by the light through the door transom beheld his partner standing with the garments aforesaid in his hand. It was distinctly compromising.

Partnership may confer a common interest in many things, but it seldom includes pants. So far they are exempt from communistic teachings. Pants, in the present phase of civilization, are regarded as personal, even by advanced thinkers. Bill so regarded them.

"What are you doing with my pants?" he demanded. And the engine of Dobbs' ready invention for once stalled.

"Your pants?" he said feebly. "Oh, you mean your pants! Why——" He blinked in sudden light as Bill threw a switch. "Why, so they are!" he exclaimed in accents of intense surprise. "I must have picked up yours by mistake in the dark. Now ain't that funny? Ha, ha!" But his mirth rang hollowly.

"It's funny as hell," Bill returned coldly. "What's that silver dollar doin' on the floor? I had one in my pocket. Gimme them pants." His fingers explored the pockets and his brow clouded ominously. "You darned old stiff," he announced, "I believe you've been tryin' to roll me!"

"No, I ain't, Bill, honest," Dobbs protested manfully. "I wouldn't do such a thing. Fact is, I woke up with a touch of toothache, and I figured a chaw of tobacker would ease her. I forgot to buy any to-day, and I didn't want to wake you up, and that's the holy truth. I wouldn't never——"

But Bill, unheeding, got out of bed, possessed himself of his partner's trousers and went through the pockets. He found a goodly plug of the staff of Dobbs' life, but no money.

"Now I get it," he said. "You ain't got a red left. And yesterday you had a hundred. What you done with it?"

Dobbs, under the gun, made a clean breast.

"Well you are the holy limit!" Bill commented. "When you've got the streak you'd gamble your socks. If I hadn't fixed things I'll bet you'd have lost your whole roll, instead of a measly hundred."

"I might," Dobbs admitted humbly; "but I'm off it now. You know yourself when I'm sure my luck's out I don't play nothin'. And I ain't got no more luck now than I'd have flirtin' with angels. I've quit, and I'll shake on it."

And as both considered this rite as being rather more binding than an oath, Bill was satisfied that for a time at least his partner would stand without hitching.

CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD FRIEND RETURNS.

THE next morning Bill, smoking an after-breakfast cigar, beheld the entrancing vision of Miss Patty Shannon approaching him swiftly.

"Oh, I was so afraid I shouldn't find you in time," she said with an air of relief.

"What's the matter?" Bill asked, for the young lady appeared to be excited.

"Daddy was called away at some unearthly hour this morning to look at a mine up the coast," Miss Patty explained. "He went on a boat with the owners, and they wanted to sail at daybreak. He woke me up, and gave me a check for you and Mr. Dobbs, to pay for some mining property he is buying through a Mr. White. He said you would understand, and I hope you do, for I'm not sure I remember all I was to tell you."

"I guess I know," said Bill. "He spoke to Dobbs about it. We take the title in our names and indorse his check over to White."

"Yes, that's it," the girl nodded. "He said Mr. White would have the papers ready if you would call at his office. But the important thing that I was not to forget to tell you is that these papers are in pursuance of an option that expires to-day at twelve o'clock. He says the money must be paid before then, because somebody else has offered Mr. White a higher price. I don't understand such things very well, but that is what he said. I'll have to leave it to you to figure out."

"I get it all right," said Bill. "We'll be

there in time. Just give me the check, and I'll look after it."

"I have it locked up in my bag in our rooms," Miss Patty told him. "I was so afraid of losing it. Come up with me and I'll give it to you. And then you may see me off."

"Off?" Bill echoed in dismay.

"Not for long," Miss Patty smiled. "I'm just running down to Seattle to visit an old school friend while daddy is away."

The young lady's traveling bag stood packed and locked on a chair in the sitting room of the colonel's suite. She unlocked it and took out a blank envelope, unsealed, from which she extracted the check, which she tendered to Bill. Like the check in the previous similar transaction it was drawn on a St. Paul bank and was payable to the partners' order. Its amount was five thousand dollars.

"It's all right, isn't it?" the girl asked.

"Sure," said Bill.

The girl took the check from him, replaced it in the envelope and handed it back to him. He placed it in the inner breast pocket of his coat.

"Well, that's a weight off my mind," Miss Patty declared. "If I hadn't found you I don't know what I should have done. And I was afraid I'd miss my train."

"I wouldn't care if you did," said Bill. Her eyes laughed at him.

"But that's selfish. Shall you miss me very much?"

"Course I will," he declared chivalrously. "I won't have nobody to go to shows with me."

"Take Mr. Dobbs."

"Da—darn Dobbs!" said Bill, and meant it.

"You know—Bill—you're rather a darling," said Miss Patty.

Now Bill, whenever he had been honored by the company of the colonel's daughter, had been on his best behavior. He had been painfully restrained and respectful. Never by word or deed had he attempted the least familiarity. Apparently he was safe for a lady to drive. But man is only human. Miss Patty had never called him by his given name before, let alone coupling it with a term of affection. Bill looked into her brown eyes and read in them a challenge which he was ever swift to meet. And so the young lady, whether to her surprise or not, found herself swept swiftly into a pair of arms of a strength beyond her previous experiences—if any—and most emphatically kissed. For just a moment she lay against the cigars that upholstered Bill's manly bosom; and then she released herself and stepped back.

"No, no!" she cried as Bill showed a disposition to repeat. "Oh, how could you? I thought I could tut-tut-trust you!" And the brown eyes filled with tears.

"Don't cry, darn it!" said Bill with more satisfaction than contrition. "Sure you can trust me. You can bank on me every time. But when you looked at me like that, and called me—what you did—well, I'm a man, ain't I?"

Which seemed to be incontrovertible.

"I don't know what you must think of me!" Miss Patty told him in sad self-reproach.

Bill began to tell her what he thought of her with enthusiasm, but with a look at her watch and a startled exclamation she declared that she had just time to catch her train.

Bill, internally damning all transportation systems, accompanied her to the station, where he jammed his way to the wicket and bought her ticket. He got past the gate on his stature and a superb bluff, and saw her safely aboard. From the fact that she laughed and threw him a kiss as the train began to move he deduced that she was not offended; and he returned to the hotel a prey to natural regrets that he had not kissed her before. There he found Dobbs, and told him of the commission with which they had been intrusted.

"Option, hey," said Dobbs. "We better not run it too fine. We'll go and fix it up with White now. You got the check, have you?"

"Right here," said Bill, patting his pocket.

They found Mr. White in his office, and he did not seem especially pleased to see them.

"I was hoping you wouldn't show up till after twelve o'clock," he said. "I'd be tickled to death to see that option lapse. Of course I've had the transfers prepared and signed ready for delivery on payment; but till the money is actually paid the only claim the colonel has on the property is the option itself."

"You got some other buyer in sight?" Dobbs queried.

"I've been offered just about double what I optioned the property for to the colonel," Mr. White told them frankly. "However, it can't be helped. Here are the transfers in your names, in accordance with the colonel's instructions to me."

"We've got the colonel's check for five thousand," said Bill.

"That's right," Mr. White nodded. "If it's like the last one, uncertified, I suppose I could refuse to accept it on the ground that it wasn't legal tender. That would allow me to make a nice bunch of money. But that isn't the way I do business."

Bill reached into his breast pocket for the check. As his fingers explored its depths a surprised and then a startled expression came into his eyes.

"Holy Mackinaw!" he breathed.

"What's the matter?" his partner asked.

"I can't find that check."

"Gosh!" said Dobbs. "Look again, Bill!" And Bill frisked himself thoroughly in vain.

"She was right in my inside pocket in a white envelope," he said. "I must have lost her." He had no idea where he had lost it. It might have been in the hotel, in the taxi they had taken to the station, on the street or even in the railway coach. The check was not negotiable because the partners had not indorsed it. But that did not help the present situation.

"You see how it is," Bill told White. "I've lost it. But I'll advertise and get it back. It's no good to anybody else."

"And it's no good to me," said Mr. White hopefully, "unless you get it here by twelve o'clock."

"Do you mean it?" said Bill, knowing the answer already.

"Do I?" Mr. White returned with a happy grin. "Well, figure it out for yourself. I can double the commission I'm getting out of this deal. Time is the essence of an option, and if payments aren't made on time I'm justified by law and by business custom in treating it as void. It runs out in half an hour. Any time during that half hour I'm here to make you a good title on receipt of five thousand dollars. After that I'm dealing with other parties. I hope that is clear, because that's how I want you to get it."

It could not be much clearer. The partners were no altruists themselves, and they didn't blame White. They withdrew to talk it over and walked to the end of a narrow hallway which offered a measure of privacy.

"Look through your clothes again," said Dobbs.

"No use." Bill returned. But he turned every pocket inside out and felt the linings of his coat. "Just like I told you; she's gone."

"You don't remember any way you could have lost her?"

"Not a remember," said Bill. "The check was in an envelope and I put it in my pocket myself. Then we took a taxi and went to the station and I came back to the hotel and saw you. But no matter how I lost it, the thing is we can't get it back in time, and what are we goin' to do about it? We know what White will do. And it was my fault, losin' the check."

"Say it was. What about it?"

"Well, darn it," said Bill, "the girl gave me the check all right, and I ought to have it now. If the deal falls through I'm responsible, the way I look at it."

"We both are," said Dobbs. "We told the colonel we'd look after it for him. I guess we'll have to put up the money ourselves."

"Most of it is yours."

"We're partners," said Dobbs succinctly. "We ain't takin' no chance doin' it, because the property must be worth five thousand or the colonel wouldn't be buyin' it. And you heard what White said. We'll have the title. And we'll advertise and get back the check, because it ain't no good to anybody else, and it's payable to us and as good as the wheat. We don't run no risk at all." And they returned to White's office.

"We'll put up the money ourselves," Dobbs announced.

"I was hoping you wouldn't—or couldn't," White told them. "It's up to you. You have fifteen minutes left."

"Don't need no fifteen minutes," Dobbs grunted and produced his check book "You don't think a measly five thousand will worry us, do you? I s'pose you want this payable to you. Do you want it certified?"

"Payable to me, yes. No, I don't want it certified. With Colonel Shannon back of you that's all right."

Dobbs scrawled the check painfully. He had written few in his life, and never one for more than a fraction of the present amount. It would pretty well clean them

out, but it would be for only a few days. He appended his signature.

"You got to sign this, too, Bill."

Bill signed. Dobbs tore out the check. White extended his hand for it; but Dobbs had a sudden access of caution. Five thousand was a lot of money, and there were still some minutes to go. It pleased him to pose as a business man, accustomed as the colonel's agent to large transactions.

"We get so many big deals to look after," he said, "that I don't keep track of these little ones. Still, I better look over these papers to see that they're all reglar."

"Help yourself," said White and tossed over the agreements which were held by a rubber band. "I've got some good cigars here. Have a smoke while you're doing it." And he bent over a drawer in his desk.

"Sure," said Dobbs unfolding the documents. "Le's see—what's the name of this property?"

"Le Chien d'Argent," White replied.

"What!" Dobbs and Bill exclaimed together. White was taking a box of cigars from the drawer and thus he missed their facial expressions, but their tones made him look up.

"Le Chien d'Argent," he repeated. "It means The Silver Dog."

It was as unexpected as the turn-up of a fifth ace in a poker game. But Dobbs had witnessed even that phenomenon, and after the first involuntary exclamation he had his features under control. He shot a swift glance at Bill, which being interpreted meant, "Drop out. I got the best hand," and he accepted and lit a cigar before he opened the conveyance, whereby one Ambrose J. Duffy conveyed Le Chien d'Argent mineral claim therein more particularly described to William Hutchins and Samuel Dobbs. And as it was unthinkable that Duffy should believe he could sell the claim back to its original owners, this meant that their names had been written in at some time after his signature. In other words he had transferred the claim in blank, no doubt for a small advance on what it had cost him. The whole thing, in the light of this revelation, looked worse than fishy.

"H'm," said Dobbs. "Has any work been done on this here claim, or is she just a prospect?"

"What do you expect for five thousand?" Mr. White countered justifiably. "But there has been a little work done—a little tunneling."

"Any buildings?"

"Well, there's a good log cabin, and that's about all."

"A cabin helps," Dobbs commented. "I'm glad to hear there's one. And how is she for timber—above timber line?"

"No, there's lots of good timber growing all around."

"Timbering is expensive when you have to haul it any distance uphill," said Dobbs. "How is she for a road?"

"Well, there's no road right at the claim," Mr. White replied. "You have about three miles of trail, and then you strike a fair wagon road."

"You ain't got a photo of the place, have you?"

"I have one somewhere," Mr. White returned, and rummaged in his desk, presently producing a couple of snapshots which showed a respectable log shack, and the mouth of a tunnel with a small ore dump and a couple of honest miners leaning on picks in attitudes which might denote either pride in their work or weariness thereat. Dobbs inspected the photographs and passed them to Bill, who surveyed them admiringly.

"Of course the colonel knows all about this claim?" said Dobbs. "He knows about the shack and the tunneling and how she is for roads and timber and so on?"

"He knows all I know," said White; "and I wish he didn't. It's only fair to tell you that you've got five minutes left."

"You can do a lot in five minutes," said Dobbs. "You was mentioning that you wasn't in business for your health."

"You bet I'm not."

"There's others," said Dobbs. "Now, we've went and lost the check we was to give you, and of course if we hadn't enough money of our own to put up, we couldn't pay no five thousand, could we?"

"No," said Mr. White, slightly puzzled.

"And in that case," Dobbs pursued, "you'd call the deal off, and make a new one with other parties at a higher price, and get a rake-off of a bigger commission—about double, I think you said."

"Yes," Mr. White admitted.

"Well," Dobbs inquired delicately, "what is it worth to you to make it?"

Bill gasped in admiration. But it took White a moment to get this disgraceful pro-

posal clearly, and then he was most virtuously indignant.

"I wouldn't think of doing such a thing," he said. "I don't do business that way. You have the papers and you've written a check, and that's all there is to it. I won't say anything about this to the colonel, though maybe I ought to. Hand over the check, and we'll forget it."

"Oh, we will, will we?" said Dobbs. "Well, I guess we won't. Why, you darn' miserable crook, do you know who we are?"

And Mr. White's face lost most of its color.

"'Stools,' are you?" he said bitterly. "This is a frame, is it? Well, shoot!"

"Who we are," Dobbs told him sternly, "we're the men that staked this claim and recorded her, and sold her to Duffy for five hundred. Maybe you and him stand in. I guess you do. But you don't unload her on nobody for five thousand on a bunch of lies. There ain't no tunnel, nor no road, nor no shack, nor nothin' at all, and she's above timber line. You darn' skunk, we ought to beat you up, and if I said so Bill would."

"Sure I would," said the avenging Bill, rubbing his hands at the prospect. "And I will anyway."

But strangely enough Mr. White appeared to be somewhat relieved even at this dark prospect.

"Now, see here——" he began. But Dobbs cut him short.

"Shut up!" he said. "We won't beat you up; but we'll put the colonel onto you as soon as he gets back, and if you stung him on any other deals same as you've tried to on this, you'll give him his money back, or Bill will take you to pieces and mislay some of them. Come on, Bill, let's get out of here. This skunk poisons the air."

They left the crushed and foiled White, and sought an atmosphere uncontaminated by villainy.

"We ought to put the police onto him," Bill suggested.

"He's crooked enough now," said Dobbs. "They might learn him more. No, we'll just wait till the colonel gets back."

And so they waited. They advertised for the return of the lost check, but without result. Occasionally they told each other how lucky the colonel was to have escaped paying five thousand dollars on White's misrepresentations for a mineral lemon. At the end of a week they were still waiting, but becoming a trifle impatient. Conceivably inspection of a mine might take time, but Miss Patty's visit to her school friend seemed to Bill to be unreasonably prolonged. Inquiry at the office revealed the fact that the colonel and his daughter had checked out on the day the latter had departed. They had not retained their rooms. No letters or telegrams had been received for or from either. The hotel had no knowledge of their prospective return.

Under these circumstances Bill merely chafed; but Dobbs, after thinking things over, undertook certain investigations. He came in late one afternoon, dropped wearily into a chair and lit his pipe.

"Where you been?" Bill asked. "I ain't seen you since breakfast."

"I been busy," Dobbs replied. "And the size of it is we don't need to wait around here no longer, Bill. She's a waste of time. The colonel ain't comin' back."

"What!" Bill exclaimed. "Why ain't he? Have you heard from him?"

"Oh, no," said Dobbs, "I ain't heard from him. Which I should remark not. This morning I went to White's office."

"What for?"

"To look around," Dobbs answered, "on a hunch I had. And White ain't there no more. Also, minin' men in this town say they don't know him at all."

"He was a crook," said Bill. "Look how he tried to do up the colonel."

"Maybe he did—and maybe not," said Dobbs. "I guess the colonel takes some doin'. When I couldn't find nobody that knew White it sorter struck me to wonder if anybody knew the colonel. So I went to our bank and saw the manager, and asked him if he did. And he didn't."

"Lots of banks," Bill pointed out sagaciously.

"Sure," Dobbs nodded. "And our manager rung up all the other managers, one by one, and asked them; and none of them knew any 'Colonel Shannon.'"

"He didn't bank here," said Bill. "His checks was on a St. Paul bank."

"So I had our bank wire that St. Paul bank," Dobbs went on; "and he hadn't no account there and never had. Look at this."

"This" was a telegram. Bill read: "Per-

son of your inquiries unknown any bank St. Paul." Bill whistled softly.

"So, you see, them checks was no good," Dobbs pursued. "And the way I dope it out, the colonel was a crook, and him and White was out to trim us for our roll."

It takes time for an entirely new idea to make a place for itself in the human mind, and this was quite new to Bill.

"Trim us!" he exclaimed. "How do you mean?"

"It does sound sorter strange till you get used to the idea," said Dobbs; "and then it's almighty reas'nable. You think back some, like I done. In the first place he wanted us to put money into his 'minin' syndicate'—which I'll bet there ain't no such thing. I guess he thought we had more money than we have, and maybe he got that notion from me. Then he got a better line on what we really had, and he put up a dummy minin' deal. He gave us a check, and we bought a property with it from White. That was to get us used to doin' it, same as you put out a few baits before you set a trap when a critter is plenty cunnin'. Then he come down to the real thing in another deal, worked just the same way, havin' learned us to go through the motions. He gave us another check, to pay for another mine, and he thought we'd put up our own money to make good after that check was lost. And so we would, if it had been any other mineral claim on earth."

"But how could he know I'd lose that check?" Bill queried, picking the apparent flaw.

"You didn't lose it," Dobbs informed him.

"Didn't lose it!" Bill exclaimed. "You don't think I've got it, do you? Sure I lost it."

"No, you didn't, Bill," said his partner. "You try to remember back. The girl give it to you, you said. Well, after that was she any ways close to you any time? I mean, did she do anything like maybe pinnin' a flower onto your coat, or trip and fall up against you accidental or something like that?"

Bill, though he thought he had forgotten how to blush, turned a dull red. "Well, she did sort of fall up against me once," he admitted.

"And then's when she got that check," Dobbs told him. "She showed it to you first, and then put it back in the envelope so's you'd just naturally put it in your pocket same as every man does with one. It was like forcin' a card. And when she tripped and fell up against you, it was same as droppin' a bill you give the waiter when you want to bring a cold deck into play. And knowin' where the check was, and it bein' in a new, stiff envelope, it wasn't no trick at all for a clever girl to reach in and get it. That's what she done. And then she kept you busy lookin' after her till the train had moved out. That didn't give you no time to look at the check again till she'd gone. And then it didn't matter much when you found out you'd lost it—or thought you had."

"Holy Moses!" Bill breathed, convinced against his will.

"So there was two of the gang gone," Dobbs proceeded remorselessly; "and the only one left was White. They figured we'd put up our money, and all things considered they figured right. So we would. Then White would have made his get-away and joined 'em, wherever they hang out. And when you come to check the deal over and go through the hands we wouldn't have held much. What could we do? What evidence that was worth a hoot would we have against them? Only our say-so. In the first deal we'd handed the colonel's St. Paul check to White, and we wouldn't have that. And we'd handed the transfer of that property to the colonel, so we wouldn't have *that*. The girl had the second check, and we'd given our own check for a genuine mineral claim, to which we'd got a good title. We ain't got a scrap of writin', nor one of them no-good checks. Comeback? Why, we wouldn't have none at all. If we made a roar the laugh would be on us."

"Yes," Bill admitted, "I guess it would." Convinced at last, he thought of the tears of outraged maidenly modesty which had filled the trustful brown eyes of "Patty Shannon;" and he was devoutly thankful that he never bragged of his successes, for Dobbs would never have let him hear the last of it. And the latter now exhibited an embarrassing curiosity as to the details of the loss of the check.

"The girl sorter fell up against you once, you said."

"Once," Bill admitted with brevity.

"And of course you caught her to save her."

"I couldn't let her fall, could I?" said Bill defensively.

"How did she come to fall?"

"Her heel caught on a rug," the veracious Bill replied. And Dobbs, foiled, sighed regretfully.

"I thought maybe she might have pretended to make love to you," he suggested delicately. "She looked plum' innocent, but she puts me in mind of Delilah."

"Was that your old girl that sang in the choir?" Bill asked, glad of the change of subject.

"Delilah was Samson's wife," Dobbs informed him severely.

"That wouldn't matter to you," said Bill. And Dobbs gave it up.

"Anyway," he said, "they didn't get our roll, and when you come to think of it, The Dog has done pretty well for us. Course, we sold it for only five hundred; but it's saved us five thousand. And I wouldn't wonder if we could do something with it yet."

"How do you mean—'yet?'" Bill asked, puzzled.

For answer Dobbs reached into his pocket and brought forth a bundle of documents held by a rubber band. Before his partner's amazed eyes he unfolded the conveyance of "Le Chien d'Argent" mineral claim from Ambrose J. Duffy to William Hutchins and Samuel Dobbs, which Bill had last seen in White's office.

"Holy Mackinaw!" he exclaimed. "Where did you get them?"

"I cold-decked White," Dobbs confessed with a shameless grin. "There was sev'ral bunches of papers on his desk in reach of my hand. He was rattled when he found we knew the claim, and I just switched the cut on him. I figured these might come in handy if he went to law with the colonel. And I dunno but they'll come in handy for us."

"But we never paid no five thousand dollars like it says here," Bill objected.

"These papers look like we did," said Dobbs. "I'll bet Duffy got paid about eight hundred. White's the only man to kick, and he won't. I figure The Dog has come back to us."

Another story by Mr. Chisholm in an early issue.

SAM JONES AND THE BOY

THIS is the true story of an encounter between Sam Jones, the great evangelist, and a Southern boy, as the Honorable Thomas J. Heflin, United States senator from Alabama, told it to the "greatest legislative, deliberative and contemplative body on the globe."

Mr. Jones was driving along a dusty Alabama road when he saw a boy plowing corn. The heat was terrific. The ground was dry as a gourd and hard as a rock. The blades of the corn were a sickly yellow and the roots were half out of the earth. As a corn crop, that aggregation of retarded growth was a dismal, arid and depressing failure. But the laborer in the vineyard of the Lord felt it to be his duty to impart knowledge and advice to the worker in the field.

"My son," he began, "you've made a big mistake in neglecting your corn until it's turned yellow."

But the boy was unappreciative, unresponsive and unconvinced.

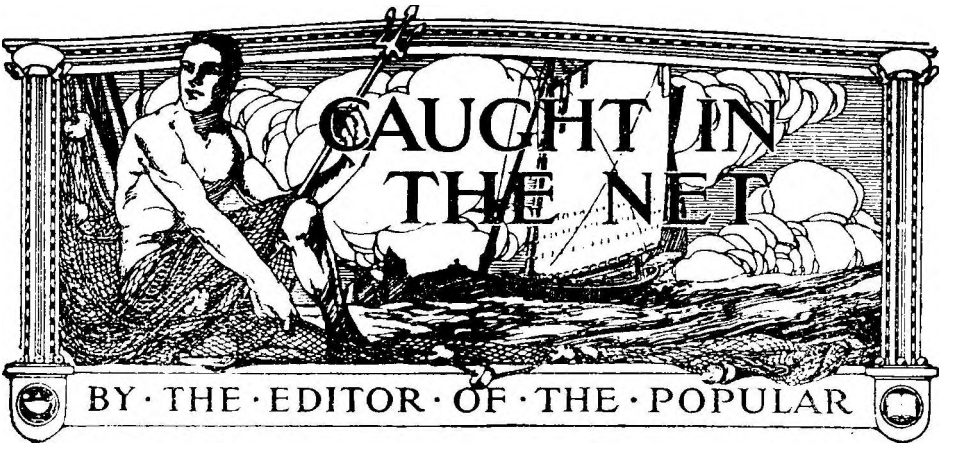
"No sich er thing," he snapped back. "We planted the yellow kind. Giddap, Beck!" And, with this optimistic address to the bag of bones called mule, he wearily began to circle the field again.

Mr. Jones, still bent on good works, waited for him to return, and tried again in kindly tone: "Son, if you don't get a hustle on you, you won't make more than half a crop of that corn."

"Workin' on halves anyways," grunted the boy. "Giddap, Beck!"

When he came around again, indignation had invaded the preacher. "Do you know, my son," inquired Mr. Jones severely, "there's mighty little between you and a fool?"

"Yep; nothin' but de fence," agreed the boy. "Giddap, Beck!"



HOW A PRESIDENT IS ELECTED

ON November 4th you will cast your vote for President Coolidge or Mr. Davis or Senator La Follette or some other candidate of your choice; on the evening of that day excited crowds will gather in every city and town to hear the election returns; in the normal course of events the newspapers printed early the following morning will be able to announce with reasonable surety the election of the thirty-first President of the United States.

In spite of all this, the next president will not be elected until early next January, and there is no legal guarantee that he will be the man who received the largest number of votes at the polls in November.

The cause for this remarkable situation lies in the Constitution, the supreme and superior law of the nation.

The Constitution makers of 1787 thought that the voice of the people should be heard, but that it should be heeded in accordance with the deliberate judgment of the best citizens of the various States. So they provided, in Article II. of the Constitution, for the election of the president by electors appointed in each State in the manner that the legislature of that State might direct; the number of electors in each State to be equal to that State's representation in both houses of Congress. They provided, also, that a majority of the votes of all the electors appointed should be necessary for election; and that in the event of no candidate obtaining a majority the House of Representatives should elect the president, each State having one vote and a majority of all the States being necessary for a choice.

Slightly modified by the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified by the States in 1798, this system of election remains in force, although in a form that would surprise the men who devised it. From the very first no presidential elector has followed his own judgment when it ran counter to the will of the voters. Today, instead of being selected by the State legislatures, the electors are nominated by party conventions in each State, and voted for by citizens at the polls. With the moral certainty that the electors in turn will cast their ballots for the candidate of their party. On the second Monday in the January following the general election the electors meet in their States, cast their votes, and transmit these votes in writing to Washington. At a joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives these votes are opened and counted by the president of the Senate, and if any candidate has a majority of all the electoral votes, he becomes the president. This year there will be 531 members of the electoral college. To win the election it is necessary for one of the candidates to obtain the votes of 266 of these electors. If no candidate obtains a majority the election of the next president passes into the hands of the House of Representatives.

NO STOPPING THEM

THERE seems to be no stopping America's aviators. In spite of a lukewarm public sentiment, ready enough to grant applause but by no means prepared to bestow confidence or contribute practical assistance on a national scale; in spite of an apathetic Congress, too busy with scandals and elections to consider seriously the country's aërial problem; in spite of a crippled and bankrupted aircraft-production industry, our flyers persist in leading the world.

It is pathetic, but inspiring, to survey the long struggle against domestic handicaps which Americans have fought to keep their country at the head of the world's march toward conquest of the air. The Wright brothers conceived, constructed and flew in this country the first heavier-than-air flying machine. They did it in the face of the most discouraging public and scientific skepticism. And when they had done it they still had an uphill fight to wage. They were still looked on as the fathers of a scientific freak merely. Few believed that their genius would ever bear practical fruit. And Europe reaped the first harvests from the seed they sewed in America.

Since that first historic flight at Kitty Hawk America's attitude has changed but slightly. Yet American aviators have maintained the stubborn tradition set by the first Americans who flew. Without the encouragement of public confidence, with only the most niggardly financial backing from their government they have held our place in the forefront of aërial achievement, to the admiration and astonishment of the rest of the world.

Consider the record. The first airplane to fly was an American airplane. The first airplane to cross the Atlantic ocean was an American airplane. The first to cross the Pacific was an American. The first nonstop flight across the main body of any continent was made by an American ship and crew. The first dawn-to-dusk passage of any continent was effected only last June by an American army pilot in an American army craft. The fastest horizontal motion ever accomplished by mechanical means was achieved by an American aviator in a navy plane last year —266.59 miles per hour was the record then set. Last year the army and the navy air services established thirty-three world's records in various branches of flight.

And now Americans in American planes have ringed the world!

We wonder what our airmen will achieve when the country gets behind them and pushes whole-heartedly with money, brains, and enthusiastic confidence. If America's flyers can astonish the world in spite of their present handicaps, what will they not do, short of miracles, when the handicaps are removed?

MORE THAN A PRIVILEGE

THE great day draws nearer. The gentlemen who "told you so" four years ago are preparing to tell you so again. The air of Indian summer is warm with the breath of the solid South and humid with the tolerably honest sweat of candidates nailing down planks in the intricate patterns of platform parquets. Issues and epithets collide in the long roll of campaign oratory at its thermal best.

It is going to be a long hard election for the voters. Toward every point of the political compass hysterical fingers are pointing with alarm. On every autumn zephyr float the siren voices of office seekers soothing the ear of suspicion. The radio stutters scandal and stammers eulogium.

In the welter and chop of the steaming cross currents the voter struggles manfully, striving to keep his head above the surface until he can find a straw of sincere conviction to which to cling.

Probably there has never been a time in the political history of the country when issues were so many, policies so vague, claims so extravagant, recriminations so reckless, and opinions so hard to form. Nor was there ever a time when carefully considered opinion was more sorely needed. What with the unprecedented confusion into which the oil investigations, the bonus, the world court, the Japanese issue, and the multifarious demands of special classes and interested minorities, have

plunged the situation, the head of the unfortunate average citizen spins and hums until, in despair, he is tempted to toss the whole business onto the knees of the gods and let the politicians fight it out among themselves.

It is to be hoped that few will succumb. If the country has reached the verge of political chaos the blame cannot be laid wholly at the feet of politicians. The voter who dumps his burden of responsibility into the already crowded lap of chance and goes golfing or fishing on election day must shoulder his share.

This country has stood for over a century on the principle of government by the people. What it needs and what it wants at the next election is a clear expression of its people's governmental desires. It is the manifest duty of every American to bury his nose in the newspapers this fall, until by inspiration or design he has reached an opinion. And then it is his duty to carry that opinion to the polls. Too many of us conceive the vote as a simple privilege. It is a privilege—and a precious one. But it is a great deal more than that. It is a high patriotic obligation.

WHAT DOES WALES READ?

OF all British royalty since England laid the foundations of English-speaking America, the present Prince of Wales has found the most popularity and excited the greatest measure of friendly interest on this side of the Atlantic. Probably no other Britisher, royal or otherwise, has been so pictured, storied, and talked about in America as this Edward who will one day be "the Eighth" if his bad luck at steeplechasing doesn't grow any worse. So that we over here know, or imagine we know, a great deal about the fascinating and congenial heir to the throne of England.

We know, for instance, that he is good looking; that his tailor can do no wrong; that his nerve is as stiff as his horsemanship is dubious; that his private and unofficial motto—an excellent one, too, for a downtrodden, tradition-ridden potentate-to-be—is "The worm will turn!" that he has a mind of his own and can "take it or leave it alone;" that he owns a ranch in Canada and prefers it immeasurably to Buckingham Palace and Sandringham; that he—— But what is there that we don't know about the Prince of Wales? If there is any truth in the newspapers we know pretty much everything.

One thing only has been withheld. Nobody seems to know what the Prince of Wales reads. Perhaps he doesn't read anything. Perhaps the royal life is so romantic that the romance of imagination, for young Edward, is eclipsed by reality and so can hold no charm.

But that isn't probable. It is more likely that the only thrill he gets from real life is riding the water jumps for a fall. For ourselves we can think of nothing so completely monotonous as the life of a royal idol. Imagine, if you will, being the figurehead of the ship of state! Imagine a lifelong condemnation to a posture of benign impersonality. A convict in a cell has more freedom for the expression of his individuality than the royal youth in Buckingham Palace. His life generally must be a frightful bore.

We know a great deal about the future Edward VIII., but not much of what we know means anything. Of the real man behind the mask of royal reticence we have no accurate index excepting that which the spectacle of his nerve at the water jumps gives us. There alone we see him as he is in one phase—a man of stubborn grit.

If somebody would tell us what he reads! Then we could form a rounded judgment. As an index of character we defy the psychoanalyst to find anything in a man's features more revealing than the books in his library and the magazines on his study table.

POPULAR TOPICS

FAME—as various heavy thinkers have remarked at short intervals ever since heavy thinking became a popular indoor sport—is as transient as a commercial traveler whose expense account has mounted above the danger line.

Fame also is largely a matter of geography. Douglas Fairbanks found that out during his visit to Germany with Mrs. Fairbanks last spring.

The acrobatic Mr. Fairbanks is the proprietor of an attractive and profitable set of features that make up what he has good reason to feel certain is one of the half dozen best-known faces in the world. Millions of people from Greenland's icy mountains to Macedonia land and points south have gazed upon the dashing Doug doing his stuff on what the movie fans slangily call the silver screen. But not in Germany. The movie watchers on the Rhine prefer to watch stars of the more deadly sex.

Therefore, in Germany the famous Mr. Fairbanks usually was addressed as Herr Pickford.

WHAT, you most obligingly ask, are the five other best-known faces in the world?

Nominations, as they used to say while the Democratic convention was giving its famous impersonation of the Thirty Years' War in Madison Square Garden last summer, are in order.

The Sunday Pictorial Supplement Editors' Union nominates the Prince of Wales and Lady Nancy Astor.

Sport nominates Mademoiselle Suzanne Lenglen and Monsieur Jack Dempsey.

The Ain't She Sweet Society nominates Mary Pickford.

We nominate Watch Face.

The gentleman who puts our instructive and entertaining remarks into type nominates CHELTENHAM BOLDFACE.

And, if you want to dig up a couple of old scandals, there was "The Face on the Barroom Floor," widely known in its day; and a Miss Helen, of Troy, who had a face that lost a thousand chips—or was it ships?

THE textile industry has the longest pay roll of any of the great businesses of the United States. It employs 1,611,000 workers. The steel-and-iron industry is next with 1,586,000 employees, and the lumber industry is third with 839,000.

Having just dodged Mr. Ford's ten-millionth gasoline burner, we are surprised to learn that the printing trade employs 510,000 workers, and the automobile industry only 496,000. Although the automobile industry ranks seventh in the number of workers employed, it is at the top, or very near the top, in the value of its product.

STUDENTS of the German Agricultural College of Weienstephan who complete successfully a special course in beer making are to be rewarded with a degree which —translated into good United States—means "doctor of beer."

Right here in the land of the free and the thirsty we do almost as well—we have doctorers of beer.

WE yield to no one in taking a sunny and cheerful view of life, but there are some unpleasant facts that—unfortunately—cannot be dodged. Our esteemed contemporary, *Electric Trade,* adds to the general gayety of the nation by calling attention to the following cheering facts culled from the latest census reports. Read 'em and weep:

Ninety per cent of the men engaged in active business fail to reach old age with a competence.

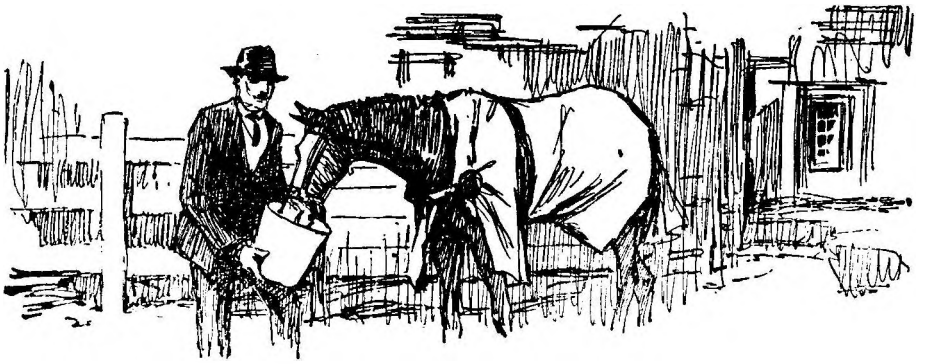
Nineteen out of every twenty persons fail to provide for their old age or for their families.

It's a warning, brothers. As they used to say in the good old days when Sir Swatem, dressed in a natty tin suit and armed with a battle-ax collected the income tax——

Work, for the knight is coming.

IF General Dawes is elected to the office of vice president we know just what he will do after he is sworn in.

He will cuss somebody out.



The Half-per-cent Handicap

By W. O. McGeehan

Author of "The Championess," "The Cauliflower Ear," Etc.

Man is not the only animal who can take it or leave it alone. There have been horses, too, with sense enough to know when they'd had enough.

SITTING in the kitchen attached to his racing stable at Aqueduct track, Mr. "Slim" Foley was discussing prohibition and its influence on the turf which furnished him a transitory and somewhat exciting living.

"Papyrus was one of those beer horses," he observed. "But, being English, he could take his beer or leave it alone. Still, I am always inclined to believe that, if it had not been for prohibition and he had been allowed his bucket of beer with his oats while here, he might have made a better showing against Zev.

"He wasn't like Johnny Marbury's Robin Hood. That horse turned out to be just a common souse and very undependable. Drink ruined Robin Hood when he showed signs of becoming a stake horse. A beer horse can be put back on the water wagon though, if he has a strong will and a horrible example to make him really want to lead a better life. Take the case of Tim O'Hara and his colt, The Growler."

Leaning back in his chair Slim Foley told just how a good horse by his unswerving devotion saved his reckless owner. The tale is best unfolded in the words of Mr. Foley.

Tim O'Hara never was a wild boy or Cashman never would have hired him for a trainer. He was no roisterer nor was he a hypocrite. Everybody at Sheepshead and at Gravesend had a good word for him, for he never would harm a horse nor a man—not to win the Derby. He attended to his business, yet at nighttime he would join the boys at Moore's and talk horse. What else was there to do of evenings but to talk and of what does a turfman talk but horse?

Moore's was on Neck Road between Sheepshead and Gravesend and a homelike and decent bar it was in the days when it was lawful to have a glass with a friend and another with Tommy Moore, for it made the talk all the more interesting. Everybody passed by Moore's, for in those days they would be leading the horses along the road from one track to another.

The Cashman stables were at Gravesend and he had a nice little string, enough to keep Tim O'Hara busy and happy. Many's the day I've seen that sot horse, Robin Hood, waiting outside for his bucket of beer, for he never would pass Moore's till he got it. The stableboy would be shouting to Johnny Marbury to bring it out and that horse would drain the bucket, then roll his eyes and go staggering off with the boy. One bucket was all that Johnny Marbury would allow him, but somebody would slip the horse an extra bucket on the sly and many's the afternoon that Robin Hood

would be led back to his stables staggering and fit for nothing but to sleep it off.

It was warning enough to horses and men not to overestimate their capacity. But nobody seemed to be heeding the warning and Robin Hood was one of the most shameless horses I ever met and I have met horses that tried my temper sorely. A horse on the downward path can travel faster, if anything, than a man.

The year that Tim O'Hara fell in love with Nell Bannon he started to curtail his visits to Moore's—not that there was a bit of harm in them, but Nell Bannon's father, Dan, had his stables at Sheepshead. Dan Bannon was a strict teetotaler. They said that he was a bit wild as a lad and became a bit bigoted when he reformed, as many of them did. But nobody on the turf could say a hard word for Tim O'Hara and he was a good-looking boy with a ready laugh that won its way to Nell Bannon's heart. Tim had his way with horses and with women.

But one horse can get a man into a pack of trouble. Tim was looking over a couple of two year olds that Cashman had picked up at a sale. One of them struck his fancy in particular. It was the one they afterward called The Growler. He was a bay colt with a white star and he took to Tim right from the start. His eyes were positively human. Tim was one of those horsemen who claim that they can tell whether a horse can run or not by looking at its eyes. The strange part of that is that these horsemen come pretty near to proving their theory.

One day when the string was being led out for exercise Tim noticed that The Growler was acting strangely, swaying from side to side and looking a bit foolish. He could not make out what was the matter with the animal. Then he happened to think of the breeding. The Growler was by Robin Hood, the souse horse. Tim started to wonder if the bibulous habits of the sire could be visited upon the get as the Good Book says—or something like it.

He began to watch the stables when the help thought that he was either at Moore's or at Sheepshead enjoying himself. A good trainer never permits any mysteries to exist in his stables, and Tim was a good trainer, one of the best.

He crept into the stable one day when four of the stableboys were having a card game in the feed room next to The Growler's stall and he hid himself quietly away. The boys were so busy with their game that they paid no heed. Finally one of them went out with the bucket and came back in a short time with the thing filled with beer. The boys passed it around and then started another hand.

Then the mystery explained itself. The Growler very quietly worked around to the back of the stall where the bucket was lying and poked his nose into it and began to drink.

"Swifty," one of the boys, caught him at it. "Can't you keep the beer away from that souse horse?" he complained. "The loser of the next hand will have to go out and get it filled up again."

Tim displayed himself and gave the boys a tongue lashing, but he was laughing inside all the time. The colt looked so cute sipping his beer and the way he put it over on the boys showed that he had brains. That quality in a colt counts for something.

A few mornings later Tim was moving some of the Cashman string from Gravesend to Sheepshead. It was a warm morning and Tim came into the bar with a bucket. "A seidel for me and fill the bucket," he said. He took the seidel and the bucket and walked outside. Some of the crowd followed him just out of curiosity, wondering what a trainer would be doing with a bucket of beer in the morning.

Tim led the bucket on the walk and signaled to one of the stableboys. The youngster led a bay two year old over and the colt had his head in the bucket in a minute. "Here's looking at you, Growler," said Tim, and he emptied his seidel.

Of course that amused the hangers-on at Moore's and they remembered that The Growler was by Robin Hood, the horse that guzzled beer until he drank himself right off the turf.

"Look out that the colt doesn't go the way of his drunken father," said Hank Harris, the blacksmith.

"No fear," said Tim O'Hara. "I'm teaching the colt to take his beer in moderation and in the open. It's those that drink by themselves that get into trouble. This colt can hold his drink and so can I —what I take of it."

So it got to be a regular thing. Tim and The Growler would drop over most every

day and have their bit of beer together and the thing became the talk of the Long Island tracks. One day we caught that colt cheating. He had been by in the morning. When the stableboy was leading him back in the afternoon he wouldn't go by the place. He raised the deuce until Moore himself came out to see what was the matter.

"Bring him one on the house," he said to the bartender and he invited the boy inside. The Growler finished the bucket and still looked thirsty. "It's a warm day," said Harris, the blacksmith, who was feeling a bit merry. "Bring him another and bring me a seidel."

You can believe it or not, but the second bucket made The Growler fairly tight. He was kicking around and acting like a college sophomore all the way back to his stables and the boy told me that when he put him up the colt rolled over to sleep it off like a human being.

Papyrus beat everything in England in spite of the fact that he was a beer horse—or maybe because of it. Of course he could not beat Zev, with Sande, in the mud—especially when he was not properly shod. But he did well for a drinking colt. And so did The Growler.

He won his first start as a two year old and he won in what the turf writers call impressive fashion. Tim was pretty well pleased and he said to the crowd at Moore's, "There is proof for you that a temperate horse can do better than any of them when he is in charge of a temperate man."

But Hank Harris was stubborn. "Sooner or later that colt will be neglecting his business to be hanging around the saloons," he said. "His sire was a souse and that colt will turn out to be a souse in the end. You'd better be having him taper off the stuff by degrees, or maybe the Keeley cure would work with a horse if you tried it."

But Tim would only laugh. The real trouble happened after The Growler won his second race and the pair of them stopped at Moore's to celebrate. The whole crowd was out on the veranda, for they all had played the colt, him being a personal acquaintance and one of the gang at Moore's as you might say.

The Growler's nose was in the bucket and Tim was just about to lift his seidel to his lips when the lad stood like a man petrified. We looked to the road and we saw a man and a girl in a buggy. It was Bannon and his daughter Nell. She was a little beauty, with a cherry-colored hat and a slimsey white dress.

Tim dropped his glass and lifted his hat. But the girl just looked at him scornfully and turned her head with an angry toss. Bannon just scowled at the crowd of us. He was a teetotaler, was Bannon, and a hard man on those that liked their bit of a nip. Tim went as pale as a ghost. The laughter went out of his eyes. He was hurt to the heart.

Without a word he took the lead line from the boy and he led The Growler back to Gravesend. We saw him a bit later on his way to Sheepshead. He was back that night and a changed man. He spoke no word to a man in the place but he slunk into a corner and began to order hard liquor and he drank it by himself. The crowd could guess what had happened.

The tracks are great places for gossip so some of the details leaked out. When one of those righteous girls turns shrewish she can wither the heart of a man with words and Nell Bannon spared no words with Tim O'Hara.

It was bad enough that he himself would stand guzzling on the public highway, she told him, but when he encouraged a poor dumb animal to make a beast—or rather a man—of himself, it was the end. With men and with most of the women Tim O'Hara was always ready with a bit of repartee but before Nell Bannon and her wrath he was dumb. He was in love with the girl. There was the difference.

It was all very unjust. That is the trouble with the best of women. They do not judge fairly and they do not fight fairly. It was not Tim O'Hara that led The Growler astray. It was that colt, sired by a souse, that led Tim from the paths of rectitude. At least that is what the jury at Moore's made out. They did not blame Nell Bannon. It was the pernicious parental influence of her teetotaler father that made her so hard. If the breeding counts with the horses you have to apply it to the human race too.

Tim went from bad to worse very rapidly, as any good man would have done under the circumstances. One afternoon he and that colt staggered along Neck Road in the broad daylight and both of them as full as a couple of tinkers. The stableboys said

that they slept in the same stall that night, Tim with his head pillowed on the horse's flank and both of them snoring so that they disturbed the whole stables. They were around the next day and both of them the worse for wear.

Of course while they were having a little something to pick them up Nell Bannon and her father had to be driving by. Neither one of them would look at O'Hara and the colt excepting out of the corners of their eyes.

It was a few days later when Tim came into the place with his eyes bloodshot and well out of sorts. One of the stableboys and the lead pony, Fleas, were outside with The Growler.

"Take my horse out a drink," said Tim, and he sat himself down at a table with a brandy highball before him. Hank Harris, the blacksmith, undertook to remonstrate with the boy for his weakness. Hank was big and strong enough to undertake the job.

But Tim was not quarrelsome. He was just bitter and he only sneered when Hank spoke to him of the foolishness of his ways, drinking himself into stupidity and leading a promising two year old to destruction with him.

"If you have no regard for yourself, have some for the colt," said Hank. "It's a fine pace you've been setting him."

"You can go to the devil your own way," said Tim. "But you'll kindly let The Growler and myself go our way. He's my pal, drunk or sober, happy or miserable. Between us we'll drink Long Island dry and who thinks they can stop us?"

Moore's bartender came in looking fairly well astonished. "Say, Mr. O'Hara," he announced, "your colt won't take his beer."

Tim lurched up from his chair and went out to the road. Sure enough, The Growler was backing away from his bucket.

"What's the matter, old horse?" demanded Tim. "Come on. Back up to the bar and drink it down."

But the colt continued to pull away from the bucket as though it were poison. Tim looked a little more bewildered than he had been since the day when Nell Bannon cut him dead. Then he got huffy and abusive.

"Oh, very well," he said. "If you want to turn so respectable that you want to give me the go-by, go ahead. That's how it goes when a man is down and out. His last friend refuses to drink with him."

Tim went back into the place and started drinking savagely by himself. In about an hour the bartender came to Hank Harris with his troubles.

"That colt won't leave the front of the place," he complained. "The boy can't do anything at all with him. He is raising the dickens and collecting a crowd. I'm blessed if I don't think he is waiting to take Tim O'Hara home. Can't you get him out?"

By this time Tim was fairly hazy. Harris got him out of the place and The Growler became quiet. Hank and the bartender hoisted the trainer to the back of the lead pony and the cavalcade proceeded to the Cashman stables as peacefully as you please.

It got to be like a scene from "Ten Nights in a Barroom." Every time the colt would be led by with Tim inside he would stop there and wait to take him home as it were. If he would not come out The Growler would neigh. It was like that bit where the little girl in the white nightgown would stand outside the swinging doors and sing, "Father, dear father, come home with me now"—I forget the rest of the song but it was very pathetic and every time I ever heard it I would have to leave the theater and get a few drinks to make me feel cheerful again.

This went on until it became the talk of both tracks and all Neck Road. Old Man Bannon was very savage about it. He said that it demonstrated that a beer-swilling horse might see the error of his ways but that a sodden human being could see nothing. Naturally he told his own version to Nell Bannon.

The Growler lost a couple of races. Our theory was that it was all due to the colt worrying about Tim O'Hara and fretting around Neck Road waiting to take him home. The colt actually lost flesh and Tim became quite unlike the dapper, laughing young trainer he used to be.

Hank Harris tried to argue with Tim but it did no good. "It's not fair to the colt," he said. "This business of him trying to set you a good example is breaking him down."

"I'd do the same for him," said Tim. "If he was soused I'd take him home and he blame well knows it. If he's turned

teetotaler that's his lookout." There was no use talking to the man. He had to have a jolt and he got it.

The stableboy got tired of waiting one night or was lured away by the rattle of the craps dice somewhere. He left the lead pony and The Growler standing outside Moore's. Tim came out and fell into the saddle of the lead pony, taking the leading line to bring The Growler along. Tim was very far gone that night.

The cavalcade passed along Neck Road in a very disorderly fashion making so much noise that people threw open their windows to watch it pass by. Most of the noise was made by Tim. He thought that he was singing but the consensus along the road was against him.

The chant which purported to be a song was, "Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still." Tim was murdering the thing. One very reliable listener said that he thought it was cats the way Tim put his sorrowful soul into it. The volume was so loud that it completely drowned the whistle of the express. The lead pony was old and a little deaf but The Growler was not. The thoroughbred reared back and pulled Tim out of the saddle. The lead pony floundered on and was hit by the engine and hurled to the other side of the track. A flash of lights passed by.

Tim sat watching stupidly holding the lead rein in his hand. He felt something cool against his cheek. It was the moist muzzle of The Growler, and the thoroughbred whinnied softly. It came to Tim then that The Growler had pulled him back just as he was floundering into the path of the express.

Hank Harris, the blacksmith, who lived near by, came out with a lantern and found them. Hank guessed quickly what had happened and he took the pair of them to the Cashman stables. With The Growler safe in the stall Hank turned on Tim and gave him a tongue lashing as heavily as he pounded a bit of red-hot iron.

"The colt saved your life, Tim O'Hara," he said.

"I don't thank him for it," said Tim sullenly.

"It's because you're a quitter, Tim O'Hara," said Hank. "You're not fit to be associating with thoroughbreds because you're not one yourself. You're a quarter horse, a front runner, that's what you are." And he pitched into him, using taunts that hit like sledges.

"Get out," said Tim finally. "Get out and let me alone with my friend, the colt. At least he can't pick on me and wouldn't if he could."

"I'm glad you can see that much," said Harris as a parting shot. "You were long enough about it."

Next morning Tim O'Hara, very white and shaky, approached Moore's with The Growler on the lead rein. But he did not go into the place. He just nodded to Moore and passed on. The word passed around that Tim had turned prohibitionist with the colt. But it was not the old O'Hara. It was a silent and brooding man. He took no joy in his work. And the horse was the same way. If it had not been for the scorn of a good woman the pair of them would be having their beer every day at Moore's and enjoying life. A good woman can create more havoc than a bad one and without half trying, especially if she happens to be the daughter of a teetotaler.

Tim and The Growler were passing one bright summer afternoon when the Bannons drove the other way with their buggy. Nell Bannon and her father did not see them. For a moment Tim hesitated at Moore's but the colt tugged at the rein as he seemed to be stopping.

It was then that Hank Harris, the blacksmith, declared himself. "I'm a man that hits while the iron is hot," he said. "I can strike better than I can talk, for I am not a bellows. But talk I will, this afternoon, and I would sooner take a beating." With that Hank Harris washed away the stains of his trade and set off for Sheepshead with a new white Panama hat.

He would say nothing of what transpired there. But the very next day Nell Bannon drove near in the buggy alone just as Tim O'Hara was walking up with The Growler. Nell Bannon had a beautiful smile, though where she got it the Lord only knows. It was not from that dour old water drinker, her father.

All of the light of that smile went out for Tim O'Hara and the boy was stupid, like a man blinded by too much of the sunshine. Finally he came back to the stoop of Moore's and he called out to Hank Harris, "Take The Growler back to the stables for me, Hank. I'm going for a ride. And thank you again, Hank Harris."

Of course that ended it all for Tim O'Hara and never a drop has he tasted since, not even a bit of beer on a hot day. The women along Neck Road say that it was because of the love of a good woman he started to travel the straight and unhappy path. But they claim too much credit. The truth of it was, as you must have seen for yourself, that it was because of the love of a good horse, and only Hank Harris could have brought the girl to her senses. She was jealous of the credit for Tim's reformation being given to the colt, who deserved it. The minute Hank told her the colt had made a changed man of Tim the girl stepped in to take the credit from where the credit was due. It's the way with the women.

There are people who will not accept a miracle. Some of them said that the colt did not reform on his own account nor for the sake of his trainer. They claim that the cunning Hank Harris put some quinine or something bitter into a bucket of his beer and started him to taking a dislike for it.

They never will give a drinking man or horse credit for anything, even swearing off, and then they will wait if it's a lifetime for him to backslide so they can have the pleasure of saying, "We told you so." But Tim never did. Neither did the colt.

Old Bannon, the hypocrite, made his son-in-law change the colt's name. He said that the name, The Growler, always would be associated with saloons. They changed it to Waterwagon and I'm happy to say that the horse never won another race.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

REPRESENTATIVE GALLIVAN of Massachusetts, is a Democrat who believes that one of the cardinal duties of his party is to show up the weakness of Republicans. He thought he saw an opportunity to do some of this harpoon throwing one day during the last session of Congress when Representative Longworth, one of the framers of the present tariff law, sat down beside him while the house was in session.

"I note," said Mr. Gallivan, leaping to the fray, "that this new tariff hasn't poured the prophesied streams of gold and rivers of money into the pockets of the people. It doesn't work, does it? It's fallen down, hasn't it?"

"Oh," replied Longworth, "you expect too much of the law. You remind me of the little boy who was told that he could toughen his feet by soaking them in salt. 'Is that so?' he said; 'well, as it's pretty near time for me to get a lickin', I guess I'd better sit in it.'"

WITHOUT TANGIBLE REWARD

SENATORS were lounging in the cloakroom waiting to vote on a bill which everybody knew would be passed by a big Republican majority. Out on the floor a Democrat was breaking an oratorical lance against the measure. He had been breaking it for two hours. He alternated between reading extracts from dusty documents and soaring high into windy generalities. Four senators sat at their desks fanning themselves and reading newspapers.

"Wonder what he hopes to accomplish by all that talking when he hasn't a chance on earth to change a single vote," said Senator Cameron of Arizona, after peering out of the Republican cloakroom.

"Maybe," suggested Mr. McKinley of Illinois, "he's not looking for reward—like the little boy who was tying a tin can to a dog's tail.

"'Boy,' said a preacher who happened to see him, 'do you know what the wages of sin are?'

"'You call this a sin?' inquired the boy.

"'It certainly is,' said the preacher.

"'Well,' concluded the boy, 'I don't want no wages for this. I'm doing it for fun.'"

Transplanting a Vi'let

By James Fellom

Author of "The Wherewithal," and other stories.

The Mojave Desert sees the blooming of a romance along lines that would have agitated the funny bone of Mr. Shakespeare.

OLD GRAVY" BECKETT had climbed around over the Mojave Desert so much and so long that there was absolutely nothing about it startling enough—from the fangs of its sidewinders to its deceptive mirages—to restore the wire edge to his blunted sensibilities. So, he was quite caustic on such things as sunstroke, heartbreaking hikes, thirst madness and lost mines; and he mumbled and snarled profanely into his gray cloud of beard when he heard the hysterical chatter of the "city galoots" on their first visit to the gaunt, picturesque land.

Like most ancients of the prospector clan, Old Gravy spent his days of idleness in some saloon—the Eighteenth Amendment was as yet in the process of germination. He lived in Highgrade, and his particular hang-out was the U. & I. Bar, where he sucked away on a wheezing corncob of evenings and passed whole hours minding his own business. At eleven o'clock he went home, punctually—every night for fifteen years.

Now, strange to say, in all that time the population of Highgrade had learned nothing about their venerable townsman, except that he "coyote-holed" an abandoned gravel bank a mile from camp, rocked a wretched little heap of pay dirt for the few colors of gold he could find, and occupied a dilapidated rock cabin along with a shabby yellow cat, a tame wood rat, and a red geranium that bloomed in the little window. Briefly, Old Gravy, in his seedy, patched-up clothes, was looked on as one of the army of human derelicts who, forgotten by kith and kin, just waited around for the mercy stroke.

So he continued to hold down the friendly chair in the U. & I. until, punctually at eleven, he would knock the ashes out of his pipe, get stiffly to his feet and hobble off through the darkness for home. Reaching there, he went through the regular routine of habit such as preparing his morning kindling, stroking the back of the shabby yellow cat, babbling affectionate nothings to the beady-eyed wood rat nosing about on the table, and watering the red geranium.

Next morning he would be astir at seven and pecking away at the gravel bank an hour afterward. And what gold he daily wrested from the bed rock of Highgrade Gulch went into a certain tin box in a certain secret niche in the cabin wall. These things he did—had done for years—with a

religious constancy that it seemed nothing could change.

Then, suddenly, one hot night in August, he got the biggest shock of his life; one that startled him, completely upsetting his whole mode of living. He came home to find a letter under his door, slipped there by the accommodating postmaster who, by the way, knew it for the old fellow's first piece of correspondence through the Highgrade office.

Old Gravy stood and looked in amazement at that letter. "Marvin S. Beckett" read the superscription, done in a clean firm hand across the surface of a square cream-colored envelope. A strange pride surged up within him that somebody knew his name, had written him, that his name appeared so well on paper. Who could it be from? It wasn't his brother Jasper's writing, and there was nobody else who might write. Gingerly he opened the letter, and read by the light of the candle:

LUCERNE, IOWA, August 4, 1912.

DEAR UNCLE MARVIN: This is the first time you have heard of me, but I have known of you all my life. I am the only child of Doctor Jasper Lucian Beckett, of Lee Ford, Iowa, and I'm sure you're his brother, Marvin Seawell Beckett, who vanished years ago.

Papa passed away last year grieving over poor mamma's death. I am all alone, now, and so lonesome, uncle dear. Papa used to speak of you so much, and I've always wanted to know you. It just happened that a friend of mine was out in your locality some weeks ago, and hearing your name and knowing that papa had a brother Marvin, made inquiries, and told me about it when he returned.

Can't I come out to California and be with you? You are the only relative I have, and I know we'll learn to love each other—we're the last of the Becketts, Uncle Marvin! Write soon. Please let me come to you! With all my love. Your affectionate niece,

VIOLET BECKETT.

Old Gravy read the letter over twice; then, he sat down and read it again. His puckered old face set hard. He lit a match, kindled his pipe and spat savagely.

"No sirree, Miss Vi'let!" he cried. "Not on yore life, will you. You'll hoe yore own row. I don't know you. I ain't beholden to you or him. What's it to me if he up an' died? So, I'm s'posed to raise my brother's kid? Be pestered in my last days with another man's brat? A deadhead! A poor ree-lation! Oh, ho! That's his game, eh! Well, I ain't a-goin' to do it. You'll git out an' shift for yoreself, like I done—be you boy or gal!"

He sprang from his stool and hobbled around the earth floor in a fury, his rheumy blue eyes snapping fire, his shriveled hands working spasmodically. The shabby yellow cat had darted under the sheet-iron stove for safety. The wood rat's head peeked out from an aperture in the rock wall. Both gazed in amazement at their old friend, unable to understand his peculiar antics. For ten minutes he stormed, assailing the midnight silence with a flood of furious chatter.

"'Tain't enough that Old Gravy's got rheumatiz. 'Tain't enough that he's workin' day an' night to make ends meet. He's figgered that I should bring her up. That I should slave. For what? So's she'll look up like them axtresses in the maggyzine, eh? An' then laugh at me after. He leaves her busted an' wants me to do for her till she's ready to skeedaddle with some beau. Well, I ain't a-goin' to do it! No sirree! I ain't a-goin' to do it!"

He resumed his seat finally, having spent his wrath, and talked to himself for a long time. Then, he picked up the letter once more, read it and threw it aside. He did this again and again. Soon he began to study the writing, the cream-colored paper—his name. The cat came out from under the stove and risked a hop into his lap; the wood rat negotiated a morsel alongside his stool. He sat on, and the night grew breathless. Slowly, a change came over him.

Shriveled up in his seat, his beard sweeping his sunken chest, the great age of him pitifully conspicuous in the uncertain flutter of the candle, he cast this way and that with forlorn eyes over the beggary and shadows of his quarters.

His brother Jasper had not lived this way. Jasper had stayed at home to become a doctor: *he* had broken away to see the world. And he had got no farther than this catacomb—crawled into this cheerless rock pile to die. So Jasper was gone? That chubby little fellow whom all the neighbors had vowed looked so much like his mother. Why, it seemed only yesterday! And, now, Jasper, the man, was no more. Who was this other? Violet Beckett! Yes, the name Beckett was as good as dead—that name written on that envelope.

Dawn saw him up and around. There was a singular sprightliness about him, a

noticeable hauteur that, sad to say, was scarcely in harmony with the miserable patch-work suit he wore. Routine was flung to the winds; lifelong habits broken. He swallowed his breakfast and stumped off for camp and the U. & I. Bar. As he entered the place the postmaster was talking to a group of men.

"It was a square envelope," he was saying for the fifth time, "and the writing was in a woman's hand—the toniest letter ever come through this office, and smelling powerful of violets. It's got me stumped. I always thought he hadn't any folks. Except, of course, it's some woman——"

Just then, Old Gravy breasted up to the bar near by and nodded at the mixologist.

"Give me a"—he began, changed his mind and finished—"a lemonade."

The bartender eyed him incredulously—having served this particular customer for years—pulled himself together and started preparing the mixture. The occupants of the place stared agog—a lemonade! The postmaster recovered himself sufficiently to say:

"Good morning, Mr. Beckett."

For reply he got a bow so dignified and haughty as to completely squelch him. But "Mr. Beckett" went ringing through Old Gravy's brain like some beautiful strain. The postmaster had called him *Mister* Beckett!

Gulping his lemonade, he turned and walked out. Down the street he went, head thrown back, his sunken chest expanded, a rather rakish swagger to his gait, while a score of curious eyes followed his progress. Soon, it became quite apparent where he was headed for. As is the case in many desert communities of the West, the railroad stations are any distance up to five miles away, this being due largely to the line holding to the level country, obviating thereby the cost of grading. The station of Highgrade—a crazy little building rising alone out of a clean sand flat to the east—was a surveyed two miles from the camp itself. It was thither that Old Gravy was bending his steps.

This becoming evident to the postmaster and his friends, the desire seized them to learn just what took him to the depot—there was no train for at least three hours. That he had changed astonishingly overnight and that the change had been wrought by a letter from a woman who perfumed her correspondence with violets but whetted their curiosity the more.

The postmaster, therefore, stepped to the telephone and called up the station agent.

"Say, Mills! Old Gravy is hotfooting it over your way. Find out what he's up to. He got a letter last night from a dame, that smelled of violets."

"Maybe it's an old sweetheart, Sheldon," laughed Mills.

"Search me. But he's acting funny. All swelled up and—drinking lemonade."

"Lemonade!"

"The same. Ring me up, Mills—at the U. & I. The crowd is anxious."

At the other end of the wire, Perry Mills, one of a half a hundred agents on the long twisting drag of the Mojave & Southwestern Railroad, glanced through the window and spied the familiar old figure approaching in a swirl of dust. Mills was sweeping out the office when Old Gravy swept in.

"I want to send a telegram," he announced loftily. But it was not until he had enlisted the services of the agent that he succeeded in having the following drawn up:

MISS VIOLET BECKETT,
Lucerne, Iowa.

Come as soon as you get this. Bring all the duds you got. You ought to come on half fare. Show the conductor your ticket and don't be leaning out of the car window. Look out for fellows who act sweet as pie. Don't be bawling when you get here. See that there ain't no holes in your stockings and put on a clean dress to get off in. I'll meet you.

UNCLE MARVIN.

Now, there was considerable of the practical joker about Perry Mills. He was one of those fellows who was always waiting for the opportunity of getting a good laugh at somebody's expense. This desire took hold of him as Old Gravy paid for the telegram out of a fat roll of bills and stalked majestically out of the door. Mills grinned thoughtfully at the yellow sheet for some moments—plotting. He made sure that Old Gravy was well on his way back to camp, then he picked up the telephone.

"Nothing much, Sheldon," he announced when the postmaster answered. "He sent a wire East. He's taking a kid to raise—his niece."

"The dickens! Say, what're you giving me!" howled the receiver.

"That's a fact. He's expressed her the money for her ticket. She ought to be here

in less than a week. Say, the old boy is wealthy—did you know it?"

"Wealthy! You're loco, Mills. He ain't got enough to——"

"Hold on a minute! I'll read you the telegram," broke in the agent, driving home the lie with diabolical cunning. He took the necessary delay to procure the message to manufacture the following: "'Am forwarding money. Send little Violet in care of conductor. She ought to come on half fare. Will be glad to have her. Expect to make her heir to my fortune.' How's that sound to you, Uncle Sam?"

"Gee-rusalem!" exploded the postmaster. "Fortune! Does he say—fortune?"

Mills hung up presently and went into paroxysms of laughter. He had stirred up a sensation in sleepy Highgrade, and well he knew it.

Meanwhile Old Gravy was flinging back toward camp over the sandy road, his brain in a riot. That he had gained prominence through his receipt of a letter had been sufficient in itself to inflate him, but coupled with his senile pride at having a relative living—his niece! a young girl who was to abide with him in this girlless community—it had hurled him into the seventh heaven of conceit. Lo! A Beckett was coming!

Into the settlement he strutted again, entered the U. & I., invited some twenty loungers to drain a tribute to Bacchus, and ostentatiously peeled off a bill from his big roll.

"What'd I tell you?" gasped the gossipy postmaster to the doctor. It's that worked-out gravel bar he's been coyoting for the last fifteen years. I read once about a beggar leaving an estate of two hundred thousand dollars."

Old Gravy spent the remainder of the morning visiting one store after another, getting prices on the choicest lines of table delicacies, wearing apparel and such household articles as hinted broadly at a life of inordinate luxury. Throughout he maintained his singular attitude of haughtiness and a certain secretiveness that put the camp at a desperate itch. From every corner eyes peered at him, and ears were strained to catch his words.

"I figger on blowin' in about one thousand dollars," he confided to one storekeeper, and the news spread with befitting exaggeration.

The day passed slowly, with Old Gravy growing more and more the cynosure of the camp. It was the red-letter day of his life. His old brain, feverish with excitement, began fastening on its figments as facts. He went parading up and down the street, bound nowhere, but finding a keen relish in hearing "Mr. Beckett" poured into his ears by men who had addressed him as Old Gravy for the past decade.

Around six o'clock a freighter arrived from the station and handed him a telegram. He took the missive, cast his eye over its contents and jubilantly hobbled off for home. Shortly afterward Postmaster Sheldon heard about that telegram and hurried to communicate with Perry Mills. But for some unknown reason the agent was wary on divulging any information.

"Hasn't he said anything?" he parried.

"Not a word. Say, put us wise, Mills! The boys are talking about giving the kid a reception and——"

"Well, she's coming—on Monday's train. I think she's a little thoroughbred, if you want my opinion. Reading between the lines I'd say she thought we were a bunch of bloodthirsty outlaws. A welcome would be just the thing, Sheldon."

"I'm strong for it," admitted the postmaster. "By the way—he's got the coin, just as you said."

Again, Mills indulged himself in a hearty laugh. He had baited Sheldon—saying just enough to keep his skirts clean in the event Old Gravy showed that telegram.

"A reception," he chortled. "The camp won't sleep a wink from now on. It'll stage a big blow-out, and she'll come—a pink-eyed school kid, freckled, in a stiff calico dress tagged 'Violet Beckett, Highgrade, California.' A reception—hard-boiled shirts and squeaky shoes! Sagebrush aristocracy! Ha, ha!"

Meanwhile, Old Gravy reached home and read the telegram again in a transport of wild glee.

Will leave immediately. Should be there Monday noon. Have hair like papa. Watch for me, as everything will be new and strange.

VIOLET.

Old Gravy swallowed his supper and plunged into the work of tidying up his cabin. He babbled to the shabby yellow cat about the coming of the little mistress and whistled the wood rat out of its cozy retreat in the rock wall to warn it against a continuation of its nocturnal racketing.

Later he ruminated by candlelight over the golden contents of the tin box, ample, he told himself, to make Marvin S. Beckett and his niece the toniest people in the township. Of a sudden, too, he developed a deep aversion for the grimy patchwork suit he wore.

The last green sprout of a dead family tree was coming! Did she have the Beckett features—that strong chin and patrician nose? By the hair of Jasper, he would know her! She had reddish hair.

During the next three days the population of the little camp was carried along on the crest of a steadily mounting enthusiasm. Nothing ever happened in Highgrade; for which reason, perhaps, the expected arrival now of Miss Violet Beckett—who was to enjoy the distinction of being the only unmarried female in the settlement—had all the earmarks of a signal occurrence, deserving of civic recognition. So thought the camp.

Just what form this should take was a much-mooted question, until, with the weekly appearance—Saturday afternoon—of the four-page *Mercurial Gazette,* the point was definitely settled by the printed suggestion that, since the charming Miss Beckett was to make Highgrade her home, it behooved the citizens to give her a welcome demonstrative of the chivalry and hospitality of the West.

"Let us honor the fair accomplished niece of the Father of Highgrade," editorialized the writer, "in live-wire fashion. Let us make it a good one. Why not suspend business, have an escort of honor meet the new citizen at the station, open-air exercises, a banquet and concert in the evening? It is seldom that the men of Highgrade have the opportunity of honoring a member of the gentle sex, particularly one related to so noble and venerable a pioneer——"

Old Gravy read that printed eulogy of himself and Violet, and the last prop of self-control was knocked from under him. He began boasting scandalously. The vaporings of his old brain were jabbered out for facts—Violet was a beautiful young girl, sixteen, with long auburn braids, wonderful pianist, sang like a bird, had won prizes dancing, he was going to build a rock bungalow. Thus he boasted, and the camp got busy for a rousing welcome.

Monday came, finally—an alarmingly hot day. A holiday atmosphere hung over Highgrade, made all the more manifest by limp little flags nailed anglewise to the porch posts and false fronts on the one street. The citizenry to a man had risen early, shaved, oiled up its boots, donned gaudy shirts and neckerchiefs and sallied forth to parade its haberdashery.

Promptly at ten, Old Gravy swelled uptown. He wore a moth-eaten checkered suit of loud design—once the proud property of a gambler who had found it beneficial for his health to make a night flight out of camp—a pair of congress boots, and a derby hat much the worse for wear and at least three sizes too small for him. He strutted—followed by an admiring crowd—from one oasis to another, spending money like a ward politician. Burning up with importance he went, drunk with compliment and adulation.

Around eleven o'clock Postmaster Sheldon—marshal of the day, his carefully prepared speech tucked in his pocket—began assembling his hosts for their march to the station. The doctor drove his flag-bedecked runabout—a dinky one-seater, that steered by a handle—up to the sidewalk, and Old Gravy clambered in. A four-piece orchestra—accordion, violin and two guitars—lined up behind, followed by the marshal and his aids wearing sashes, and some two hundred gala shirts and neckerchiefs strung out in correct marching formation.

It had grown stranglingly hot. The sand flat between the settlement and the station glittered like a lake of broken glass, acrawl with heat waves. Mills, the agent, glancing out of the window saw the colorful procession come winding down the short hill slope on which perched the camp, and begin its slow approach. He laughed uproariously. The sudden chatter of the telegraph instrument interrupted him. As he listened to it, a blank expression spread over his face. The information conveyed was this:

> Mills, am bringing the Queen of the Desert and she's going to reign in Highgrade. Phone in and get out a delegation to meet her. She's billed to Old Gravy. Some class, boy.
>
> CONDUCTOR SMITH.

The operator of Coyote Holes, two stations north, was the sender and he immediately resumed with:

"Smith is right, P. M. I just saw her. She's a peach. I envy you, old top."

"You're kidding me," Mills wired back.

"Not I. Say, if I were young and single——"

"Is that straight, L. T.?"

"Sure thing," ticked Coyote Holes. "Wait till you see her. She's a bear, I tell you!"

Mills threw a look at the clock and scampered to his quarters to don his best clothes. What he had treated as a huge joke on the town, had proved to be a reality—a "queen" was coming!

It lacked ten minutes of train time when the Highgrade population reached the station. They overflowed the building and packed themselves under every visible sunshade in the vicinity, mopping their red sweaty faces and grumbling against the heat. It was the hottest day in many summers—and it was getting hotter! Even the enthusiastic postmaster looked sick—his chin dripping, his choker collar wilted out of all recognition.

Old Gravy, alone, seemed to retain his poise without effort. That poise was the culmination of vanity. Standing in the glaring sun, his long white beard draping the front of his flashy checkered suit, the diminutive derby topping his rick of snowy hair, he presented a singularly grotesque appearance that was at once pathetic and laughable.

At last, from the distance came the faint whistle of local No. 4. It brought the suffocating aggregation to its feet. The marshal of the day roared out a volley of commands. In two minutes the crowd was lined up between the station and the tracks; then, the dapper little doctor backed his decorated runabout into a convenient position, and the orchestra began tuning its instruments.

Presently, the train of three weather-beaten cars rolled up and stopped. The brakeman swung to the ground and stared in dull amazement at the spectacle. Followed the conductor, taking a stand like a uniformed butler at the side of the forward steps of the second coach.

The orchestra struck up "Stars and Stripes Forever" with professional abandon. A long moment of suspense—then out of the second coach issued a single passenger. She halted on the lower step and gazed in bewilderment at the lines of vivid shirts—at the checkered suit and ill-fitting derby of Old Gravy, as he advanced.

The conductor waved a hand toward Old Gravy.

"Miss Beckett—your uncle," he said, in the tones of an official announcer.

An audible gasp escaped the multitude. The postmaster paled beneath his sweat and suffocation. As at a signal, the orchestra collapsed in the middle of a thundering Sousa measure. A fearful silence fell, while four hundred eyes fastened, in blank dismay and stupefaction, upon the passenger on the steps.

She was not so extraordinary, Miss Violet Beckett, but when one is expecting to see a slender girl of sixteen and instead is abruptly confronted by a buxom woman of perhaps one hundred and eighty, or ninety, pounds and approximately thirty-nine years of age, I submit that the disillusion is somewhat disconcerting particularly to such simple, trusting souls as were the men of Highgrade. And, Miss Beckett's hair was a bright red—the one and only characteristic of her father.

With all her pronounced plumpness, she was the personification of wealth. Her dress was a flimsy rich creation, gorgeous with handmade lace. Pink silk stockings of a gauzy mesh showed off her stalwart ankles to a startling height—the vogue that year—while her pudgy hands were heavy with jewelry, and a huge sunburst shone from her waist front like a miniature headlight.

Just now she stood under her large pink floppy hat and stared on at the motionless lines of men, along with the crew of the engine and baggage car, and a number of Mexican passengers who hung out of a coach window and jabbered as to what the grand celebration was about.

At last Miss Beckett, never more sensitive of her buxomness than now, found her voice.

"What does this—this idiotic turn-out mean, conductor?" she asked sarcastically.

"Why," attempting a genial smile, "it looks like a welcome, ma'am—in your honor."

"Welcome?" she scoffed, sweeping the citizenry with a withering eye. "It looks to me more like a circus-struck town." Which was precisely what every Highgrader was thinking that very minute.

Tableaux do not endure forever, fortunately. Two short blasts from the engine reminded the conductor that he was work-

ing for a railroad company. With a mumbled word, he put out his hand, assisted his indignant lady passenger to the ground and clambered on board. The train rolled away, leaving the painful situation to unravel itself. The stage driver, who plied between the station and the camp, emitted one long, ear-splitting howl of derision as he sent his team galloping for town.

Then Postmaster Sheldon came desperately to the rescue and floundered about in an effort to make Miss Beckett understand how profound was the delight of the community at having her in its midst. Old Gravy, the picture of wilted and apprehensive senility, was next thrust forward to receive a cold greeting and a head-to-foot scrutiny that utterly demoralized him. Following this, Miss Beckett—in anything but the sweetest of moods, for the sun stood now at meridian—was helped into the runabout beside the dapper little doctor and, at a signal, the assemblage got into marching order and started on its fiery tramp for Highgrade.

It is scarcely necessary to dwell at length on the happenings of the next two hours. They were wholly unlooked for, embarrassing, unpreventable. In the first place, while there was a well-defined road between the railway depot and the camp it was across a stretch of the finest-sifted sand in the whole Mojave Desert, making freighting a rather expensive and trying business.

So, it is not surprising that the doctor's runabout—intended for the transportation of a slender girl—should immediately mire down under the excessive overweight. It did. It mired down within a stone's throw of the station and, thereafter, at almost regular intervals. By the time the paraders got a half mile away from the blessed shade of the railway building the dinky automobile had buried its wheels up to the hubs not less than twenty-six times. On every occasion a score or more men came forward and lifted it bodily out of the clinging sand. It snorted on again for another few yards, dug a grave for itself—and the operation of lifting was renewed.

Now, anything becomes wearisome from too much repetition. Nothing will squelch a man's enthusiasm and patience so rapidly and completely as standing out on a desert plain with the thermometer at one hundred and fifteen. Miss Beckett developed a consuming resentment against all things Western. Soon, Old Gravy—a woeful spectacle of disappointment and dismay—fell under the glare of her baleful eyes and she proceeded to pour out on him, in low furious tones, the vials of her wrath.

"And, to think that I came two thousand miles for this!" she raged. "Haven't you common decency—a man of your age? You abandon me to the fancies of a pack of barbarians. My uncle! What can I expect from a person who dresses like a caricature? Marvin Beckett, you'll pay for my humiliation! Wait till this farce is over! Even if you are papa's brother, I'll not stand——" Her breath gave out and she sank back in the stalled machine, choking with fury.

Toward the middle of the afternoon the successful entry of Miss Violet Beckett into Highgrade had been accomplished; but only after an exasperating delay, occasioned by the dispatching of a messenger into camp to summon the stage to do what the plucky little runabout could not. Miss Beckett now fumed in her room in the St. Francis Hotel. The citizens of the town stood grouped in the public places and grumbled among themselves, spiritlessly, disgustedly. The holiday atmosphere changed to a funereal gloom.

As for Old Gravy, he stood scandalized and he knew it. He lingered just long enough to ascertain where his full-grown niece was going, then sped for his cabin as fast as his rheumatism would let him, and closed and barred the door. The shabby yellow cat meowed and the wood rat squeaked him a concert, in welcome. He sank on his bunk and groaned aloud.

So, this was Jasper's child? In Heaven's name, what sort of family had Jasper married into! Violet certainly didn't take after the Becketts. And this Amazon proposed to make her home with him? Never! He'd vanish in the night, first—yes sirree, jump out of the country! He sat on in his dingy, dismal little rock hut and wrestled with the problem. He recalled that she had come at his invitation. What an infernal fool he had been! Something had to be done. She'd drive him into his grave inside of a month.

Night was falling when he got an inspiration. He'd marry her off! His capricious old mind led him into believing that all he would have to do was find a man who would

marry Violet. Once married, she would be off his hands. The lady's prerogatives in the matter never crossed his whimsical brain. He didn't know anything about love. The main thing was to find somebody willing to be the benedict. But, how? Who? He ruminated on and found the way.

Shedding his flashy attire for the comfortable suit of patches, he set out for camp and reached the rear of the post office unobserved. His timid knock brought Sheldon to the door. The postmaster glowered on him—not having yet recovered from his humiliating experiences of the afternoon—but Old Gravy looked so pitiful and crushed that the sharp rebuke which rose to the lips of the erstwhile marshal of the day was never uttered.

"I can't help it, Sheldon," lamented his visitor when the door was closed behind him. "Looket, how I'm fixed! I'm in a orful hole, man. I jest got to git rid of her, somehow. Listen! I'll pay any feller one thousand dollars to splice up with her. An' I'll foot all the bills, to boot. But he's got to tie to her—an' travel. I don't give a continental whar he takes her. You kin talk smooth, Sheldon, an' I wisht you'd hunt up some chap. I'll have the money here, to-morrow. If you'll take the job I'll give you one hundred dollars."

The other frowned at the floor. He shook his head slowly.

"I'm afraid you've forgotten that Miss Beckett has a say as to whom she'll marry, dad."

"I don't see how you figger, if the feller is all slicked up like a dude—'bout her age an' middlin' handsome. I said I'd foot all the bills, mind ye."

There was a soft footfall beyond the glass-front partition divided off into the usual honeycomb of post-office boxes. A man had entered from the street a few moments before. He stood now listening, peering in at the postmaster and his old friend.

"But suppose Miss Beckett doesn't take to the applicant?" persisted Sheldon.

"It'll be up to him to make her. That's what I'm payin' him one thousand dollars for, ain't it?" shrilled Old Gravy excitedly. "'Twon't hurt none to try, will it? I tell you, niece or no niece, I won't have her round me. There's a hundred dollars"—tossing a number of bills on a table. "Will you tackle it? Go on, Sheldon! I ain't got many more days——"

"I'll do my best, Mr. Beckett," said the postmaster, as he took the money. "But I can't promise results, simply because if your niece is averse to——"

A sharp knock on the delivery window interrupted him. He got to his feet and slid it open, revealing a singular individual who hesitatingly inquired if it were too late to buy stamps. Sheldon glanced him over with a suspicious eye as he gave him a strip of twos. The fellow rubbed his chin apologetically.

"I—I just happened to overhear what you gentlemen were saying," he began, in awkward fashion. "It—it struck me that I might—well, offer myself as an applicant. You know what I mean——" He broke off.

The postmaster now regarded him in an entirely different light. Here was one hundred dollars easily earned!

"Step right inside, friend. Who knows but what you'll fill the bill?" he said genially. He closed the window, and hurried to throw open the door.

The man stepped in. With his first full-length view of him, however, Sheldon's hopes took sudden flight. The fellow was to Miss Violet Beckett what a toothpick is to a Sequoia, figuratively speaking—a six-foot-three shadow, with a melancholy mustache, small disappearing chin and sad, lusterless, blue eyes. He had long bony red hands, and his Adam's apple protruded over his low stand-up collar so prominently as to be disconcerting to the beholder. He was dressed in a hand-me-down suit that fitted his angular figure like some ridiculous disguise. Gingerly he lowered himself into a chair and looked painfully ill at ease.

Sheldon gave him a reassuring smile.

"Of course you're familiar with the details of this affair, and—just why do you believe yourself eligible, Mr.——"

"Burr—Francis Burr," supplied the other. "Well, you see, for one thing, there's the financial inducement offered and, besides"—he gave a sick grin—"I'm as vain as most men on their ability to make—er—conquests."

"What's your business, Mr. Burr?"

"I'm a—well, you'd call me a drummer. I travel for a soap concern."

"Ever had any previous 'xperience?" ventured Old Gravy, squinting hard at him.

"You mean in courtship? Why, yes—that is, I've kept company with young

women on several occasions." He paused, resuming with an air of confidence: "I don't want to appear conceited, but I'll guarantee to make an impression on the lady referred to within a reasonable time. This is a business proposition. So, in the event you—er—hired me, I'd expect something down to bind the bargain."

Old Gravy passed a blissfully wakeful night. His deliverance from what he fancied was an appalling predicament seemed to him nothing short of miraculous. He had been plucked from the burning, as it were. A beneficent Providence had sent Francis Burr to save him—coincident with the moment when his needs were desperate. Burr wasn't much for looks, certainly, but he talked as if he possessed the open sesame to the feminine heart. One thousand dollars was a lot of money but, blow though it was to his hard-earned savings, it bothered Old Gravy not a whit. He was too thankful, too deliriously jubilant over his escape.

At nine o'clock next morning he trotted off to the post office to deposit with Sheldon—according to agreement—the full financial consideration, of which Mr. Burr was to receive two hundred and fifty dollars on account. That gentleman arrived a few minutes later. He had undergone a magical change. While he still retained his string-bean slenderness, it was cleverly camouflaged by a snappy tailored suit; the coat generously padded out at the shoulders and chest, the trousers of voluminous but nobby cut. On his head was a snowy Panama, the distressing Adam's apple had vanished behind three inches of collar, and he smelled frightfully of violet perfume.

"I see you've got the right brand of cologne, Mr. Burr," grinned Sheldon slyly.

"Yes. That's important. In this case it wasn't hard to find. Sometimes, though ——" He broke off, and his mournful eyes gazed off into space.

Old Gravy winked at the postmaster. It was quite evident that Burr was no blundering amateur. Even so insignificant a point as a lady's favorite perfume did not get by him!

Meanwhile Highgrade had heard the remarkable news. Conjecture and curiosity ran neck and neck, rampant. Though it was some hours before a mail delivery, the citizens began trooping into the little post-office building—hopeful of getting a glimpse of this newfangled Romeo who valued his single blessedness so lightly.

At last the moment arrived when, according to Sheldon, Miss Beckett must have completed her toilet and would, therefore, be quite prepared to receive them. Old Gravy was to request her presence in the hotel parlor, and the usual formalities of introducing the suitor as an old friend would follow, counseled Sheldon. Then, after a reasonable time, Old Gravy could excuse himself from the room, and Mr. Burr would remain to visit and ripen acquaintance with the young lady.

But Sheldon's sagacious planning was seemingly for nothing. A little freckle-faced boy came panting into the office, spied Old Gravy, and sang out in one breath that his niece was waiting for him at his cabin —that she wanted to see him, right away. The old fellow went as white as his hair. He gazed aghast at the postmaster.

"She's took possession!" he choked. "She's riled up over what happened yestiday. She said she'd light into me, fust chanct she got. I can't——"

"Calm yourself, Mr. Beckett," drawled Burr, in his slow solemn tones. "Let us stop a moment to consider this message. It appears to me that your home offers a far better meeting place than a hotel parlor. Certainly more acceptable to me, in the circumstances. Suppose you obey her summons, and that I accompany you?"

So it was that, with Sheldon on one side of him and Burr on the other, Old Gravy—trembling inwardly he knew not why—set out for his dilapidated rock hut. Behind them trailed a curious crowd. They came in sight of their destination. The door stood wide open. The old man taking his courage in both hands went forward and stole a look into the interior.

Seated on his rude little bunk was Violet. Her head was buried in her hands, and the sound of her soft sobbing reached his ears. Presently she looked up, and seeing the frightened white-bearded face peering in at her got to her feet and hurried toward him.

"Uncle Marvin!" she cried, her arms thrust out toward him.

He stood amazed, staring wide-eyed at her.

"Go on in! Speak to her!" said a voice at his shoulder. He glanced around to see

Burr standing alongside of him. He obeyed.

"I—I don't see nuthin' to cry about," he floundered. "You ain't sick, are you—Vi'let?"

"You—you poor—neglected dear!" she sobbed aloud. "I didn't know—I didn't stop to think, Uncle Marvin. I spoke so—so terribly to—to you, yesterday." Her arms went around the frail old form and crushed it tenderly to her breast. "You've—you've been living in this awful place, dear," she went on. "So lonesome. With nothing to love, except—except a cat and a rat, and—and that poor little geranium to—to cheer you."

Outside, the curious throng waited solemnly. Burr paced with long restless strides before the cabin. Soon Old Gravy and his niece came out, chatting happily. Then an unlooked-for thing happened.

Violet's eyes fell on Burr. She gazed in bewilderment at him. A glad cry broke from her.

"Why, Frankie—darling!" She rushed forward—into his outstretched arms. "Why, I—— What in the world—— I didn't expect you for at least two weeks, honeybunch!"

The six-foot-three shadow grinned. "Oh, I got lonesome and took the next train! Business can take care of itself for a while, I guess."

Violet turned. "Uncle Marvin, this is my fiancé—Mr. Burr, of Burr's Miracle Soap. He came out to buy a borax mine, and told me there was a Marvin Beckett here——"

"Your uncle and I have already entered into a little business transaction together, Violet," laughed Burr. "I've got the joke of the century to tell you. In the first place, he owes me——" He broke off, for Old Gravy was waving a frantic arm at him.

"Never mind what he owes you, pretty boy," said Miss Beckett, as she kissed him. "It's all in the family, anyhow. I've adopted Uncle Marvin for my very own."

The curious Highgraders straggled silently back to camp, quite thunderstruck over the dénouement. They felt that in some way the community had lost through the adoption of its landmark, Old Gravy.

THE NATIONAL BANQUETEERS

THE National Banqueteers are Washington's vanishing tribe. Captains of caviare and colonels of after-dinner eloquence find few camping grounds in the national capital now. In the good old days the banquet was a feature of the city's life. If the leaders of a "movement" desired congressional support, they gave a banquet. When the old wheel horses of the House wanted to make the new members feel at home and submissive to party discipline, they gave a banquet. When a millionaire got tired of counting his money and longed for the thrill of flattering publicity, he gave a banquet.

It was not a simple matter of ordering food lavishly and inviting people indiscriminately. It was a game with rules and "inside stuff" peculiarly its own. Sometimes the man who paid all the expenses got a "famous personage" to act as host. The newcomer had to have expert advice on whom to invite so as to get the best results in the newspapers. Most important of all was the selection of the speakers for the evening. Some of the congressional orators accepted invitations so often that their presence conferred little prestige on the host. Others were harder to get; luring them to the "festive event" called for diplomacy and suasion. The bulk of the assemblage consisted of congressmen, diplomats, and men about town who had more appetite than "influence." They were the National Banqueteers, the "old reliables."

But prohibition has changed all that. Without the whisky and wines the jokes are flat and the eloquence somehow far inferior to the best efforts of Demosthenes. There are just as many men about who have "games" to put over, but the desired victims will not attend. The National Banqueteers buy their own meal tickets, and the designing gentlemen give theater parties instead of renting private dining rooms in restaurants and hotels. Banqueting as a business is rapidly dying out.

Traveler's Choice

By Calvin Johnston

Author of "Mascot Extraordinary," "The Hill Horse," Etc.

A railroad story of high imaginative power in which good and evil come to grips at a lonely, prairie junction, and fight to a decision while the storm of life howls round the struggle.

ON the tick of twelve of the sultry midsummer night, a cloud which had been snarlingly illuminating the southwest reared suddenly and sent a howl of thunder along the railroad yards. In a moment the tarpaulin of the switch-engine cab was down and the sheltered enginemen grinning at the switchmen streaking for the shanty through the hail shower, blue with lightning. Then feeling an icy presence at their backs, they turned, raising their own complaint against the tempest, only to face Denny, the old switchman, who felt for his pipe even as the tarpaulin dropped behind him.

It is natural that enginemen who are compelled to move about incessantly because of the annoying signals of the yardmen should like to see the latter move on before the storm. The engineer said frankly that Denny had put one over on them. "However, I give you credit for deciding which way to go."

"'Tis not always best to decide which way to go," replied Denny so significantly that the new fireman was secretly impressed. The storm shook the locomotive in its gauntlet of ice and the sunken eyes of the speaker reflected pale lightning upon the fireman across the dusky cab. "'Tis not always best," muttered Denny, "to decide which way you should go. As proven by the experience of one Terence O'Malley who saved himself in a cruel storm by indecision instead of boarding a locomotive which is a target for lightning. Whist!" As though his raised crooking finger pulled the trigger of an infernal cannon, a bolt exploded in the air around them, and with the concussion the tarpaulin dropped behind the new fireman.

Composedly the engineer and Denny saw him streak for the switch shanty, and the latter relaxed with an expression of comfort on the cushioned seat he had vacated.

The engineer smoked a moment meditatively. He convinced himself that Denny had deliberately frightened the fireman away that he might secure that comfortable seat; he warned himself against believing these switchmen, least of all the grandfather among them. But gazing at the curled-up figure of the old man who seemed closeted with mysterious memories quickened by these surroundings, the engineer heard his own blarneying tone.

"About that Terence O'Malley now, Denny! Sure 'tis something I ought to know."

"It is," assured his companion; "though I would make plain in the beginning that the fireman misunderstood. 'Twas O'Malley's storm of life I referred to and not one like this which he would have defied with scorn. But the statement stands—'twas because O'Malley could not decide which way he would go that he bested the storm."

'Tis conceded by all trail hounds of law that the traces most certain to lead to the discovery of a crime are those which the criminal has covered up—went on the old switchman. But there is a sort of crime which carries a threat of worse to come—a crime of warning, which should be arranged so that the traces lie around under the eyes of those who are threatened.

On a blue-and-gold October day in the foothills, thirty years agone, the traces of a crime of warning were to be seen from Lone Crossing station, the junction of the P. D. and the G. S. W. railways. In fact the remains of the victim lay there, charred and rusting with a twist of smoke hanging over like a ghost; the remains of a freight train ditched by wreckers a week before, whose splinters were being burned so that the iron could be loaded for the scrap heap in Barlow.

The wreck was on the P. D. and the agent had come out on the platform to watch the section gang two hundred yards away, loading the tangled remains and to wonder at the violence abroad in a world which looked so peaceful. Millie McCrary, operator and joint agent at Lone Crossing wondered, but was divil a bit surprised by any outbreak of fury on the part of life. A queer little manner Millie had, as if pressing her straight slender body against an invisible storm; so she stood on the platform, a wisp of dark hair straying over her temple and clear brown eyes searching beyond the ashes of wreck as one who must discover his path through a wild and perilous dusk. Her lips pressed together anxiously, but they did not tremble or droop, y'understand, and though in truth the invisible storm beat heavy upon her, Millie weathered it with a calm spirit.

"'Tis a proverb," said the man who sat on his heels against the station, whittling, "that a criminal will return to the scene of his crime. If 'twas me, I would stay away from it, being that remorseful even of the smallest offense." And in a sense the man told the truth, having the day before moved away from a spot where the memories of a crime annoyed him.

Millie was thinking: "This immigrant O'Malley talks a great deal," and she asked politely: "When do you expect to hear from your friends so you can go on with your journey at once?"

"They are not friends, but strangers," answered O'Malley, "whom I have written about mining prospects. One has claims up the G. S. W. and the other owns claims up the P. D. So being a man of energy I thought to load my stuff in the box car which arrived yesterday and is set on the siding there, as y'can see."

"Oh, but he talks without end," thought Millie with a nod.

"And when I heard from them here," ended the man of energy with a yawn, "I could make choice of location and be off up either one railroad or the other at the drop of the hat." He was a small man dressed in baggy old clothes, with a tousle of red hair and a narrowed but amiable blue eye. Stretching himself, he strolled down to the crossing and stared under his hand up one line and then the other as if the messages he was expecting would come fluttering along the wire. "They seem to be in no hurry to answer," he said sauntering back to the young woman who had been watching him curiously, "but then neither am I. Hurry," said O'Malley, "is not necessary to a man of energy."

"He calls himself that," Millie was thinking, "and yet in all his life he has accumulated a few old clothes and tools, and household goods enough to fill the end of a box car."

O'Malley said there should be a little town at the crossing, what with some farms down the line and a number of big mines twenty miles back in the hills.

Millie explained that one had been surveyed, as he could see by the stakes, when the P. D. built through a couple of years before. "But the two lines began to dispute over the ownership of the town site," she said, "and till it is settled no homeseekers are turned this way." In fact the little house of the agent was the only one in the town, but she had taken the lonesome job the month before with the promise from Superintendent Rivets that she would soon have neighbors

"And you do not wish to send wires to your mine agents to hurry their answers? Remember the company will be charging rent for the car," warned Millie.

"Sure they should pay me for living in it as caretaker," answered O'Malley, "with all the empties I saw rotting on their sidings. Now I will go up to the wreck and if the wrecker comes to gloat over his crime bring him in to you."

Millie McCrary looked after him with a frown of anxiety. "There is never any spot so out of the way that trouble does not come to settle along of you," she reflected. "Already I have had bad news, and on top of that the wreck, and now a stranger who may be just a gabby prospector and may not, but is in no hurry to move on."

At the moment the stranger was moving on lazily to the scene of the wreck where the gang was pulling out with their car of iron. For a few moments he stood by the smoking ashes, and then crossed the right of way to the woods that skirted it. Back a hundred paces he sat down with his back to a tree. "I do not like the feeling as of trouble, about this Lone Crossing," he thought, "and did wrong to joke on the proverb of criminals haunting the scene of crime, who have myself been a fugitive of conscience so many months. 'Tis such jokes bring judgment on a man." With this he gazed about in a presentiment, and heard through the woods to his right a thumping sound as of a gravedigger at work. The sound died down only to be succeeded by a stealthy footstep to his left, and through the bushes he glimpsed the figure of a man walking slowly with his face held up; as O'Malley gazed, the man threw high his arms and then folded them over his face with a groan. In a moment he had disappeared, leaving O'Malley with a heightened presentiment of misfortune.

"'Tis the wrecker filled with remorse," reflected he, "after a look at the wreck ashes, and a terrible sight the man is to another guilty man. With my loose tongue and curiosity I must first jest about such things and then come prying in here. And the twinge of conscience such a reminder gives me, I deserve," he went on, still talking even as he rose to leave the spot, "because I was not content to let a dead dog lie. A dead dog!" mused O'Malley with terror, the figure of speech he had happened on being above all others calculated to recall the circumstances of his crime; and the gravedigger thumping began again on his right.

"After all these months when I was making great strides in forgetfulness," said O'Malley, "I must like a fool wake the memory all over again," and the thumping coming closer he moved with a prowling step, only to stop face to face with another prowler across the glade. Gaunt was this animal, with a rough-gray coat; his head was big and bony and scarred and his sunken eyes like battle lanterns in a fog.

"'Tis a cat," said O'Malley, "a house cat whose house would be the house of correction by the expression of outlawry. Kitty, Kitty," he said, unable to hold his tongue even in the presence of a sign so fateful as this.

But the other's eyes turned green and he spit with a lash of the tail. The thumping was now at its loudest, and a big rabbit, limping into the glade indifferent to all enemies except the one on his trail, was laid dead at O'Malley's feet by a single pounce and crunch of the cat. Again the outlaw hissed in warning, and suddenly lifting in a long spring wrung the neck of the pursuing weasel with a toss in the air.

O'Malley was moved to admiration of such hunting but his applause stuck in his throat; with head swinging from side to side and deep growls rolling along the ground ahead of him, another beast more fearsome than the first broke from the bushes. Past the man and within fifteen feet of him stalked the monster, a specter of war and famine with brindle hide stretched over his protruding ribs and battered head rolling. "'Tis Barney, the bulldog of the train master at Barlow," breathed O'Malley, "and the cat is Cinder Dick."

The dog ambled up to the rabbit near Cinder Dick who sat moving his paw before his whiskers to fan away the scent of the weasel which he had slain as a matter of sport; there side by side the two sat, the dog waiting on his host, as a polite guest will do before helping himself to dinner, even though whining with hunger. As the feast did not begin he turned with an air of inquiry and so faced Dick and the man also; 'twas the most pathetic thing ever seen by anybody and a torment to O'Malley, who spoke his name: "Barney!" One instant the eyes of the dog were fixed on him—sightless they were yet filling with

accusation; then wrinkling back his muzzle with a gnash of fangs he groped silently toward O'Malley.

Twice the man repeated his name, pleading with him, but the blind dog came on, fangs bared, and swinging his head with never a sound, pure vengeance in its most natural form.

Not a paw did Cinder Dick lift in this matter, y'understand, but was sitting in as though ready to give judgment if appealed to, the last O'Malley saw of him. Then the man, easily avoiding the blind vengeance, escaped from the spot, once folding his arms across his eyes as he had seen the prowler do after looking on the scene of wreck.

Leaving the woods O'Malley walked through the hot ashes not noticing what he did and only determined to get out of Lone Crossing before worse befell him. At the depot he found a wire, from the mining agent, at the P. D. station and himself wired the other one on the G. S. W. to hurry his information. All this without talking; and Miss McCrary, who had watched him go into the woods and later walk out through the hot ashes, inquired if he had seen the wrecker come haunting. "What I have seen," replied O'Malley, "will not detain me in Lone Crossing." Which only added to the girl's suspicions.

"He is not what he seems; the wires he receives and sends are cipher," she said, and the anxiety over what had happened while he was in the woods was another gust of the invisible storm which ever beat upon her. Long shadows from the far hills were now crossing the platform and O'Malley saw the girl come out and gaze at the sun in its setting; she seemed a lonely, tempest-blown figure against the peaceful light.

O'Malley later thought of it when frying his ham over a spark near the siding where his car was set. But in the main he was busy thinking of his get-away from Lone Crossing and after dark went back the hundred yards to the station in hopes that his second message might arrive that night.

There was no one in the station, whose door was locked, and he crossed the track to the cottage where a candle burned dimly behind the curtained window. But his knocking brought no answer; there was the feel of desertion about the place and he waited in vain for the girl to return.

"Where has she gone, with no neighbor in miles?" he wondered. "What a mystery!" O'Malley, being used to solitary places, was not at all concerned at being alone; but he was not alone. The black dark was haunted with the groping unsteady padding of an avenger who stole from the woods with grinning fangs. 'Twas really Remorse he heard, prowling in the jungle of his own darkened soul, and suspecting as much he said, "Of course a guilty man has his fancies; still I will not trust them and maybe have a leg bitten off." The lonesomeness increased with an intensity he had not believed possible at all, as if Fate, who dispatches all winds and all trains if the truth was known, had stopped them where they were, along of the bats and bugs which buzz in the night, so that O'Malley and the avenger could have the stage to themselves.

'Twas well established in O'Malley's memory afterward that a shadow hung between him and the pale stars as of something floating about and looking on with interest. "I must get out of this if I have to run wild in the foothills," he talked on. "The groaning wrecker who had no more sense than to visit the scene of crime I do not sympathize with; but the scene of my crime is now traveling about with me."

He walked quietly from the deserted house to his car, appalled by the mysterious appearances and disappearances at Lone Crossing. " 'Tis certain I must choose my own way of disappearing quickly," he was saying, standing there, when a tall figure glided by down the main line and lost itself in the shadow of the station. A soft rat-tat-tat followed, then a deep curse and the figure repassed him.

"It mashed its thumb, by the curse, whatever the thing was," said O'Malley, and though upbraiding himself for his meddling which caused him so much trouble, must again investigate. "A bulletin the thing nailed up, of course," he muttered, "concerning affairs at Lone Crossing, and as I am the only inhabitant at the moment 'tis plainly a public duty to read what is the matter now." So he did under a trembling match read printed in sprawling letters on a sheet of brown paper:

> Agent. Three-day notice to pay up claims. It will be worse than a train wreck next time.

'Twas common knowledge that when the P. D. built into this county some of the

settlers had held right-of-way values so high that the property had to be condemned. Since then the company had been presented many false claims for locomotive-cinder fires and stock killed, and when these were turned down, tough citizens refused to pay fare on the passenger trains. There had been fighting with crews, and many threats; then the wreck.

"Those blaggards down the line are now going to wreck the stations," said O'Malley. The young-lady agent would of course pack herself out of Lone Crossing on reading the bulletin, and O'Malley determined to start somewhere in the morning, whether or not he received his message from the G. S. W. station.

A moving light in the cottage caught his eye, the door opened and closed, and Miss McCrary with a lantern crossed over to the station. O'Malley wondered where she had been and why, but resolved to meddle never again in what did not concern him. "Here is a bulletin which does not interest me, nailed on your door," he said, and after she had read it under the lantern, asked that she call up the G. S. W. station. "They may have called you with a message for me during the time you were somewhere away from Lone Crossing," he said. "Of course, it is nothing to me where you had gone when I knocked at the cottage."

At this the lantern rattled in the girl's hand, but she went on into the little partitioned office in a corner of the waiting room, made the call and told him, all steadily enough: "No message has been filed for you."

"Then I will not wait for it. You can order the P. D. local to stop in the morning and pick up my car," said O'Malley with decision. "Anyway, the station would be closed to-morrow, so that a message could not get through to me."

"I will be here to-morrow—and every other day," said Millie McCrary.

"But the bulletin!" And as she shrugged her shoulders with a steady look, O'Malley kept on. "These blaggards down the line, having started open war, will go the limit. You will advise headquarters of the threat, but they will not pay the claims and cannot protect you."

"Still I will stay by my job," said the girl.

"It is this way," said O'Malley. "The blaggards will not stand for any witnesses, and if you are here when they come, they are not above burning you in your own house or knocking you on the head."

The girl laughed, a hard little laugh. "Well then, they will knock me on the head and burn me up, and that's that," she said.

"Well, you have been warned by an enemy and by a friend, and I am amazed at the wrong-headedness of you," said O'Malley, "though of course you may have some way of disappearing."

"You are interested in that," she said with a blaze of the brown eyes. "Well, I am now placing the order with the train master to have your car picked up in the morning, so you will soon have matters at Lone Crossing off your mind."

"Thankfully," said O'Malley, "and bidding you a pleasant good night."

But after Miss McCrary had finished reporting the bulletin to the train master and been advised to keep good watch over the company property, she went out to discover O'Malley on the platform, by the light of the rising moon.

"Are you still wrong-headed?" he asked.

"I am not to be scared away," she answered with dignity.

"Then I wash my hands of you entirely," said O'Malley, but she did not seem to hear him and stood gazing at the moon, peering crimson as an eye of wrath under the shaggy brow of the woods.

A minute later, alone on the platform, the man snorted with disgust. "Well, she knows what will happen here," he said, "and will have nobody to blame but herself. 'Tis not an O'Malley would desert a woman in the face of trouble without warning her to vamose." He felt that by this good deed he had gone far toward squaring himself with conscience for the crime against Barney, and rubbed his hands smiling. To be sure a remembrance came to him of the lonely girl as she had stood in the sunset; and just now, gazing at the moon with body straining against the black shadow cast by the woods. "Defiant she is, and as if lifting herself against a storm," he thought. "Well, if it blows her away she cannot blame me." 'Twas hard indeed for Terence to judge which of so many words should be the last, but what he had just said was so comforting that he was ready to go to bed on it. And he had turned toward his car only to be halted in mid-stride by

a figure in his path and feel the flush of comfort driven out of his veins by an icy flood.

In the full gleam of the moon sat Cinder Dick, still as a stone and eyes glittering clear and green. Always a monster of high presence, y'understand, he needed no false pretense of dignity, and having come on judicial business he glared naturally as the lord high chancellor, with a bitter grin under his whiskers. 'Twas so he had sat in the wood when the issue was called between the blind dog and his enemy, as Terence O'Malley well remembered; and now he appeared presiding again in a trial which would prove the sincerity of the man's repentance for evil done, or his falsity to all that is honorable.

"'Tis this way, Dick," testified O'Malley presently in confidence. "As the girl would not leave on the blaggards' warning, I have taken every means to protect her, by advice of my own." The cat did not blink or move, but O'Malley, observing him sharpening his claws on the planking, resumed with a sly shift of the subject.

"'Tis yourself has a feeling for the afflicted, O'Malley as well as Barney, for never have I known peace of mind since hurting him, till I saw him in your care to-day. That is my only consolation since he will let me do nothing for him—that you are his friend in need. And I thank you gratefully."

As the other continued listening, O'Malley took occasion to refresh his memory in the Barney affair. He reminded Dick, who had been official mouser at headquarters, that the temper of the train master's bulldog had not been of the gentlest. So that meeting him one morning in the yard, O'Malley had thrown a stick at him, as a man will at one he does not care for.

"I saw him fall down, and then move," said O'Malley, "and yourself walk out from under a car and look at him. 'Twas the bloodcurdling growling of him drove me away, supposing that his temper had got the best of him again. But now I know that he was blinded and raising the curse of the brute on cruel mankind."

That morning of the crime the cat, nursing many wrongs of his own, had listened with lashing tail till the dog's curses became a groan of despair. Then his mind made up to have done with all mankind, Cinder Dick had moved into the bushes beyant the yard, Barney groping at his heels. More than once it was rumored the two were together in the woods, having wandered ten miles along the line from Barlow. The big cat's cunning and the strength of Barney were united as in one animal, for protection and the slaying of game, from rabbits to badgers. Even sheep wool and the fur of foxes were scattered along their trail.

Cinder Dick rose. The court sitting was ended; a bristle among his whiskers and along his spine and a low caterwaul hinted a judgment to which the threat of the wrecker was nothing. As the cat glanced toward the woods, Terence O'Malley glanced toward the cottage; in each poor refuge dwelt a creature blind and distressed, given over defenseless to the violence of a merciless world. But brute was going to the succor of brute, and man was shirking the duty to his kind. The vision of the dog he had blinded returned to O'Malley; the dog lifting his face above the dead rabbit, in gratitude to the outlaw, an enemy of every other living thing. What wild adventure and danger and storms the two had weathered together—all that Cinder Dick might earn a look like that from his friend.

"'Tis worth all the danger," said O'Malley, a moment blinded himself. And in that moment remembering the girl as one groping alone through storm and danger, he thought: "'Twould be worth while before I move on to earn such a look for myself."

'Twas not spoken aloud, and yet at the moment the tail of Cinder Dick ceased its lashing, the bitter grin vanished entirely and he sauntered forward with the man falling in at his side. "Glory be," thought O'Malley, "by doing the right thing now he will acquit me of the wrong I have done." But not word or meow, laugh or pur was exchanged, y'understand; the two sauntered side by side to the end of the platform where Dick, who was a connoisseur of locomotives, paused to size up one rolling by after blowing for the crossing. Then, his tail in the air, he walked on into the shadow of the woods and Terence O'Malley turned back to his bed.

'Tis not to be denied that O'Malley swaggered a bit, till reflecting: "Sure, the man I saw over the bushes to-day must be tall; and he will be as tough as a grizzly. Plainly the remorse he shows for crimes past does not interfere with his future career as a

wrecker and I have put myself next in line for him. Wirra, wirra, again I have talked too much." But a moment's review proved this was not the case at all. Not a word had he spoken aloud of protecting the girl. Yet the pledge he had given silently in that mysterious court of moon and outlawed brute before two phantom witnesses was sacred and not to be broken, though O'Malley was broken himself in keeping it.

"The mere words would have counted for nothing at all," he thought with astonishment.

Terence O'Malley was awakened in the morning by the conductor of the local, who was told to go on without him. In a few minutes he was out of the car and raising the smoke of a breakfast fire which threaded across the orange-and-silver dawn. It promised to be a fine day for talking, but Terence, with a serious job on his hands, began it silently. "'Twould be well for me to think as little as possible also," he reflected, as he remembered the height of the man among the bushes uneasily. "After breakfast I will prepare some lengths of rope to tie the scoundrel when he is subdued." For weapon he chose fists, and with reason. "Sure, I might shoot or bat the eyes out of him with a revolver or club and I hope I am too cautious to attract more blind victims to haunting my trail," he thought, "until I have squared the last one."

Miss McCrary presently visited the breakfast fire and said it was as well he had waited, as the second message had come for him. O'Malley read the wire and compared it with the first one.

"Now you know where you want to go," said Millie, "and can be starting at once."

"You are a railroad agent," he pointed out to her, "and interested only in the movement of business in any direction. But a traveler must or should choose where he is going, which is not done at the drop of a hat."

She nodded, dumfounded by so many words, but thought as she walked away, "As I suspected, his business is at Lone Crossing and his telegrams a bluff. I must keep watch."

But O'Malley was prompt in starting as soon as her back was turned, and an hour passed before Millie learned she was spying on an empty car.

Meantime O'Malley took up the trail of the wrecker and a mile or so deep in the woods came on a decayed log cabin. Before it in the weedy clearing a young man walked back and forth. "'Tis no doubt very convenient to pitch camp so near the scene of operations," thought O'Malley, "but foolhardy, too. I do not see a weapon on him.

"Stand! Hands high! Turn your back!" called O'Malley from a clump of sumac bushes at the edge of the clearing.

But the young man after a violent start did not a thing he was commanded. "If you want me alive come and take me with your hands," he answered; "and I warn you I'll put up a hard fight. So you'd better go ahead and shoot."

"No; I will take you," answered O'Malley, "at least half alive." He came out of the bushes, dropping his coat on the ground, and started the fight which soon carried all over the clearing, first one being knocked down and then the other before O'Malley was lucky enough to win. The wrecker was dazed for a minute and O'Malley slipped the noosed cords over his hands and feet and braced him against the cabin wall. There the two sat side by side engaged in recovering their wind and senses when with a patter of running footfalls Millie McCrary broke through the screen of brush into the clearing, to stand panting with hand on her heart.

"Georgie, I am too late!" she said; and dropped on her knees by the bound man to wipe a blood spot off his face. "There was no need to beat up your prisoner," she told O'Malley with indignation.

O'Malley passed his hand over his forehead, and got out his pipe. "Georgie, I beg your pardon," he told his prisoner sadly enough. "If I had only known I need not beat you up 'twould have saved me two dreadful cracks on the ear. Why didn't you make haste with your information, Miss McCrary?" He laughed a cynical laugh and gazed afar, making black smoke with the pipe.

"'Tis no use crying over a little spilt blood, Millie," said George; "though I'd rather he'd shot me than take me back to disgrace. Why didn't you shoot when I told you?" he demanded fiercely of O'Malley.

"Shoot ye!" repeated O'Malley, again rubbing his brow. "What were we talking about? Oh, 'twas the fight and the capture. Well, if the ropes are painful to him, Miss McCrary, take them off him." And as the pair looked at him with doubt: "Sorrow the day," he said, "I meddled in this matter and took two swings on the temple which unseated my reason so that I tied him up."

"'Twas your ear a minute ago," said the other with sarcasm.

"So it was," agreed O'Malley. "I seem to have lost all sense of location. And am I still at Lone Crossing, with Miss McCrary the agent freeing a desperate prisoner who last night nailed a notice on her door to run for her life!" He rose prepared to depart when he had received his answer, but when it came he sat down again immediately.

"This is my brother, as you well know," said Millie, "and 'tis only a part of your strange hypocrisy to pretend he nailed up that bulletin."

"If you had called me horse thief or road agent I would swallow it politely," said O'Malley, "but hypocrite I resent. Is it the part of a hypocrite to take seven or eight wallops——"

"They were but two just now."

"Faith, my brain is clearing enough to count. But again I ask you, would it not be carrying hypocrisy rather far to take the honest name of O'Malley, and to go into the particulars of my business——"

"You are a special officer of the P. D.," replied Millie firmly, "who thought my brother might be in hiding in my neighborhood."

"Most of the O'Malleys have lived within the law but never taken an active interest in it," said Terence. "And your brother can stay hidden till doomsday for all of me."

As he smoked, the ex-prisoner and his sister whispered together, studying him. "How did you suspect George was here?" the latter asked.

O'Malley explained and was then asked why he had mixed in the affair at all. "'Twas in atonement for a crime of my own," he answered, and as it had turned out a good day for talking after all, went into the details of the Barney-Cinder Dick affair.

There was a silence after he had finished, broken by Millie. "And so you wished to protect me because Cinder Dick protected Barney." Elbow on knee, chin in hand, she studied him, a hard-sinewed, red-headed little man in rough clothes. One forgot how much he talked in listening to the fresh clear voice; his narrowed blue eye and astonishing honesty of expression suggested a schoolboy who knows much too much to appear at the head of his class. "He is so very, very honest, that——" thought Millie.

"Y'understand, it was an opportunity to strike a balance with conscience," answered O'Malley. "That was all. By the way, 'tis a sight to warm the heart of a salamander, the friendship that shines in the face of Barney when he turns it toward Cinder Dick. But of course he has earned it by a hundred devotions, while myself only——"

"That face is too honest; this man is a liar, a dreadful liar with his fable of the two animals," thought Millie McCrary. With a quick secret terror she felt the tears welling under her eyelids and words of gratitude struggling behind her lips for the only one in all the world who had ever thought for her, fought for her, whatever he was, whatever the reason. And she could only cover up by a bold utterance and straightforward smile and gesture. "I do thank you, sir, for wishing to protect me; I am sure it will help you to the blind dog's forgiveness.

"Still," she thought, bewildered, "he is a liar!" And out of the screen of bushes thrust a scarred head with green glowing eyes that could belong only to an outlaw, and Cinder Dick stepped noiselessly into the clearing, followed by his familiar.

"Barney!" said O'Malley, softly.

The fierce dog's muscles bunched, his muzzle wrinkled; but without further movement he turned the blind eyes toward his companion, who gazed at the three against the cabin and then at the sun as if taking his bearings. "Meow," said Dick and passed from sight, his fellow monster at his heels. And this time without a growl for his former enemy.

George McCrary was the first to speak. "Never have I seen anything like that," he said, and Millie, her eyes on the ground, told him quietly:

"Explain to Mr. O'Malley how you happen to be here. He is a friend to be trusted."

There was little to tell. George, an operator on the other end of the division, had been working his second trick without rest and gone to sleep on a train order. Luckily nobody was killed, but one was injured and an engine was half wrecked. It would have been the usual thing to fire him and let it go at that, but Superintendent Rivets, under the pressure of a new manager, had laid a charge of criminal carelessness against the young man. "So I hid out to escape arrest," he concluded.

"Now you understand that I could not flee Lone Crossing while George was here to be fed and comforted," the girl told O'Malley.

The thought of arrest put her brother in a panic. "I must make a break to get out of the country," he kept repeating.

"Simple enough," said O'Malley; "for both of you. When it is dark George will get into my car and travel in charge; it can be billed to that new mining camp a hundred miles up the G. S. W. and I will follow later by passenger. I'll find him a job in the hills till he can make a stake. With your brother gone, Miss McCrary, you can leave Lone Crossing before the station is burned or blown up. They will be passing the buck as usual at headquarters till that really happens, then they will believe it possible. But once you make it plain to them personally that you will not be the goat they will give you a transfer. Good operators are too scarce to waste."

So 'twas arranged on the spot, a spirit of gayety taking possession of the party to discover that their troubles had been settled by one move, and Miss McCrary hastened back to her duties.

O'Malley visited with the young man in the woods till late in the day and then returned to the station. George prowled in after dusk, and the spirit of gayety was at its height when the G. S. W. train ordered to pick up the car was heard in the distance. " 'Tis not likely that any G. S. W. man will know you," O'Malley had assured him; "and the new town is on another division and a place of strangers. You will report as my partner to the mining land agent, so I can locate you when I arrive in two or three days."

After the meeting in the clearing with Barney, O'Malley had made a rapid calculation which he had been talking about ever since. "If I have advanced so far in the blind dog's forgiveness in one day, what can't I accomplish in two or three days?" he said. He was not the sort of penitent, y'see, who would try to square himself with the animal and then leave him to freeze or starve in the winter woods.

When Miss McCrary objected that he would be a target for the vengeance of the wrecker if he stayed at the station, O'Malley explained that he would live in the shack where George had been hiding out. "To live there in outlawry with them will give me a standing with Cinder Dick, who we must not forget is in control of the situation," he said, with a look of craftiness.

In spite of the fact that he had proved his trustworthiness, Miss McCrary studied him doubtfully. "He has proved up, and yet I never knew a man who covers up the truth in so much mystery," she thought. Yet it was only humane and natural for him to try to persuade the blind dog to follow him and be cared for.

Never was a traveler given a more cheerful send-off than the fugitive, George. "Everything will be all right now," said his sister, with a good-by kiss. O'Malley shook his head, and closed the car door behind him. Then Miss McCrary went back to the station to hand the G. S. W. conductor the way bill and contract for immigrant outfit with man in charge. "He's in his car, asleep, I guess," she said.

"He will not need to leave a call on the G. S. W.," answered the conductor, who was not pleased by the stop. In five minutes the car was in the train, the fugitive on his way to safety.

O'Malley remarked as much, but for an instant the girl covered her face. "Can I forget that he is an outlaw, now?" she asked.

O'Malley felt with awe that he actually saw that spark struck from the high soul of the girl, which raised the drooping body and sent it straining bravely into the invisible storm of life. As they looked for no danger that night, O'Malley was to take his blankets into the waiting room. The girl, having told headquarters she was coming in, was answered that the station could be closed till the town-site dispute was settled.

"I will have my few belongings ready to load in the baggage car on to-morrow morning's train," she told O'Malley. After she had gone to the cottage he watched the

candlelight flickering on the window and then sat himself down by the stove for a good-night smoke.

The small fire burned in a breathless way, without a crackle; a train rumbled by leaving the foothills more silent than before. "'Tis not for nothing this place is named Lonesome Crossing," said O'Malley, but without spirit to talk farther even to himself. Never is there a more dreadful experience than keeping open house for Silence, for, as is well known, Silence is the first mother of all things in creation and she will be accompanied by some weird members of the family which no human can meet and hold on to his senses.

Presently O'Malley felt one outside. "Faith, it serves me right for not keeping on with my talking," he thought, but could make no sound or move even of the tongue. His heart also stopped as the door which he supposed on the latch swung easily.

"'Tis only a matter of your appearing to me once more, Cinder Dick," he said when he could draw breath, "and I will be taking flight out the world to escape a blast of brimstone."

But Cinder Dick paid him no attention whatever. Plainly having some dark and secret business of his own in the woods, he ushered Barney quickly to a corner and turned back. Only in the doorway he paused, twisting the scarred frowsy head over his shoulder and transfixing O'Malley with green eyes baleful as demon fires.

"P-s-st," he said with a yowl as hideous as midnight murder, so that both Barney and O'Malley were startled off of the floor. "P-s-st," said the outlaw and staggered off dangerously into the night, nevermore to be seen.

"Dear saints!" said O'Malley.

"Woof," said Barney.

Side by side the two sat facing the stove, with an occasional mutter of confidence to each other.

When Millie McCrary came out of the house next morning, it was to see O'Malley leaving the woods. "I have been carrying the blankets and grub to the cabin," he said, "and will be very comfortable playing outlaw along of Barney and Dick."

She wished him luck in winning the blind dog over and talked a moment of her own affairs. She asked O'Malley to send George on to the coast, after he had made enough for his fare and two or three weeks' board. "Remember he is a fugitive and I can't write him in his own name," she said, and handed over a memorandum of the name she would address him by. "I have made up my mind that he could remain unknown in San Francisco," she went on, "so he will find letters there at the general delivery and later I will join him. We will easily get jobs there in the commercial offices."

"And there your troubles will end," predicted O'Malley. He moved her trunk and a rug over to the station platform and they were checked and loaded on the morning train for Barlow; the few sticks of furniture and kitchen utensils she would not bother to take along.

As she wished to stay on the job as long as possible, she would not be leaving Lone Crossing herself until the evening train, so O'Malley, intent on his own mission, returned to the woods, and sat in the clearing talking to Barney. Many times during the day, he chuckled over the deception he was putting over. "She is a suspicious woman," he told the dog, "and if she knew you had thrown in with me would ask why it was necessary for me to stay here. And I would have no excuse but a lie which might not succeed." All day they loafed and talked, seeing nothing of Cinder Dick, but more and more interested as they discovered that each had both human and bulldog traits to recommend him. And toward evening O'Malley took Barney to the edge of the wood and tied him with apologies to a tree where he was content to gnaw on a ham bone.

The depot was dark and locked up, Miss McCrary waiting outside by a lantern. And the two chatted in gay spirits till train time; then they walked down below the crossing where the stop was made to whistle, and O'Malley passed her bag to the coach platform with a wish for her prosperity in Frisco.

"Thank you again," she answered; her voice was lost in the roar of the exhaust and in a moment O'Malley was a solitary in Lone Crossing stumbling up the track toward the lantern on the platform.

With a coupling pin he had hidden under the depot that morning, he smashed the lock, and then went after Barney. As on the previous night the two sat in the waiting room forninst the stove with the lantern burning dimly. "Sorrow to me for an

ill-spent blathering youth," said O'Malley, "when I might have been studying the nature and manners of wreckers which would stand me in good stead such a time as this. I only hope he will not keep me waiting." And in fact the fear of the meeting was growing on him as he made and discarded one plan after another.

But when the door was hurled open and the wrecker himself appeared, he thought, "No plans but those of a tiger tamer would be useful anyway," for the man was wild and hairy, with crossed eyes and crooked nose and teeth.

"A pleasant good evening," said O'Malley, but the wrecker was no man for the courtesies and with a stride laid hands on him. At once arose the growls and yells of all the devils as Barney, who looked for nothing but war under such protectors as had been given him, left the ham bone for the wrecker's shin. And the beast in O'Malley was let loose when the wrecker staggered back shooting at the dog. In an instant they were all over the room together, landing in a corner with tremendous thumps which increased as Barney strove to tear off the leg and O'Malley the head of the intruder.

Nothing would have saved him but the cry of a woman: "O'Malley, do you want to kill him entirely?"

"'Tis Miss McCrary," gasped O'Malley. "Ps-st, Barney, lay off him! Have you no manners?" and he stumbled to his feet, seizing the revolver on the floor, as Barney acknowledged the introduction with a whine and wag of the tail.

"I will tie him up if you please, miss," said O'Malley, using the ropes he had first bound George with. "You made a quick journey."

"It was boarding one side of the train and off the other," she answered and he noticed she carried the station revolver in her hand. "For this morning," she said with defiance, "I saw the muddy animal tracks all over the floor. So I stole up through the woods later and saw you talking with Barney and staying at Lone Crossing under false pretenses."

For once the hard cheek of O'Malley blushed. "'Twas this way——" he began weakly.

"'Tis this way," she said. "You are the railroad special officer and was I going to leave you to fight the desperado alone after your kindness to me? And I had this to shoot with if necessary," and she pointed the revolver proudly at O'Malley.

"I see 'tis impossible to deceive you," repled O'Malley, stepping aside. "And now we are quits." So in an instant the old gayety between them revived and they laughed over the adventures they had together.

"If you do not mind," he said then, "will you call up Rivets and send a cipher for me about the prisoner?"

"But he is on the line; I heard the order for his special this evening," said Millie, and, having figured the superintendent would be passing that way presently, they went out with a red lantern, leaving the prisoner groaning and cursing, with Barney to guard him.

And after half an hour the special came up and was held and the superintendent came into the waiting room with them, rubbing his hands. "So you have the wrecker, O'Malley. Glory be! I will take him in myself. Scoundrel!" And he would have dragged the man away. "Call the conductor to help load him."

"Hold!" said O'Malley; "there is a price on the man." Rivets nodded in surprise and he went on, "To be paid on the nail."

"D'ye think I carry the P. D. pocketbook?" asked the superintendent.

"Money! Do you offer me blood money?" demanded O'Malley with indignation, and Rivets ran his hand through his hair.

"You dare not;" said O'Malley, "for delivering flesh and blood to you I can only be paid in flesh and blood."

Miss McCrary listened in with fascination and awe. "This man is mystery on mystery; will he never have done?" she thought.

"I will trade you the wrecker for the George McCrary whom you threaten with arrest."

Rivets hesitated, being a shrewd bargainer.

"You will be trading a man criminal only in carelessness for one who is fatally careful; my man has committed ten villainous crimes and yours only one. What odds do you expect? And, further," continued O'Malley, "you will have the wrecker in your hands and I will have to catch George."

"Have it your way—I will quash the

charge," shouted Rivets, bewildered by the hail of words. O'Malley helped him carry out his prize, talking all the way; at the car Miss McCrary heard Rivets' shout: "Yes—yes—I tell you! Help yourself to the P. D.!"

The special swung out of sight and the two stood silent in the moonlight.

"And you captured the wrecker only to trade him for George," said Millie, with a curious reverence.

"He is free as the west wind," laughed O'Malley; "and you can stay on at Lone Crossing."

The girl nodded her head slowly, drooping a bit and shivering, with a new terror of loneliness.

"As your baggage is in Barlow, you'll have to go in to-night," said O'Malley, who was also going on the eleven o'clock. But first he would have her walk out on the prairie among the surveyors' stakes and point out where he would build a row of stores. "The town-site row is settled, and as you heard, Rivets told me to take it. I would rather have it than the town sites I have been wiring about," he said.

"So he is just what he said he was," thought Millie, with a little shock. "A land man, and no mystery about him at all." But in a moment he had her guessing again.

"And I will build my own house on that corner," he said. "A traveler should have his own choice of destination, and where would I live now if not here?"

"Why?" asked Millie in a little voice.

"Well, I have fought two battles in two days for you," explained Terence, "and have bought the town you live in to lay siege to you. It is this way——"

"Terence, Terence——" she began.

"I know what you would be answering now," exclaimed the hard-fisted little man in great alarm, "but Millie, give me a chance, give me time; wait till I have had my say."

"Terence, Terence!" and like Rivets, overwhelmed with the hail of words, she sighed, "Yes—yes—yes." A strange silence fell on the man and the girl felt she had made no mistake, held close in the sturdy arm of him, an eternal shelter from the storm.

The blind dog, groping after, pressed close against them and the three stood struck with solemn remembrance of the one who had built up their household yet could never belong.

"Old Cinder Dick," said O'Malley softly.

There where the autumn moonlight tore its way through the half-stripped shaggy boughs into the wild, game-haunted glades, lay the fur and feather-strewn trail of the outlaw. "He cannot forgive the world," said O'Malley, "yet he had a heart for Barney and me for old time's sake. But he has gone on now into the wilderness. I feel it."

"Into the storm," whispered Millie. She shrank a little against the shoulder of her sweetheart, who looked at her, his blue eyes wide, and she loved his mystery, vowing never to try solving it.

"He was a hobo kitten," said Terence, "riding to Barlow in a box car. Such was the neglect of the world he had never been taught to juggle a spool on a string."

"I do not wonder he is embittered," replied Millie, her own eyes wide and shining.

"Good-by, old outlaw of the woods," he said. "If ever the chase turns against you—the O'Malleys three will have a home for you, though we compound a felony."

"Amen," said Millie.

"Wuff," said Barney.

THE OBLIGING CONGRESSMAN

THERE lives in Washington during the winters a retired millionaire who is famous for both his delightful entertaining and the merciless edge of his wit. There is in Washington, too, a bachelor congressman noted equally for his objectionable manners and his industrious pushing in where he is not wanted. They met one afternoon in a club.

"Say!" began the congressman, obviously trying to curry favor. "I passed that wonderful home of yours this morning."

"Thank you," said the millionaire gently. "Thank you very much."

Behind the Jungle

By Eleanor Gates and Frederick Moore

Authors of "The Risk Hunters," "Truth on a Spear," Etc.

In spite of warnings, vague but sinister, Ramsay pinned his faith in youth, resourcefulness, and his lucky star, and pitched his tent on the white sands of Auka Island. Danger whispered to him before he landed and stalked with him from the moment he set foot on that mysterious shore. But he looked to his weapons and set about his business, defying Chettle and the natives to do their worst.

(*A Complete Novelette.*)

"YOU'RE dead sure, are you, Mr. Ramsay," asked Captain Woodford, "that you want me to land you and your traps on that beach ahead there? You're dead sure?"

Dawn was just at hand. Straight before the schooner, upheaved above the dark level of the ocean, was an island which, its top line a saw tooth of needle-pointed mountains, looked to be, in that light, a thing of two dimensions, as if it were only a plum-colored shadow against the deep-blue sky.

The skipper was the elder of the two men, big-framed, so that he looked to be emerging—at cuffs, waist and trouser ends—from a short-coated suit of tan crash that showed too much of his checkered gingham shirt. Tipped jauntily on his graying hair was a worn cap, the broken visor shading a pair of spectacled eyes which just now were fixed upon his only passenger in some concern.

Ramsay did not answer at once, but he turned from where he was leaning, sidewise, against the after end of the cabin roof, and gave the skipper a prolonged and inquiring stare. He was on the near side of thirty, but looked even younger under his green-lined sola topi. He was of the wiry, lean, alert type that is given to pushing out across new borders. The trimness of his figure was accentuated by his dress—khaki riding trousers, a khaki shirt with two breast pockets, and high brown boots dulled by much oiling, the whole finished off by a pistol belt that held an automatic, and a second strap, worn over his right shoulder, on which was slung a pair of binoculars.

"You've said something like that to me before, captain," he observed at last, slowly.

"I've said it before for the same reason that I'm saying it now, Ramsay—I'm anxious about your going ashore on Auka."

"Anxious?" In a face which the salt breeze had whipped to ruddiness Ramsay's eyes, gray, straight looking, fearless, narrowed to give the other a still keener examination.

Captain Woodford went on, a trifle haltingly: "I haven't been definite, Mr. Ramsay, because I didn't want you to feel I was prying into your business." Then, with an embarrassed shifting of the feet, "And I don't want to know it now. Only—well, hasn't anybody said anything to you about this island?"

"Several things, captain." The reply was

more than noncommittal; it was provocative.

"I see. And you're going anyhow, eh?"

Ramsay's look veered ahead once more. Now that saw-toothed purple shadow was gone. In its place stood up a crescent of bare, sharp-pointed mountain peaks, their tops brightened to a pale amethyst, their lower slopes dressed out in masses of green. At their precipitous feet, along this south end of the island, ran a white strip of sand upon which a few dots were moving like brown ants.

"Perhaps I haven't heard what you've got in mind," he conceded.

"Auka's got a bad name," asserted the captain. "Ever heard that?"

"No. What's the reason for it?—if you don't mind my asking."

"Ask is just what I want you to do. And I'm mighty glad I brought up the subject again if you're in the dark. Only I wish I could tell you something that'd—that'd——"

"Keep me aboard here?"

"Well, make you cautious, anyhow. But I can't. I can't say truthfully that I've ever heard more than what you'd call hints, and they've been whispered; and all I've seen is eyebrows going up and down, and shoulders doing the same, and men giving you a queer sort of a slant with their eyes when anybody mentions Auka."

"What have you gathered from all this?"

Captain Woodford took off those unseamanlike spectacles, blew his breath on them noisily and gave them a careful polishing. "That things are wrong on Auka," he answered presently.

"Gin? Gun running? Fighting? What, captain?"

"There I am again!" exclaimed the skipper, with a short laugh. "I can't call off one actual charge or tell you a single fact about the place. You know how it is with gossip in these ports out here—places get a bad name. But the best I could ever get was that there was some kind of hidden deviltry on the island."

"Natives gone back to their old customs, I suppose?"

"Can't say as to that. But things go on—foul play of some kind that ain't healthy for whites to come across."

"Think it's cannibalism?"

"No, not man eating, either. Nobody seems to know just what—except that men 've landed there, and 've never been heard from again."

Strangely enough, instead of appearing checked or discouraged by the statement, there suddenly came into Ramsay's eyes a gleam of something like satisfaction, like triumph—as if he were hearing what he best liked to hear. But as if he were anxious to hide his feelings, once more he faced toward that strip of beach, at which the schooner, as she advanced, was bowing gravely.

"Captain, I can see some of the natives!" he exclaimed. "What's more, I'm so farsighted that I'm sure they're women and they're carrying something."

Captain Woodford gave a mirthless laugh. "If they're carrying something," he observed dryly, "they're sure to be women."

The younger man understood. "The women do the work, eh?" he hazarded.

"All of it. So in case you've got any supplies to pack around——"

"They won't pack for me," declared Ramsay with finality. "Not if I know it. Is that what's wrong with Auka—mistreating their women?"

"There *is* a story I've heard," the skipper rejoined by way of reply. "It's about these Auka women. It's more of a legend than a story, though, because it goes way back into the history of the island before the white man's time. It tells something on this order: Once there was a big storm down in this part of the Pacific and it swept two big war canoes all the way from some other island to this one. The canoes were filled with warriors—about sixty to each boat. When they landed they fought the Auka men and killed every last one.

"The women had disappeared into the jungle. From the steep side of those peaks there, keeping their children from making any outcries, they looked down on the beach and the native settlement and watched the battle. When they saw their own men had been finished they were afraid to return, thinking they might be killed. So they pressed on across the mountains to the slopes of the farther side, which are gradual. The conquerors followed them, discovered where they were hid, killed every boy, and brought the women and girls back as captives.

"I'm told that ever since that time there's been a standing feud between the men and women of Auka. The Auka women say

that there are two tribes on the island. One tribe is the women, the other is the men."

"That's why the women do the carrying, eh?" observed Ramsay. "They're slaves."

"Exactly. Now, nobody stands for the truth of that yarn, but I understand there's a strange thing about Auka that makes a man believe it must be true. It's this: Even to-day the natives yonder don't live in family groups. The women and the children live about in huts, here and there. But the men live in several 'long houses,' as they call 'em."

"Club life."

The captain showed a full complement of strong teeth in a grin. "Yes. And it's considered very weak and ladylike in a native clubman if he gives up life in one of the men's houses and goes to live 'alonga Mary.' It's the stylish thing, as we'd say, to make occasional family visits. But that's all. As for the boys, when they come to a certain age, say fifteen, they leave home and go through a ceremony that's like riding the goat. It enters 'em for life in one of the long houses."

"Don't wonder there's a bad state of affairs on the island," declared Ramsay.

"Men dog lazy. They'll fish a little or trap pigs and deer. Rest of the time they just soldier it and break all sleep records."

"And that's the flock of birds I'm depending on to help me through a hard job," grumbled Ramsay, not without a touch of humor. "But isn't there at least one native gentleman you can recommend?"

Captain Woodford thrust out his chin. "I can tell you one to keep away from good and plenty," he answered. "You'll recognize him—biggest man on the island. I've seen him a time or two—alongside my schooner, only, in a boat. He's the one islander that's got a mustache. That's the headman, old Mabu."

"The chief?"

"Well, he bosses 'em, though they say he isn't the chief by rights. Why they say it, I don't know. But I've heard some talk of crooked work in the line of succession—that was a few years back. At present, I can't tell you how things stand—can't remember because I never got it clear. But somewhere in the whole matter there's queer business."

"And this Mabu—he doesn't have a single white man on the island? Not even a missionary?"

"There's a white there, but he's anything but a missionary. I don't know why he stays, because he doesn't keep a store. And no trade. But it's a heavenly place, as you can imagine by looking at it. And perhaps he's a sort of prime minister to Mabu. His name is Chettle."

"Got control of the headman, you think?"

"Owns him—body, soul and breechclout. Got him in the hollow of his hand. And as there's no other whites around, and as Chettle speaks the native lingo, you'll understand why the Auka people can't speak English."

"That'll make it awkward for me, won't it? H'm. And is Mabu against white men?"

"They say he is. Dead set against 'em! Chettle and his brown gang won't have anybody. Whites don't set foot on that beach there once in three or four years and then don't get any farther than the edge of the jungle."

"Then the chief and his prime minister wouldn't want me poking around up in the interior?"

"Well, I can't answer that, Ramsay. I'd say straight off that you won't get the chance. On the other hand, as I don't know why you're going, it may just happen that they'll be glad to have you come. You see, it depends."

Now Ramsay began to pace to and fro on the deck; and his manner showed subdued excitement. "So only this Chettle's got a foothold, eh?" he observed. "You think, captain, that they put trespassers out of the way?"

"I think visitors just naturally get out. But if they didn't, and anything happened to them, who'd be the wiser? It's a damned desolate place, you know."

Ramsay halted. "Captain," he declared, "I'm going to tell you something. But, first, I'm going to ask you a question: Suppose there's something valuable on the island that neither Mabu nor Chettle knows about, because they're too lazy to look around, or wouldn't guess it was there unless they were shown it? And suppose I go there and find it?"

He was guarding his meaning and the other understood that he was about to hear something particularly interesting. "You've got me flat aback," he admitted, with a wag of the head.

"Captain, have you ever heard any gold yarns about Auka?"

"Gold?" Woodford stared at the younger man. "Gold! I wonder, now, if there's anything in that, Ramsay! What makes you say gold?"

"I'll tell you. In Singapore a certain official in a bank told me that they keep getting consignments of it—not small nuggets, but dust. The consignments are regular. Also, they've been coming for some time. Their character indicates that they're coming from the same locality—the same island. The quantity proves that somebody has struck it rich but is keeping it under cover. Now I happen to know this S'pore banker pretty intimately. In fact, our families are tied by marriage. In some way, during this last year, my kinsman has been able, *he* thinks, to locate the source of the dust supply. As I'm a mining engineer he sent back to the States for me. That's why I'm here."

The skipper nodded solemnly. "I see. So that's it. Gold on Auka and Chettle getting rich. The story holds water. I mean that *if* you've got the straight of things here, it explains a lot—the fact that whites aren't wanted and that Mabu and Chettle are so thick. You see, a native chief would have to do his banking through a white man. If he's got a man working with him who won't give him away to other whites, why, it's a perfect arrangement, isn't it? And it keeps all sorts of men from swarming here on a gold hunt. But——"

Ramsay laughed. "Oh, I know what you're going to say. If there *is* gold ahead there it'll make my visit all the more dangerous."

"It might. But, Ramsay, why couldn't your Singapore banker be sure about Auka? The man that brings the gold—haven't they asked him questions?"

"I should say they have! But he doesn't know any more about the source of the stuff than we do. As I understand it, he pays so much for each consignment; then he's able to get just enough to pay him for his trouble."

"But the man he gets it from—what about him?"

"Money's been spent to run the truth down. We know four men through whose hands the dust goes. But we don't know the fifth, or the sixth, or the tenth. In other words we don't know Man Number One."

"Ramsay," went on the skipper, "on second thought I believe that when you picked out Auka you were right! Yes, sir, this explains everything! Don't you see? I mean the bad gossip about disappearances and the fact that whites are kept off and the way that Mabu and Chettle stand together, because probably Mabu's the only native on the island who's getting anything out of the diggings."

Ramsay grinned. "I think I'm right, too. That's why I was so tickled when I heard you say what you did a bit ago. As you've concluded, every single thing just seems to nail my guess right. The source of those gold shipments is right straight ahead there!"

"But look here, man!" went on Woodford. "Don't you see that if there is gold in here—a great deal of it—Chettle isn't going to stand by and let you, a mining engineer, into the place?"

"He won't want to," answered the younger man, "but just the same I'm going in."

"You'll meet up with trouble thick as bees on a mango."

"Likely to, yes. But I'm going to take a chance. I've had a tight squeak or two before this, captain, and come through all right. A Hindu seer once told me that the Forces are on my side—whatever that means. Well, they seem to be—so far."

"But if your luck should turn," Woodford said gravely. "You know, all the gold in the ground isn't worth a man's life.

"Here's an island rich in gold, say. The inhabitants aren't getting any of it, or being helped along by what is, at least, partly theirs. Instead, a man who seems to be a scalawag of the first water stands to get away with a few million dollars.

"You're not going to be safe a minute," argued Captain Woodford, as if he had just made up his mind about the matter for a second time. "That's sure. Every minute you must keep your weather eye lifting. Use your ears, your eyes, your brains, and —if you have to—your gun." Behind the polished lenses of his spectacles his look was anxious.

"Trust me! I'll watch out every second."

The captain pondered for a minute. "I think I may be able to help you," he de-

clared. "I'll be coming north in about two months. This morning, when I take you ashore, I'll let Chettle know, in your presence, that on my way back I intend to stop and pick you up."

"That's mighty kind of you!" exclaimed Ramsay gratefully. "I appreciate that and I know it'll help me."

"We'll agree—also in front of him—that on no account are you to go before I come. And I'll say to you that if you're not here on the beach I'm to wait you. Understand? That means he's got to deliver you or there'll be trouble."

"It can't help but make a difference in the way he'll treat me," asserted Ramsay. "At the same time it'll make a difference in the way I'll be able to treat him. This island boss won't dare go too far. I'm going to feel easier in my mind, captain, knowing you'll surely come back this route."

"I'll be back if a jimmycane doesn't harvest me in," vowed the skipper with earnest significance.

The two men shook hands.

II.

When, shortly after sunup, the longboat from the schooner thrust its prow into the hot sand of Auka, on the beach there was a significant absence of native men.

"Order's probably gone out to keep away from us," Woodford hazarded. "So the gentlemen, knowing they couldn't very well keep us from landing, are going to snub us by staying up in their clubhouses. But they'll watch us."

Of women there were plenty—curious brown beings, ill-shaped, their lips stained red by *sirch*, their dress consisting of a square of trade cotton or tapa cloth. These came swarming about the strangers, chattering their excitement over having visitors and offering for sale a varied list of the island's products: oysters from the rocks, fish out of the sea, breadfruit, raw and roasted, pawpaws, and bananas.

All were furtive-eyed. Most of them were heavily burdened. Many had small children astride the hip. Other children were carried by being mounted, each on his mother's neck, small hands clasped about her forehead, small legs to either side of her head. The others were bent with loads of fuel or fruit. One woman, old and gray and witchlike, had swung across her crinkled back the limp, bristly carcass of a newly killed pig.

"Here are the slaves and the drudges," said the captain.

"How nervous they all seem," Ramsay pointed out. "Scared to death. Like children who're afraid of the switch."

When Ramsay's luggage and supplies were landed by a second boat the babble of amazement grew. Then black eyes and black heads were turned away from the beach toward several extensive roofs of bleached thatch.

"What's the next move?" Woodford wanted to know. "Shall we sign one of 'em to go fetch the chief?"

"I don't believe I care to send for anybody," decided the younger man. "It's my experience that if you're going to try to put anything over in a cheeky way, why, the more high-handed a man is, the better. So I'm not going to ask permission, or wait around. Before you go I mean to be settled under my own canvas."

A site for the tent was chosen in short order; then, while the women of Auka lingered, exclaiming and marveling, several of the sailors put up Ramsay's commodious cloth house under the supervision of Captain Woodford. Into it went the various pieces of luggage, the boxed stores of provisions, and other supplies that were cased in tin, all so stacked as to form a circular wall.

"Haven't they ever seen a tent before?" asked the younger man, struck by the conduct of the women.

The captain laughed. "That isn't what's the matter," he answered. "What they're not used to is seeing men do any work."

One stayed a little apart from the others, farthest away, and on tiptoe, ready for flight. This was how it came about that Ramsay was able to note her carefully. She was young—not more than sixteen or seventeen, her hair held back from her oval, brown face by a strip of yellow cloth. Slender, she was, and as wild-eyed as a deer. Seeing herself observed, suddenly she gave a start and was gone.

Ramsay was fully settled before any male of the island made his appearance. The newcomer was a signal for the headlong scattering of the clustered women, who sped in all directions.

"The chickens go," announced Woodford, "and here comes the hawk."

It was Mabu. One unique feature made that evident—the heavy black mustache. Black was the predominating color of the chief, a huge, burly fellow, clouted, but otherwise naked, armed with a long fishing spear, and gayly adorned with a tattooing that laced his body in a colorful net.

At closer range he displayed other interesting features. His chest was slashed into deep furrows and high ridges, this being, in his tribe, the savage mark of manhood. His head was matted with hundreds of short, tight ebony curls. He had small narrow eyes like the eyes of a serpent. To either side of each pupil in the small area of white there were scarlet touches where the tiny blood vessels had broken.

His nose, through which was thrust no ornament, was Semitic in type, rather than Negroid, and he had the long, thin jaw of a white man. His parted lips showed him to be yellow toothed. When he halted he thrust forward a foot that was calloused almost to the hardness of a hoof.

"Going to be cold in your reception of him?" asked Woodford. "What's the proper thing in this case, Ramsay? A present?"

"A gift would be considered a sign of weakness," Ramsay answered. "So would a smile. He's been sent to look me over and make a report. I'll stake him to a cigarette and let it go at that."

Mabu took a leisurely survey of both men while he puffed Ramsay's offering. Presently, having said nothing, he turned himself about and went stalking away, using his spear as if it were an alpenstock.

"That's his way of letting us know we're not welcome," Ramsay explained.

Mabu was gone and there were only a few children loitering near, craning and whispering, when a score or more of the islanders came past, but rather as if by accident than design. When they were close they halted and stared, their faces set and unsmiling.

"Committee of welcome," observed Ramsay ironically.

"Sent to give us a scare," added the captain.

They were young. But among them was not one so large as the chief. However, what they lacked in height they made up in straightness of carriage. But their bodies were undeveloped. Down the leg they showed too much calf, a sign of inactivity. In spite of their evident lack of exercise each one of them was inclined to be overthin.

Their only weapons were light spears tipped with iron. The earrings they wore were of bone; their armlets were of brass wire or colored beads. A few had tin bands about the forearm or bracelets of iron.

"No sign of gold," Ramsay pointed out.

He and the captain made note of their appearance and attitude with as much indifference as possible, giving the group no prolonged stare, only an indifferent glance or two. Presently, without having uttered a greeting, the group suddenly made off, plunging out of sight among the trees.

"Well, how do you feel about 'em?" the captain wanted a know.

"The only chap I'm concerned about," returned Ramsay, "is the prime minister."

The sailors went back in the longboat. Woodford and Ramsay set up the latter's folding cot and arranged the mosquito net. Already the captain's men had gathered wood for the cooking fire and for a bonfire which was to be lighted later on. It was not the younger man's intention to return to the schooner even for supper. He got out his cooking kit, went to the near-by jungle edge for fresh water, put coffee over a flame, and the two sat down to smoke and wait.

But it was not until toward evening that the white counselor of Auka Island made his appearance—a tall man, not so heavy as Mabu, and not so picturesque. Instead of a breechcloth he had on a pair of faded blue trousers which had been cut off unevenly just above the knee. A worn cartridge belt held them in. Under this, its butt of blue steel half concealed, was thrust a full revolver.

He was a coarse-featured man, his full mouth overlong, with a tendency to droop at the ends, his under jaw protruding, so that his expression reminded Ramsay of a bulldog. To look at, he appeared to be ignorant; but his eyes, which were striking, had in them a malevolent keenness. They were not only small eyes and set close together, but they were unnaturally round. Above each the hair of the eyebrow, instead of arranging itself in a curving line, was bunched and grew long, so that it formed a thick tuft.

As he halted before the tent he took a Chinese pipe from his mouth. "How-dy-do!" he began, his traveling glance making

the salutation general. There was an unpleasant nasal note in his voice.

Neither Ramsay nor Woodford was more than barely cordial. "Give him a cool reception," had been Ramsay's decision. "Independence is what this gentleman won't understand, especially as he thinks he's running Auka à la king."

Without being asked to, Chettle sat; then leisurely, through the haze of his own smoke, by turns he eyed the other two, those round eyes squinting, his under lip pendulous, his big sunburned body exuding a rank odor of tobacco.

"I suppose things go about as usual with you," Woodford inquired, but without any real show of interest, "since I saw you last?"

Chettle's retort was a question: "So you been here before?"

"Oh, quite some time ago."

"M'm-huh."

He turned to Ramsay next. He did not ask any questions, or volunteer any remarks. What he did was to stare. As the younger man returned his look he held it unpleasantly long. Then, detail by detail, he noted carefully the stranger's dress. The keynote of his whole scrutiny was a bold impudence.

Presently he spoke: "Travelin' for pleasure?"

Ramsay gave him a cool smile. "I'm a petrologist."

"What's that?"

"A student of rocks and stones."

"Got plenty of 'em here."

"Naturally." Then seizing this opportunity to be frank concerning the object of his coming. "But have you ever noticed anything unusual about the rocks of Auka? Have you got any marble, or granite, or ore rock—that is, I mean quartz?"

For a long moment Chettle did not answer. Then, "I don't know much about rocks and so forth," he observed with something more than a touch of irony. "Plenty of black lava hereabouts."

"It's not a big island," Ramsay observed. "It won't be much of a job to study."

"Not much," returned Chettle. Now there was a new note in his voice—a challenge.

Ramsay caught it. And instantly opened the question boldly. "Never found any signs of gold here, have you?" he asked.

Chettle's look wavered. A perceptible tremor passed over his face. Then, as if attempting to recover himself, he sat straight and grew muscularly tense. "Go-o-old?" he drawled, not able, however, to hide unmistakable emotion. "Whatever give y' that idea?"

"The results on other islands in these seas," Ramsay answered.

Chettle humped his shoulders as a sign of his disbelief. "Ain't no gold on Auka," he asserted, still avoiding the other's eyes.

"Well, here's where you may get a surprise," Ramsay went on. "I'm a miner. When I've had a good look over the island I'll know."

Chettle nodded. "I suppose so," he returned.

Now Captain Woodford took a share in the conversation. "Mr. Ramsay'll want to take a jaunt into the interior," he said.

"I'll want to start in from the north, where all the streams are," Ramsay supplemented. "You see, if there's any free gold on Auka it'll show itself in the stream beds. Of course, if I find anything worth while, you as headman, and the people of the island, will have to be paid fairly for the right to mine."

Chettle had ignored the captain, as if he felt resentment both for the latter's presence and interference. But as Ramsay finished speaking he showed a sudden and surprising affability. Picking up a short length of bamboo, and squatting on the heels of a pair of rubber-soled cloth shoes, he scraped smooth the dry sand between him and Ramsay and drew an outline.

Roughly what he shaped was an arrowhead with serrated edges. Its base was to the north, its tip to the south. Criss-cross marks located the mountain chain that, curving from east to west, loomed over the settlement. Northward, from the farther slopes of these mountains, ran three diverging rivers.

"Here you are," he declared frankly. "Auka's three-cornered, as you might say. To get up behind the mountains we sail along the east coast, round the northeast corner, and land somewhere along the north end. From there the climb's easy."

"I want to take it slow," Ramsay told him.

Once more the skipper broke in. "You'll have all the time in the clock," he remarked carelessly. "Because as I said before, it'll take me a full two months to come by for

you. But I won't be in any hurry either. So if you're not on the beach when I anchor, here I'll wait till you turn up."

Instead of seeming troubled or annoyed by the captain's announced plan to return to Auka, for some reason Chettle appeared to be pleased—at least so it appeared to the visitors.

"You'll need men for your trip," he pointed out to Ramsay. "But that's one thing we've got a plenty of—good strong Kanakas. Leave that to me and I'll see that you get the right gang."

"Thanks." A meaning glance shot from Ramsay to the skipper. "I'll pay them well. But—I don't want to give *you* too much trouble, Mr. Chettle—any responsibility. By the way, what about the climb up those streams? I suppose it'll be pretty stiff work getting through from the coast."

"Not a-tall! Not a-tall!" vowed Chettle emphatically. "The men you take'll know how to break trail through jungle. If you take enough of 'em, so's each one don't have to be loaded down too much, why, you'll make it easy."

"Splendid. Your advice is going to be very valuable to me. And I want to ask, can you suggest a native who'll be able to act as guide on the trip?"

Chettle fixed those round eyes upon Ramsay. "There's just as many guides on Auka," he declared, "as there is men. So that's one thing you won't have to worry about. Anyhow, as I don't get much chance to see new white folks once in a coon's age, while you're on the island I'm going to stick around with you. So I'll hike along with you as guide."

Captain Woodford stirred, then rose. "I'll be signaling for my boat now," he observed. "Because I must be on my way south. I'm glad, before I leave, to know that Mr. Chettle's planning to go with you, Ramsay. I know he'll look after you and have you back here on the beach two months from now when I come by. So remember what I say: Here I'll be and here *you* must be—dead or alive."

III.

In the next few days Ramsay was able to learn several things concerning the situation on Auka. He confirmed what Captain Woodford had said about Chettle's being the real ruler of the island and about the illtreatment of the women. He discovered that laziness was the prevailing shortcoming of the males and that there was not even one small plantation of any kind under cultivation. Also, though elsewhere in the South Seas native children were being schooled and given moral and medical attention, on Auka they were wholly neglected.

There was one thing which he suspected, but as yet could not prove: That the men of the island, from the youngest to the eldest, were being controlled through the use of a powerful liquor, either of native or foreign make, which was being furnished them in abundant quantities. What else could account for the strange, wild sounds that, of a night, came down to him through the palm grove from the long houses hidden in the jungle?

He was to learn still another thing, this when he had been on the beach a week, with Chettle still delaying the start of the expedition on the pretext that certain men whom he wanted for the trip were away on a hunt. And this other thing which he was to learn was to prove the most surprising of all.

One night, late, as he lay asleep just within the door of his tent, the sound of a step roused him. Suddenly he found himself awake, sitting bolt upright and on the alert for treachery. Next, he saw, standing on the sand strip in the full moonlight at a little distance away, the figure of a man.

It was a strange figure—nude, tall and gaunt. To one side of a face which could be seen only dimly fell a long black skein of straight hair that was like the tail of a horse. As the light glinted on a pistol in Ramsay's hand a voice spoke, a deep voice that was strikingly musical but low and cautious.

"A friend to talk with the stranger." The English was good but touched with a curious accent, the chief feature of which was a certain preciseness.

"Come this way," Ramsay returned. He was kneeling now, facing directly out. Behind him and to either side that barricade made of the luggage and stores was more than a partial protection against a bullet. As the figure moved slowly nearer the tent, while he watched it closely he also listened intently for any movement of a confederate.

When the figure was ten feet away,

"That's far enough," declared Ramsay. "Who are you?"

A prompt halt. The man so near was more striking in appearance than ever. About his loins was a narrow breechcloth; about his forehead, to keep back the hair, a winding of vine. In spite of that long mane of black, because of his speech Ramsay took him to be a white man; for the broad chest was unmarred by healed stripings of cut flesh, and his arms, hanging at his sides, were clean of tattooing and unadorned by bracelets or beads.

"This be Ammar-al," he answered, as if Ramsay would understand.

So this was a native! "I've never heard of you," returned Ramsay.

The visitor gave a quick, understanding nod of the head. "The women, they had much of fear," he explained.

"What do you want?"

"To say—swift—what you must know."

He leaned forward and Ramsay saw a strange and a nobly beautiful face. The skin of it was not so dark as was the skin of any Aukan whom he had seen. Plainly it was not darker than olive. The nose, instead of bending inward just between the eyes and spreading out widely in thick nostrils above the upper lip, was high and thin and straight. As for the eyes, they were not small and nipped in at the corners, but large and set wide apart. What their color was he could not tell. They looked black.

With his pistol Ramsay pointed at a spot before his tent opening. "Sit down."

Ammar-al made a long step forward. As he again came short, out of the jungle toward the left sounded the call of some night bird, quick, but soft, plaintive, low. He gave a start and turned his head that way. "I will sit another time," he whispered. Now, no. They tell me to go back. But I say this, friend: You will not know all true things of Auka—and live."

That was all. Before Ramsay could reply, or rise, the other was gone, running swiftly down along the beach. Behind him as he fled streamed his long shadow, like a floating mantle.

A moment, and that shadow joined itself with the shadow of the jungle. Ramsay, still looking at the dark spot where the other had disappeared, was almost ready to believe that his senses had deceived him and that the man had never come.

IV.

And now it was Ramsay who was anxious to delay the start, determined to speak again with that strange visitor of the night and learn more from him. When, three days later, Chettle, on his way for a morning dip in the sea, stopped long enough to say that the men who had been away had returned and that the boats could be loaded, Ramsay, while expressing great satisfaction over the news, secretly resolved to make immediate departure impossible.

"I'm not feeling any too well," he declared. "Don't know just what's the matter, but my bones ache."

"Dengue fever, maybe," said Chettle, blinking those tufted eyes.

"You've just about hit it," the other conceded. "I'll take some quinine for a day or two and keep still."

That day, and the following two, he kept to his tent, lying down most of the time and rarely showing himself. Between sunup and night he contrived to sleep a good deal, which made it possible for him to stay awake during the night. And it was midway of the fourth night that what he was expecting so anxiously came to pass.

The tall, gaunt, unclothed figure appeared as before, running up the sand swiftly. And in a moment Ammar-al was seated close to Ramsay, his legs folded under him, the light of the moon full in his face. Ramsay was able to see that this strange visitor of the night was part white, part native. The proof of this lay not only in the light tint of the skin, but in his eyes. They were a light, clear blue!

"I can stay only a short time," he told Ramsay, panting with his run.

"Chettle doesn't know you are here?"

"He thinks I am in the prison place."

"Prison! He's got one, has he? That's why he hasn't let me wander around as I'd like to!"

"For an hour I have been let out—but I must go back soon."

"Why has he locked you up?"

"I am true chief of Auka."

Ramsay stared. He did not question that this man was of high rank. But if he were the island's chief, why was he not properly tattooed and ridged across his chest with the knife?

"He likes Mabu better," added Ammar-al. "So he keeps me out of his road. Mabu is easier for handling."

"Then coming here to see me like this—it is dangerous?"

"Chettle and his men are asleep. Even the man who always watches you is asleep."

"Yes, but are you not afraid they will wake up?"

"No," was the answer. Then speaking quick and earnestly, and leaning forward, a hand resting on either knee, "I said before, if you know too much about Auka you will not live. But you have stayed here, close by the edge of the water. That is good. What of the days to come? Do you keep here?"

"I'm going around to the northern side, and from there into the center of the island."

Ammar-al gasped at the news, lifting and dropping his hands. "No? What do you hunt? Deer? Pig?"

"Gold."

"Ah!" He gazed beyond Ramsay, deep in thought.

"You have heard there is gold here—or not?"

"Our men lie upon their bellies and blow upon the river sand. The sand is driven away by the breath and a little yellow is left—perhaps a piece made smooth by long washings of water. By blowing, each man is able, of a day, to bring away some of the yellow from the gray, and this he trades to Chettle."

Ramsay took a deep breath. So it was true! There *was* gold on Auka! Probably a great deal! Which would indicate that he had chosen the very island which was furnishing the Singapore bank with shipments.

"I am interested to hear what you say."

"It is dangerous to know."

"I understand. But if I made a bargain with Chettle, so that he will gain more than he gains now?"

"Now, whether he gets much or little, he gets all. Can you offer him all?"

"No."

Ammar-al shook his head. "You would be in danger. I know. All the reasons I cannot say, because I do not know all the reasons. Only, some things are done here which are against the good of the people. These things I hate. But the people love them. That is why they are against me—are glad to see me fastened away—and follow Chettle."

"What are these things?"

"Palm wine is one, and also gin is one. By the word of the coast guard these are taboo."

"I understand. But if the women find that you are out of your lockup won't they tell on you?"

"Some would. But only one woman knows—the one who sets me free. On Auka it is believed by the men that the women, if they go about in the dark, meet the spirits of the men of their own tribe, who were slain, and are loved by them. So it is forbidden for a woman to leave her hut after sundown."

"But you spoke of other things beside drink. What do you mean?"

"Gambling. And the whipping of women. You have seen how the women go?—timid, always, and stealing about swiftly, not daring to disobey, or rest. Also, I hear whispers of matters which are worse, only of these I do not know."

"Ever had missionaries here?"

"Back a long time. Not since the man who teaches me to speak your tongue. He was the last. One day he spoke of his wish to climb to the highest peak on the island. He went, and Chettle, then a trader, went with him. The teacher never came back."

"Killed?"

"They said he came to a steep place and fell."

"And you think they will try something of the kind on me?"

"I know it."

"But why haven't they got rid of you?"

"They cannot shut the mouths of all the women. And they fear what the women might tell."

"You're pretty popular with the women, eh?" Ramsay smiled.

He was rewarded by an answering smile, the first he had seen on that grave face. "Yes. You see, they do not hold that I am of the men's tribe."

"How does that happen?"

"I am the son of an Aukan woman and a man of white blood." As he talked, through his hands he drew that long black hair that was like the tail of a horse.

"I see. That explains it. I know the story of the tribes. But, Ammar-al"—Ramsay knew he was hearing the truth, and felt that there was no evil craft in this man—"I'm not going to be frightened out of seeing the streams that fetch down

the gold. Can you give me any good advice about my trip?"

"It would be better for you if you did not go."

"I've made up my mind."

"Then I would say this: Visit first the middle river. Never go unarmed. Be watchful always, night and day. Do not trust any one. If you see that you are to be attacked, shoot at once, and shoot to finish."

"I'll do that."

"Now I will say a thing of wonder to you: I am afraid for your life. But for years I have been hoping for a man of your kind to come—to come for any reason. Because by coming he might help me and my people. I feel that you are the right man."

"Well, I don't promise that I'll be able to rid the island of our friend Chettle," countered Ramsay.

"We cannot tell how all this will turn out," Ammar-al answered. "But I must think how I can help you. And if I can help you, will you then help me?"

Ramsay put out a hand. "We'll shake on it," he said heartily.

As their fingers met, again, from somewhere up beyond the belt of tall palms there came that call which was like the note of a bird, and Ammar-al rose with Ramsay's hand in his.

"Good night—I will come again. But if I can't, I shall do all in my power——"

He turned and sped. And once more Ramsay was left to wonder and conjecture. He took the whole of the night for it, not being able, even toward daylight, to fall asleep.

"The real chief!" he marveled. "And a prisoner! That would be news for Woodford! And he's quite a human being, or I miss my guess! But what are the other things that are wrong with Auka? Something queer's going on here—something even this chap doesn't know. And there's gold here! I'll bet Chettle is as rich as a maharajah and getting richer every turn of the clock! Probably's got a million now, as the captain thinks, but is hanging on for more. Well, just as Ammar-al says, if Chettle can help it he won't let me know what's here and live to tell about it. On the other hand, if things go right for me and I can find out what I want to know and manage to get the upper hand of this precious white incubus, why, I've got Ammar-al on my side, and the women with him, and the men can always be bought."

Twice a day he had been giving his firearms a close examination, making sure they were clean of rust and in perfect order. In this task he occupied the hour of the dawn.

"It's a chance," he told himself, and could hear his own heart pounding under his shirt. "And if the old Hindu's right this time, if the Forces will stay on my side——"

V.

Repeatedly Ramsay turned over in his mind the question of his danger. He did not minimize it; neither could he bring himself to feel that things would go wrong with him. But in case they should, he was anxious to study out a way by which proper punishment might follow for Chettle, the island be ridded of him, the people loosed of their virtual slavery, and the true chief of Auka restored.

He determined to write out a report of the two visits of Ammar-al and tell of the latter's information and warnings. This he did, stuffing the pages, which were addressed to Captain Woodford, into a green-glass bottle which he corked and buried in the sand in the very center of his tent. If Ammar-al could come again before the boats were launched for the trip north he would show the young chief where the bottle was hid.

But if Ammar-al could not come again? "Why didn't I ask him to make known to me some woman that could be trusted!" he mourned.

About the advisability of going he had not changed. "They lie on their bellies and blow the sand," he recalled. "And in that primitive way they manage to get a good lot of gold. What couldn't be cleaned up if proper methods were used! Well, I'll see that Ammar-al and his friends get what's coming to them if I'm helped through this. Because there's going to be enough for everybody!"

At the end of the week that followed he found that Chettle was growing impatient on the score of any further delay. Twice each day the boss of Auka appeared at Ramsay's tent, inquiring about his state of health and reminding the stranger of an oncoming change in the monsoon—a change that would make the proposed trip, if not actually hazardous, then certainly unpleasant.

"I won't go if a big blow's on," he declared. "And I won't let the boats go."

There came a morning when Ramsay dared no longer delay his decision. "I'm feeling much better," he admitted. "Suppose we say the day after to-morrow."

"Settled!" Chettle returned, the heavy down-hanging lips spreading in a grin.

All that day and all of the next Ramsay slept as much as possible. That night and the night following he kept on the alert.

Ammar-al did not come. But in the latter half of the second night, as Ramsay sat watching and listening, he heard a light-running patter of feet and the breathing of a runner. Rising to one knee and looking out he saw the one who was approaching—a short, slender figure. As it came abreast the tent it paused, on tiptoe, as if ready for instant flight. And Ramsay recognized the girl he had noticed the first hour of his arrival—that one whose eyes were like the eyes of a deer and whose hair was tied back by a strip of yellow cloth.

She did not speak. Instead, as she caught sight of his face she beckoned him, advanced a step, beckoned again, and more insistently, then as he came out to follow her led away along the beach, hurrying in the direction which had twice been taken by Ammar-al.

At the surf edge, away from the palms, the light was almost as bright as day. But while Ramsay could see about him plainly, he could not be sure that he was not being watched, since the trunk of any tree might be concealing an observer. However, despite the risk, he determined to go on. If this were a trick of Chettle's, his own weapons were ready and he would make them score for him; but because his guide was a woman, Ramsay felt sure that he was being taken to the deposed chief.

When, at the bare heels of the native girl, he reached the wide, shadowy band which marked the edge of the jungle, she halted, turned those scared eyes on him and held out her hand. He took it with his left and she led him into a blackness which was so dense that it seemed palpable, like a thick, warm mist. But she knew the way in the dark and at once his feet could feel the path which was taking them through what from the moonlit beach behind had appeared to be an impenetrable tangle of growing things.

They went slowly and cautiously, making little noise. In Ramsay's free hand he held an automatic pistol, crooking the arm before his face to guard against the branches that hung across the trail. Thus the two traveled until there showed, ahead, a shield of dazzling light.

It puzzled Ramsay and he halted. "Can that be the sky?" he asked himself.

His guide did not urge him to go on, but waited, not stirring. Presently, close at hand, some one coughed. Then she drew him forward, bringing him out of the jungle to the natural wall of trees and vines surrounding a little clearing. And he was able to see that what had startled him was a small hut, square built and with a sloping roof, upon which the moonlight glinted with a brightness that was almost blinding.

"Is it made of glass?" Ramsay wondered.

"Come, Mr. Ramsay."

The voice was Ammar-al's. Relieved, Ramsay stepped into sight, the girl still preceding him. Ten feet more and he knew that the shimmering structure before him was made of new, unrusted corrugated iron, and guessed rightly that this was the island prison.

In the nearest side of the hut a low, narrow half door opened, and through it came a whisper: "Come in. Tani will keep watch."

Ramsay stooped and entered. But what kind of room he came into he did not know, for here once more was pitch blackness. The heat of the place was almost unbearable.

"I began to be afraid I wouldn't see you again before I left," he told Ammar-al. "What's been the trouble? Is Chettle keeping his men sober?"

"Not that," was the answer, "but this."

Ammar-al's hand reached to touch his visitor, find one of the latter's hands, and guide it floorward until it came in contact with a hard surface that felt like polished stone.

"Leg irons, eh?"

"And Chettle does not think that any woman would dare to break the taboo and leave her house at night when the spirits are about."

Losing no time, Ramsay sat and told of his written message to Woodford, of the bottle, and the spot where it could be found. "I've told him," he explained, "that if I don't come back from the gold hunt he's to inform the authorities and demand Chet-

tle's arrest. To-night I'll add something about this jail of yours, so that you'll be turned loose."

"Write of Tani," begged Ammar-al. "She is never afraid, but, also, she is never safe."

Ramsay promised. "I want to put in more about you," he went on. "Tell me everything you can. I've never seen another man down in these islands who's like you. We have a saying back where I came from that a silk purse can't be made out of a sow's ear. And I know you've got good stuff in you. Let me have your story, so that I can put it down. Maybe it'll bring you the right kind of friends, and help."

"I can tell you how I am what I am," Ammar-al answered, "and different from the other men of Auka. But perhaps the story is like many you have heard of these seas, which are traveled by men from countries a long way off. Mine is not an old story of itself, because it goes back only forty years. It was that long ago when there appeared, on the level ocean toward the east, several dark spots, above them a cloud of black. These were great ships; and toward evening of that day they were letting down their anchors in the deep water which is not far from shore.

"They were ships of war—five of them, and they had put in to refresh before turning homeward to their own country. They were ruled by a great man. My father often told me that this man was tall—much taller than any of the men of Auka; and his eyes were blue, like mine. My mother told me that her mother told her how, just as the moon was going, this man left his ship in a small boat. Some others were with him and they were coming to the shore to take part in a feast which the chiefs were to spread.

"It was that same night that this great man met my grandmother. She was a very young girl and she was the most beautiful of all the girls of Auka. With flowers in her hair and about her ankles she danced in the moonlight with the other girls when the men were finished with the feast. Afterward, before the little boat went back to the ship, she walked with the tall man, he holding her hand. At that time, on this island, always there was a missionary and the people could speak English. So the girl who is now my grandmother was able to talk with the ruler of the warships and tell him how sad she was to think that he must go. As they walked together apart, already she loved him, and she asked him that surely he would come back.

"He did not come back. But my grandmother, looking out to see him come, and waiting for him, had what could comfort her somewhat. This was the little one—the son of the tall man who had blue eyes. And the eyes of this baby son were also blue. She called him after his father—Ammar-al, which was the best way she could say 'Admiral,' not knowing that 'Admiral' was a very high word meaning he was chief of those ships. When the child grew up, and chose my mother, and I was born, I, too, had those same blue eyes. And my father, pleased to see their color when first I looked into his face, called me also after my grandfather.

"While my father lived this island saw happy days. My father said that he belonged neither to the tribe of the men nor to the tribe of the women, therefore he was able to be just to both. My father was more white of skin than I; I think his heart was whiter, too. The trader who was here in those days was an honest man. My father would have no other kind. And he gave hearty welcome to the missionaries. That was how I came to learn to speak and read and write.

"Then suddenly, when I was only eleven, my father died, and it was now that bad times fell upon Auka, for, first, Chettle came, and the good trader left—or disappeared, I do not know which. The missionary who lived here also went, as I have already said. Next, from another island, I do not know where, came Mabu."

Ramsay drew a deep breath. "I thought that bird wasn't like the other men!" he exclaimed.

"You know the rest," the deep, low voice went on. "I was put aside, where the few visitors to Auka could not see me. My books were not burned. So I tried to be content, and study, and wait until I was grown. The women were always comforting me—my mother and the rest. They said Chettle might die or other white men come who would want to put Chettle out of power. So that is how it has been—a long waiting. But when I was fifteen Chettle had a prison built for me. Since then I have lived in many prisons, this being the newest."

"And the last!" Ramsay broke in. "Ammar-al, whether I come back from this trip or not this will be the end of Chettle's rule on Auka. I have written down about the drinking——"

Ammar-al reached out in the dark to touch the white man. "More than drink is wrong here," he declared. "But of that I cannot speak for sure—it is a suspicion. Mr. Ramsay, there are several things which are no longer lawful on any of the islands in these seas—evil things, hated by governments and missionaries, and others who are clean. But I believe that some of these things come about on Auka. Which of them, who can say but the men themselves? The women do not know. Nor do I. But why can a white man, and a man who is not of the tribe, hold the true islanders away from what they know is right? Yes, something more than drink is wrong."

"I'm going to know what it is," declared Ramsay. "But as I don't know now, I intend to say as much as I can about it on that paper I've put into the bottle. Ammar-al, we must smash their clock."

The young chief laughed in his throat. "That day would be a day for the giving of a feast," he returned. "Mr. Ramsay, shall I tell you what I have dreamed for this island? To put the children to school; not so much to teach them to read and write. No. This is the reason: to put the boys along with the girls, so that there shall no longer be two tribes, but only one. Because, Mr. Ramsay, whatever may be black on this island, one thing is the blackest of all—the suffering of the women."

"You're right!" Ramsay could not help marveling how this part native was thinking as a decent white man would think. "And, Ammar-al, you're a worthy cousin to men and women in some country a long way from here."

"I often think of them," was the quiet rejoinder. "Great ladies, Mr. Ramsay, and perhaps men who are high in standing. Yes, I should like to think I am fit as a cousin. It is strange, you think, that though only a quarter of my blood is white I seem to think only of the things of the white man—such as the fair using of the women and the children, and their education, and that their souls shall be right in the sight of God when they shall come to die. All these things—would you call them ambition?"

Ramsay's laugh was friendly and pleased. "The upward urge," he suggested. "You're a quarter white, Ammar-al, but that quarter is strong in you—stronger than the blood that is brown. And so you dream of advancing your people. Fine! And, by George, it's going to happen if I come out of this with my life!"

"Perhaps you would take more time—stay on the beach until the ship returns, go with it, and come again with more men?"

Ramsay moved impatiently. "The natives aren't armed," he argued. "Actually I've got just Chettle to handle. No, Ammar-al, I don't want to do what you suggest. It's too roundabout and would eat up a lot of time. I'll go as I've planned. I won't be backed down."

Again Ammar-al touched his companion. "I think you must not stay here longer," he warned.

Ramsay got up. "Before I leave let me give you a pistol," he suggested. "Here! Take one of these two I'm wearing."

"No. I do not understand that kind. The other kind, like the ones Chettle has, I have had laid on my hand to hold and to look at. I would not know how to use one of yours."

"You'd hurt yourself, likely," Ramsay agreed. "But I wish I could give you a gun, because if Chettle accidentally finds out that we've been together you'd be in danger."

Once more there sounded that low laugh. "I am always in danger," answered Ammar-al.

"There's one thing I can give you that you can't hurt yourself with," Ramsay went on, "and that's a file. I'll send it back with the girl. You've probably never seen one, but they're three cornered, and will cut through those things on your legs."

"You will not forget to hunt for gold along the middle river of the three? And you will not trust Chettle?"

"Listen to me, Ammar-al: I'm going to behave myself just as long as that gentleman behaves himself and not a second longer. Once he shows his hand—bingo!"

VI.

In all, counting the white and the brown, there were thirty men who took the trip by sea from the sharp south tip of the arrow-shaped island to a point midway of the broad north coast. They made several

stages of the water journey during those night hours that were moonlit, and those hours of the day that, whether early or late, were cool. Whenever the heat was on they rested at points along the coast. At the last stop of all, where the middle river poured into the ocean, the whole party landed and the five boats were beached.

All the way Ramsay suffered a strange feeling of loss, of being cut off from one upon whom, almost without knowing it, he had leaned. He felt this loss all the keener because, not understanding more than a half dozen words of the Aukan dialect, he was not able to talk with the men in his canoe.

They chattered freely among themselves —in their queer, unmusical, guttural tongue. And he watched them, keen to note every change of expression, but especially how they looked when Chettle spoke to them. Sometimes they turned their dark faces toward him suddenly. Their brows gathered, as if he were a puzzle to them. Their eyes, resting on him, brooded. And always they kept up a talking, low and somehow disturbing.

For companionship Ramsay found himself making much of Chettle's dog, a white-marked, black mongrel, young, intelligent, eager for notice. To guard against a shortage of fresh meat for the white men's table three rattan crates of chickens had been brought along. Much to the astonishment of the natives Ramsay often took thought even of the fowls, feeding them and seeing that they had plenty of drink. On land, the familiar feathered creatures gave a friendly, homely touch to the camp. And he liked to listen when, the expedition afloat, from the boats ahead the voices of the cocks cheerily welcomed the dawn.

At such times strange thoughts came into his brain. "They will not come back," he reflected. "And am I also being taken like a chicken to the block?" Yet it was not fear that he felt then. Sure that ahead conflict awaited, what moved him was the thought of action: he yearned for the chance to get about settling affairs.

When, the equipment and supplies parceled out among the natives, the start of the land trip was made, it was Chettle who led the line. The other white man was allotted a place toward the rear, behind him coming only Mabu and one other. Within half an hour of leaving the hidden boats Ramsay felt certain that what he had heard and surmised about the source of gold on Auka was true; also, more than ever he believed that his danger was real—that a fight was inevitable. For, the beach left behind, and the men strung out in a long, winding, snaky line, he found that they were traveling a clear, recently used, well-worn track!

As it began to come under his brown boots and he stared down at it he knew that travelers other than pigs and deer and wild cattle used the way. "It's a road!" he declared. "And not only have bare feet made it, but bare feet are keeping it worn —hundreds of bare feet!"

Something was taking the men up this trail. What was that something? To Ramsay there was just one answer. "This," he told himself, "is where the Singapore gold comes down!"

The track made him self-conscious. Far ahead, his big bare shoulders carrying nothing heavier than the barrel of a shotgun, walked Chettle. He had made light of the gold idea. He had enlarged on the difficulty of getting up through the jungle to the higher reaches of any Aukan stream. While here, leading sure and open, went this road which was wide enough for a full-packed man!

"Yes, and it's so good it could be traveled on a motor cycle!" added Ramsay.

What would the white leader reply if he commented on the track? He determined to make the test. "I say, Chettle!" he called out. "I'd describe this as mighty easy going."

"Better'n I thought," was the answer. "Guess we'll get along pretty good."

"Looks as if elephants had been traveling this route."

"Hunters, most likely."

After that the path was not again mentioned. But it gave Ramsay much to think about. "He's deliberately taking me up it," he declared. "Why?—if it gives him dead away. Right now he knows that I know he's lied to me flat about the streams and all the rest of it. But he doesn't care if he *is* given away. Because he doesn't intend to let me come back."

Having made up his mind to that, nevertheless Ramsay did not once think of getting himself out of danger's way—by pretending an illness that would return him to the boats or by deliberately taking to

the jungle and losing himself. He went steadily on, farther and farther into a wild tangle where, if he were murdered and left, all trace of him would be completely lost. There was, to sustain him in his boldness, the thought of Woodford, who had made himself a pledge of security; also, as Ramsay himself had said, he had been in other tight places and come through safely.

"The Forces!" he remembered. "They're with me." Then laughed at his own superstition.

"I'll say he's a cheeky customer," he mused. "My seeing this sidewalk where he said there wasn't a trail hasn't fazed him one bit! My brain can't take in such brass. But that's always the way when a normal man mixes in with a murderer. Especially after what the skipper said, I can't imagine Chettle's daring to go right ahead with his plans. What I shall do is go exactly as far as he goes."

As the line traveled an ascent that was gradual, instead of growing fainter or narrower the track got steadily better and harder packed. Ramsay noticed stems and leaves alongside; not just freshly broken off by the natives he could see, but brought to ground by other travelers.

"They go up here every day," he declared.

Halts had to be made frequently. Chettle's carriers were beach men used to the sea and the oars but not to climbing under a load. Also, the atmosphere of the jungle was like that of a high-temperatured hothouse. Worn by their unaccustomed march and sweating with their burdens the Auka men slept each time they touched the leaf-strewn, moss-carpeted ground; and the sound of their breathing made a strange chorus that was like the breathing of one great animal.

At mid-morning a long halt was made. Long before then the tall, slender coconut trees of the shore side had given place to larger and taller trees of various kinds, their lofty tops bound together by blossoming vines. Underneath there prevailed a still, verdure-tinted twilight that was less like air than like a warm, green flood. Through it, going as might go so many bright-scaled fishes in a marine garden, dipped and rose mammoth butterflies, showing their gorgeously ringed and scrolled wings.

While Ramsay rested he stretched himself on his back and looked upward through the binoculars. Afterward he and Chettle had lunch under a great banyan and Ramsay tried to talk casually about the surroundings. He stirred the ground with the heel of his boot. Here were decades and decades of fallen, rotting leaves, of vines and creepers, the whole mixed with crumbling stone and forming a soil of unsurpassed richness.

"What crops would grow in this ground!" he exclaimed. "Rich? Say, this land is a treasure house! Your people could have gorgeous coffee and pepper plantations."

Chettle gave a weary shake of the head. "What's the use to plant?" he demanded. "Right in sight is a shipload of rattan, and hard wood, and dammar—not to mention fruit, and gutta, and nibongs."

The natives kept apart—even Mabu. But by a quick glance now and then Ramsay was able to note that, now the beach and the boats were left behind, the brown men had undergone some subtle change. On the sand at the island's sharp southern point he had thought of them as like any other settlement of islanders in the South Seas. But here, out of sight of any building and tucked away in the forest, their aspect was different. Against the brown boles of the trees and amid the green hangings of the jungle they fitted in, and their naked bodies were scarcely to be seen. The place was wild and they were a wild part of it.

A change had come over even the chickens. In the boats and on the shore they had cackled and moved about restlessly in the crates. Now, their heads thrust out of the openings between the strands of rattan, they kept quiet and still but stared about them at the strangeness with round, black, bulging eyes.

As toward the latter part of the day the journey was resumed a denser and still denser jungle was treaded. Now there were no more short stretches that were gentle of ascent. The way was steeper and not so straight; yet it was significant that it had still so much width that the packs of the carriers rarely were brushed by the growth forming its two walls.

About the intruders into that forest bright-eyed parrakeets darted in swift flashes of color and screamed in resentment before disappearing into the low growth. From higher up came the plaintive

cooing of ring doves—a sound which reminded Ramsay of that low call which, on two occasions, had sent Ammar-al hurrying away from the tent and out of sight. Often brilliantly hued birds that Ramsay could not recognize swung up from the path, crying out in fright on seeing that line of weighted men who, from overhead, might well be mistaken for some mammoth, many-legged jungle-infesting dragon.

The second portion of that first day's journey was not a long one. Comparatively early a stop was called for the night, and camp made where there was a fair-sized open site which plainly had served the purpose of a resting place on many another occasion. Ramsay's tent was pitched to one side of the clearing and floored with the large square of rubber-lined cloth he had brought along.

Chettle settled with the whole space of the camp ground between him and the tent. The former did not ask his men to erect much of a roof for their leader's shelter. Upon wirelike strands of rattan were laid boughs and branches. Underneath the green roof, on a bed of ferns piled high, was spread Chettle's sleeping mat.

"To-night, at least," Ramsay said to himself, "the gentleman isn't bothering about privacy."

The cooks levied on the chicken crates and soon a brace of fowls were being boiled for the white men over a supper fire. To feed the natives there was put on a stew of rice and fern vegetables. While the kettles steamed the weary Aukans lolled in groups, resting. Now and then they turned their white-rimmed eyes toward where the two white men sat. Always they kept up a steady talking that was scarcely more than a murmur, it was so low. It was, to Ramsay, not a little disquieting.

The gloom of that forest twilight rapidly deepened. Supper finished, the natives spread their mats between shelter and tent and dropped upon them. In the dim light, tossing their brightly tattooed arms and legs they gave a strange effect. They did not look to be an aggregation of men; it was as if, here in the open, great many-legged, gay-patterned, snakish monsters were lying and writhing.

Suddenly, upon the great upper floor that was the top of the jungle, darkness came like the shutting of a trapdoor. Ramsay excused himself, pleading that he was tired, and sought his tent. But he did not lie down. As he sat, looking out through his V-shaped door, he noted and with curiosity, that here and there among the lounging men were springing up for an instant little sparks, or flames.

"Fireflies?" he asked himself.

He crept nearer to his door; and a moment later knew there were no fireflies in the camping space, and understood what it was that the men of Auka were doing. The native closest to him lighted a match and held it before his own face; which enabled Ramsay to see that the man was putting the flame to the bowl of a small pipe.

The tiny light sank once, twice, and a third time, as the breath of the smoker drew it against the bowl. Then it went out, when there floated to Ramsay's nostrils a smell which was not of the jungle. It was somewhat like the smell of burned sugar, sweetish, yet strange.

Opium!

The heart of the white man leaped to his throat—at the boldness of it, now that the expedition was in the jungle. "They've been cautious until to-night," he thought. "But Chettle doesn't care any longer what I know. It's no use to pull the wool over my eyes about their hitting the pipe as long as I'm on to the fact that Auka's full of gold."

At once several things were made clear to Ramsay. Ammar-al had referred to "whispers of matters which are worse"—worse than gin, or palm wine, or the murdering of missionaries, or the whipping of women. It was this that was worse! Ramsay, himself, had wondered how Chettle was able absolutely to handle and control the Auka men. Here were shown both the explanation and the proof. Chettle had the male inhabitants of the island fast in that awful, never-loosing, degenerative clutch of a drug.

And now Ramsay understood how it happened that, on occasions, Ammar-al had been able fearlessly to come forth from his prison and move about. Nightly the inhabitants of the men's houses were sunk deep in poppy dreams.

"This is the mess of pottage that the poor devils have taken in return for their birthright of gold!" he reflected. "Well, now I know two of Chettle's secrets. And a man's always in danger if he possesses a secret that another man doesn't want him

to have. That's my danger now. Am I going to pay high for what I know?"

For the first time the thought of his situation was disturbing. And again there occurred to him that idea of flight. Should he change his mind about it, wait until past midnight, creep aside into the forest, and lose himself?

"I'll be hanged if I will!" he vowed. "Before I go scuttling away like a mouse into a hole I'll cross over to Chettle's hunky and put a slug of lead into him. Just let him start something! And I'll see the business through."

His bed was made up at the tent door. But he did not lie down on it. Instead, having stuffed some ferns into it so that it appeared to be occupied, he drew back toward the rear of the tent, and half sat, half lay, an automatic ready in his hand. Thus, keeping watch, in brief moments he took his sleep.

Near by and unknown to him there was another watcher, small, and brown of body, who crouched as silently as a shadow. And hour after hour, as the hot night passed, that sentinel's eyes were fixed upon the spot where stood his tent, and a pair of sharp ears listened, listened for the sound of the slightest move.

VII.

Ramsay heard the first bird note of the new day. It was answered by sleepy, troubled cluckings from the chicken crates. The morning air was of a grateful, summery softness. Cutting it sharply hither and thither went the wings of early flyers, while queer calls came out of the jungle. Gradually the opening of the tent became more clearly defined, as the dark lightened to that tint which was like sea water. Next, in what seemed one joyous moment, the camping place was filled with sunlight and song.

Then of a sudden, he started, leaning forward, and staring at something lying upon the mosquito netting of his unused bed. That something consisted of three yellow jungle flowers, large and beautiful and heavy with perfume. Following the first moment of his surprise at finding them there he told himself that the blossoms had fallen from overhead. But as he picked them up he found they were bound together by a strong threadlike grass.

"What does *this* mean?" he wondered.

Over the morning coffee Ramsay did not mention the circumstance of the bouquet. He suspected that Chettle had tossed the three blossoms into the tent—it was as if, with a sort of malign humor, he was, Ramsay, told himself, "presenting the flowers ahead of the funeral." For on that heavy face there was a curious but controlled smile; the round, tufted eyes were pinched together as if each were drawn, like the opening of a bag, by a gathering string, and the full lips were slightly parted.

"He thinks I'm caught squarely," concluded Ramsay. "And already landed. He's brought me around the island on the pretext that I'm to have my prospecting trip. As a matter of fact this excursion's been taken so that he can make away with me and not one of the women be the wiser."

As the packs were being taken up he felt that the natives had a knowing look in their black eyes. They had eaten scarcely any breakfast. But cheerfully enough they took their places on the trail and the second day's march began. As before, Chettle led. As before, Mabu made the end of the file.

Ramsay did not care where Mabu walked. The white man had come to feel something like contempt for the big, curly-headed one, who wore no arms—not even a knife. The other natives never came to Mabu for orders. He was merely a figurehead.

Above the jungle top the sunlit sky was a bluish gray; but the line walked through a gloom of green. Even toward mid-morning this gloom scarcely lightened, for pendulous branches fairly roofed the trail. The dog thrust his muzzle into the growth at either side. And sometimes, as if scenting or seeing him, forest dwellers that were themselves unseen went scurrying away.

Once during the morning the dog uttered a terrified howl. Following it, Chettle fired his revolver. Involuntarily Ramsay's hand went to the butt of his own weapon and he half expected the impact of a bullet. But nothing significant was to happen yet. Ahead, in the path, was only a young wild pig. At sight of it there was much chattering among the natives and Ramsay found himself grinning in relief. Supper would mean fresh piglet baked in fragrant leaves amid hot stones.

As on the day before a stop was made during the period of greatest heat. The

place chosen proved to be a more frequently used camp than the one where the expedition had spent the previous night. Indeed, it had been occupied by other men probably only a few hours before. While the carriers were still in line Ramsay spied the fresh prints of feet and saw that ferns which had been used for beds were hardly wilted.

"Native miners," he guessed. "Been here within twenty-four hours. Evidently my friend intends to gladden my eyes with a real view of the rich ground before he takes any action. Well, perhaps he has to keep up a pretense of carrying out my wishes. There may be men along with us that he can't altogether trust."

At the next halting place, where camp was pitched for the second night, a new shelter was found standing. This Chettle took without troubling to make any comment on it. Signs were abundant that several men had occupied the ground recently.

Once more the cooking fires were lighted. But this time these were used mainly to heat stones which were piled ready to one side—stones which had, perhaps, often served the purpose to which the cooks now put them. The rocks red-hot, the pig was filled with them, wrapped in fragrant ferns, and placed in a pit lined with the remaining hot rocks.

Two hours later the two white men once more took their supper together. Chettle filled Ramsay's tin plate with the delicious steamed meat, then filled his own. That there was no danger to be apprehended from the food was proven by the fact that Chettle ate promptly of his share. His countenance still wore that lurking smile, but he was pleasant and fairly talkative.

Now they were well above the belt inhabited by mosquitoes and could sit outside the leaf lodge in the cool of the forest without being tortured. But comfortable as the evening was, before dark filled the open space Ramsay sought his tent. As he sat smoking and pondering, gradually the sounds of the camp grew less. The cooking fires were already smoldering. Already, too, those tiny glimmerings which marked the lighting of the opium pipes were springing up here and there. Soon came silence in the camp; then, from somewhere toward the east and not far, could be heard a faint murmuring. It was not the sound of human voices but the voice of a stream.

In spite of himself, Ramsay found himself lulled. His cigar burned itself out. Tired from his broken sleep of the previous night he found it hard work to keep his eyes from closing. Again and again he roused himself; just as often his head tipped forward until his chin was on his breast, and his thoughts, in spite of themselves, merged into those of a dream.

Then suddenly—he did not know how late it was—he was awake and sitting bolt upright. Even as he realized where he was, and that, somehow, all was not well, there sounded in the warm stillness a piercing, agonized scream.

It was the scream of a woman.

VIII.

That cry of pain and terror died away.

"A woman!" breathed Ramsay. "But what woman? How can a woman be here? And what has happened to her?"

Again there was silence. Softly, he crawled forward to his bed, leaned close to the tent door and looked out. The light in the camping space was dim. But when he had looked for a few moments he could see the outlines of the sleeping figures of the natives. Evidently none had heard the scream. For not a man was so much as stirring a hand.

"How can I help her?" he asked himself. And could find no answer to that, for he did not know from what direction the scream had come, and to go out and search about in the blackness would be both useless and foolhardy. "Had I better call to Chettle?" he wondered next. But realized that if Chettle had been the cause of the woman's outcry, he, Ramsay, would receive no reply.

He decided to keep quiet and attempt to trace any movement in or about the camp. Almost holding his breath he listened. And could hear nothing but the stream.

Half an hour or more later he became aware of a sudden darkening outside the tent. Clouds were obscuring the small patch of sky that was visible overhead. With surprising quickness those clouds emptied themselves—of a very flood.

Now the sleeping men bestirred themselves, sitting up or rising. Some went outside as if to seek the shelter of the forest. And Ramsay, more on account of his weapons than his clothes, donned his slicker. This proved to be a prudent thing to do;

for soon the cloth roofing above him was sodden and leaking with the driving of so much water earthward.

But the storm was over in a short while, stopping as suddenly as it had begun. However, the natives did not return. As Ramsay squatted on his heels, watching his tent door, what he heard was the rain falling from the leaves of the forest. The steady drip, drip, drip, was like the feet of men who were always creeping nearer and nearer, now cautiously, now more quickly and boldly, but never arriving.

Not a wink of sleep was for him. After what seemed an interminable wait, again the birds cheeped, the cocks crowed and the light stole down from the tops of the trees. Then he heard the dialect of the Auka men, and here they came trooping into sight, their tattooed skins shining. Some wore fresh leaves bound round their foreheads. Others had thrust a flower into the hair. In their manner was something of the festive. They laughed a great deal, and loudly. They ran and played pranks.

"Looks as if they're celebrating something," he declared. "But if they don't know what happened in the night maybe they've been told their hard work's over. Well, this is when I must keep my wits about me." As nonchalantly as possible he went out to hang his bedding and the rubber-lined floor square in the fresh morning air.

Chettle called to him. "Hear that rumpus in the night?" he asked.

"Thought somebody had a nightmare," Ramsay answered, grinning.

"Nightmare, nothing! My dog got up and acted funny. So I stuck my head out and here was somebody close to my shelter. I thought it was one of the boys. But when I took hold of his arm it turned out to be a Mary."

Ramsay pretended surprise. "A girl?" he cried. "But that's easy to understand. The lady's followed because she's charmed with one of your carriers."

Chettle guffawed. "You're right!" he pronounced. "Sure, that's it! Well, she can come along if she's so set on it."

Ramsay had no glimpse of any girl. He would have liked to ask how it had been possible for her to join the party. She had not been smuggled along in one of the boats. Had she come from the settlement by crossing those dark, sharp mountains? He would also have liked to ask Chettle if the latter had let go of that arm he had seized and what had happened to the girl. But Ramsay knew that he would only get lies for an answer. So he said nothing more about the matter.

One thing was certain: The incident had made a change in Chettle. All that morning, as he walked, Ramsay could see that the man ahead seemed on the alert. So did the burly native on the end of the line. His mustache hung over a mouth that was grim. Often when Ramsay turned his head quickly he found that Mabu was watching behind him.

Ramsay drew his conclusions as to the reason for the conduct of these two. If Chettle had killed the girl whom he discovered in the night, then he was not sure that another woman was not somewhere near, having come to spy; if he had not killed her the pair feared her eye and her tongue.

"This having two tribes on the island may be a lucky thing for me," Ramsay told himself.

Just before the midday camp was reached something happened. Ramsay heard the dog give warning—excitedly, yet not with that kind of barking which meant game. At once the barking changed to yelps; evidently the animal was being hushed with kicks and blows. The line came to a sudden halt. As there was a bend in the track just ahead, a bend which prevented Ramsay's seeing Chettle and the foremost natives, the former, curious to learn what had occasioned the halt, stepped from the path and made as if to pass forward to one side of the burdened men.

At this, those in the angle of the trail quickly closed in to bar it, and barred it further by flinging their loads down across it. Ramsay, though he gestured the men aside, found that he was not allowed to pass. However, almost at once, the forward command was given, the loads were hoisted, and the steady climb began again. Angry and thoroughly suspicious, Ramsay hung back a little, and beyond the turn examined the jungle walls closely. These were so tightly woven as to be almost impenetrable. But at the spot where he judged that Chettle must have been standing when the halt was made he was able to see that the braided festoons of the vegetation were freshly broken, and had been parted, and

pushed to either side to make an opening. "We met some one," he concluded. "They're tucked away in there as we go by."

At the tear in the curtain of vines he swerved from it, and laid his hand on his pistol. He could see nothing, hear no movement. But he felt that through the green lacings eyes were watching the rest of the procession—and him.

He guessed who the down-traveling natives were: men who had been higher, blowing out the gold dust that was marketed at Singapore. "The next camping place will tell something," he concluded.

The next camping place did tell. A fire was burning. There were feathers strewn about—the bluish plumage of wild pigeons. Ramsay was able even to guess—and he thought accurately—just how many men had spent the night on the ground; for in all there were five heaps of rain-soaked ferns, each holding the print of a man's body.

The way grew steeper, the path better drained of the rain that had fallen upon it. Now, oftener than had been the case lower down, the way led into open spots, where the climbing vines and the creepers, draped ever in graceful loops from the great trees, were like the artistic hangings in some vast, high-walled, irregularly shaped hall.

At one point, when a short stop was made for rest, Chettle came weaving his way back through the carriers, his shirt hanging limp upon him and marked by dark areas which were wet with sweat.

"How do you like this grade?" he wanted to know.

"Steep enough," Ramsay answered. "But a man's paid for his climb. Never saw more beautiful country in my life. Look at this place! I don't wonder that some poet once said that the groves were God's first temples."

Chettle turned, boring the other man with those keen, round eyes. In his look was plain disdain. "So you're one of the fellers that believe in a God?" he observed, lips twitching as if the idea appealed to him comically.

The question was manifestly an insult. Ramsay decided to ignore it. "I notice that the elevation seems to have cleared away my dengue," he said.

From time to time during the afternoon they crossed a stream, this on large trees which had been cut down, trained to fall in the right direction, and squared off along the top to make a fairly wide and thoroughly safe bridge. These crossings gave Ramsay his first sight of water, which had been plentiful enough during the whole of the journey but had been brought into camp by the natives.

Higher and higher toiled the line. Once when Ramsay chanced to turn about, with arm upraised to ward off the sweeping blow of a pendant rattan, he found himself looking down upon the sea—faintly blue, far stretching, its edge fringed with inlets which, at that distance, made scallops on the shore line, each scallop looking tiny enough to be emptied by one dip of a spoon.

After rounding the breast of a mountain, under jungle trees that leaned out streamward until their branches mingled with those of trees rooted deep in the dark earth of the opposite bank, the trail came to a sudden stop. Ahead loomed up one of those needlelike mountain points. To the left, foaming, the stream, now gravelly bedded, was like running crystal.

The natives had scarcely halted when there was a sudden excited hubbub among them. They called shrilly to one another, gestured, and ran about. Plainly something had gone wrong.

Then Chettle called to Ramsay: "Seen my dog this last half hour?" he wanted to know.

The younger man puzzled. "Come to think of it," he replied, "I don't believe I've seen him since the morning stop."

Chettle went plodding down the path a ways, the very stoop of his shoulders and the look of the back of his head eloquent of annoyance and concern. He stopped now and then to whistle and call. When he came back his lips were moving with his curses.

"Wouldn't 've lost that dog for a lot," he complained. "The fool must 've trailed off after a pig or somethin'."

"He'll come on," declared Ramsay cheerfully. "You can't lose him, Chettle—not along a trail as plain as this."

The space for the camp was not so large as any of the others had been. But there were, to Ramsay, certain things about it that were very much in its favor. One of these was that his own tent could be pitched against a rocky wall which here

formed a considerable cliff on the side farthest from the stream. With the wall at his back and with plenty of ammunition he felt that he might be able successfully to stand off a sudden assault.

Chettle's shelter was erected on the extreme edge of the river bank, from where there was a fall of fully fifteen feet to the water. Ramsay noted that great care was taken with the house of branches, as if in preparation for a long stay. Stakes were driven into the ground to hold up a carefully laid thatch. The walls were woven tightly, the whole making a commodious dwelling.

It was while Ramsay sat resting and smoking and watching the natives work that he suddenly remembered, and with a start which sent the blood to his head, how well situated his own abode was for any attack from above. A well-aimed boulder sent down from the cliff top could, in a manner that might seem accidental even to the Aukan men, absolutely wipe him out.

He pondered what he ought to do. If he moved to Chettle's side of the camp he would be too close to that gentleman. As for the lower side, the trail divided it, and to right and left of the trail blocks of stone were thickly strewn about, leaving clear no level spot big enough for the tent. As for the upper border of the stopping place, there already the supper fires were being lighted, while bundles and natives and the last of the chicken crates covered the ground.

"I certainly was an idiot to pitch where I have," he mourned. "But then I can dig out as soon as it gets dark—safest thing to do, anyhow. This is the end of this particular gold track. Whatever happens will happen right here."

As soon as the welcome aromas of the evening meal began to spice the air Ramsay descended to the stream to bathe himself before eating. The pool he chose was several rods down the stream, where it widened slightly and flowed less swiftly. On the bank of the pool he trampled some ferns, stood upon them to take off his clothes, then carrying his weapons and cartridge belt to the edge of the river, laid them close to hand and let himself slip into the velvet cool of the water.

Delicious as was his bath, and invigorating, he did not fail to keep watch of his pistols and clothes. He kept watch about him, too, suspecting that an effort might be made to catch him unarmed and at a disadvantage. However, where he splashed he could see not only Chettle but Mabu. That was reassuring, for he did not fear the natives, feeling himself a match for them all.

He was out again, dried, and into fresh clothes when directly across the river from him, at the base of that cliff, which was here not so high, he thought he caught a movement. Pistol in hand he stepped behind a tree. There, as the light swiftly faded from gray to darker gray, he waited, silent, watchful, finger on trigger.

Suddenly his whole body prickled as if from an electric contact and under his topi his hair rose up on end. For now he saw, rising slowly against the black wall of the cliff—what?

The gently upward-floating Thing was at one moment perfectly spherical and not larger than the head of a man. Next, swelled, it became somewhat irregular and elongated. In the growing dark it shone out faintly luminous.

Halfway up the wafting glow veered, like a candle flame in a soft wind, then faded. Again before Ramsay's staring eyes was only the black background of stone.

"Ramsay! Hey, there! Come to supper!" It was Chettle, shouting from the camp.

"All right."

He left the tree and started back. He told himself that what he had just seen was only a phosphorescent light—a pocket of swamp gas, released, perhaps, by the slight disturbance of some rotting vegetation at the base of the wall. If it was not such a will-o'-the-wisp, then it was a globe of fireflies.

But neither of these explanations satisfied him and he was not able to shake off an uncanny feeling.

IX.

Supper was eaten at a table lighted by two lamps that were the polished halves of a coconut shell half filled with rank-smelling coconut oil. Ramsay tried to be casual, particularly wishing Chettle not to surmise that anything unusual had happened. And he put himself out to be cordial so that his companion would believe that Ramsay had no fear of treachery.

But he could not eat; and he was not able to talk freely because his mind kept

recurring to what he had seen. "There's something queer about this trip up here," he concluded. "There was that scream of a woman, and the disappearance of the dog, and now—this. Is it possible that my old Hindu was right? That when I'm in a tight place I'm watched over by the Forces?"

Before the white men left their table the men of Auka had once more given themselves up to the slavish demands of their pipes. From where he sat, sipping a cup of chocolate and having a cigarette, Ramsay was able, by the light of the dying fires, to count them, Mabu among the rest, all lying relaxed and drunk with smoke.

Following two nights of broken rest, he longed for sleep and he knew he must have it. But when Chettle disappeared into his green shelter and steadily registered his presence there by a series of long-drawn, unmusical, foghorn snores, Ramsay did not lie down. On his feet, and forcing himself to keep awake by applying, by turns, an eye or an ear to a small break in the front of his tent, he waited until the old moon was gone behind the last of those towering needle points of mountains to the west.

Then, in that camp ground, encircled by jungle and stone, the stars gave little light. He loosened the cloth of his tent on the downriver side, wriggled out as noiselessly as a snake, stood up, a hand on the cliff to guide him, and stole away. He kept in the inky shadow of the rock wall, and for his comfort took with him, tucked under an arm, the rubber-lined square.

Rod after rod he went, straight toward that spot from which had come the light. "If the Forces are here to help me," he told himself half whimsically, "I'm not going to run away from them." Presently, against his face he felt the cool fingers of some tall ferns. He stepped in among them until he judged himself to be well hidden. Then lay down, wound in the square, and feeling fear no longer, slept.

When he awoke the sky was already brightening. Instead of returning directly to his tent, and thus, perhaps, revealing his absence from it during the night, he jogged downstream to that bathing place, stripped, limbered himself with setting-up exercises, swam, dressed, and strolled campward whistling.

He found Chettle already up. But between the thatched hut and Ramsay's tent the score of natives were still stretched, each in his sleeping mat and with his pipe where it had fallen from his fingers at nightfall.

Chettle was all excuses for them. "The Auka native ain't much on climbing," he observed with a grin. "The last two days has tuckered these fellers out."

"Dead to the world," agreed Ramsay.

"You said it. But let 'em lay. They wouldn't be no use to us, anyhow. We'll come back later on for some chow. Thought we might as well track up across the slope here and see if we can run into any signs of the yeller stuff." He led the way over the steep and rocky ground.

Ramsay, trailing, sensed that the inevitable clash was now only a short few minutes ahead. "We're not here looking for pay sand," he thought. "While his men are still asleep he wants to put me quietly out of the way. Well, let him try it! Let him make a move!" Angered, it came into his mind to wound Chettle so that the latter would be helpless. "But, no, I won't do that," he decided. "I'll wait until there isn't a doubt that his intentions are rotten. Then I'll kill him." Aloud he asked, "Do you hear that deep roar, Mr. Chettle?"

"Ye-ah. Must be falls."

"And big ones."

What Ramsay had heard was a low, heavy tone. It grew to a throaty growl. Before long the two were in sight of a great mass of water which breasted whitely outward over a high ledge before plunging a hundred feet.

Still leading, Chettle suddenly veered sharply. It brought them through a thick belt of low ferns and out upon a rocky bank which, a sort of promontory, afforded a view of the pool which was under the cataract. The quieter stretches of this sheet of water were a black-green, for the morning light had not yet fallen upon them. A part of the pool the tumbling flood churned to foam. About the foam circles of waves lifted like milky ruffles.

"Gorgeous!" pronounced Ramsay.

But Chettle suddenly had come short and abruptly headed about. There was a strange expression on his heavy face. "Guess we'll go down grade," he said. "That'll save us a bad climb before breakfast."

Ramsay realized that something had turned his guide. Pretending to be freeing

his foot from an entangling vine he checked himself long enough to peer over the bank—upon a narrow sandy beach which bordered the nearer side of the pool. Upon it, stretched, face down, was a native.

One glance gave Ramsay the meaning of what he saw. The brown man was not a member of the expedition; he was some Aukan who was "blowing gold."

But as he straightened and followed Chettle, he understood that the latter was not getting away because he feared that Ramsay might see the primitive mining operation. There was another reason, and a black one. Owing to the roar of the water the native had not heard the two white men above him on the bank. It was Chettle's intention that neither should the native see him and his companion.

"This is going to be a private murder," Ramsay told himself ironically. Now he was mindful of each movement of the man ahead, whose big hands, at every step, were putting aside branches and hanging vines.

They were a quarter of a mile on the lower side of the camp, pressing their way downstream, when Ramsay had proof that his suspicions were correct. Suddenly, on the brink of the river, once more Chettle stopped and turned. The same thought was in the minds of both now, for each lifted his right hand to the weapon hanging on his thigh. But Chettle was the quicker of the two. Standing face to face with the younger man, he drew a deep breath that was like a snarl, aimed straight at Ramsay's breast and pulled the trigger.

The weapon did not go off; there was only a *click*, dull, flat—the striking of the hammer against steel.

In that instant Ramsay was appalled. His mouth wide, his breath stopped, he stood against the bore of the revolver. What moved him was not fear, and not surprise; it was the certainty of, and the horror of realizing, this man's hideous treachery.

Chettle cursed. Ramsay sprang back. Chettle did not draw a second weapon nor try a second shot. Instead, as Ramsay, waking to action from that momentary stunned condition, jerked his own pistol free, Chettle caught at the other's hand. Then for a long minute the two struggled for the possession of the pistol—silently, desperately.

Chettle, the heavier of the two, won in that test of sheer muscular strength. He bore Ramsay to his knees, though keeping himself on his feet, and as the younger man strained, groaning, gradually twisted the revolver clear of his hold.

But Ramsay was the quicker brained of the two. In the same moment that Chettle let go in order to step back and fire, Ramsay plunged at him, using his head as a battering-ram; and Chettle, with a grunt, stumbled backward into some low growth. As he fell, up over his head he tossed the arm holding Ramsay's pistol. The weapon flew from his hold, described an arc, and, as Ramsay darted away toward the camp and the supply of weapons and ammunition, struck the stream below, sending up a thin spurt of water.

X.

As Ramsay tore along his brain worked fast. He asked himself if the natives would try to bar his way—and set upon him. If he were able to gain Chettle's shelter, would he find any weapons? And would these be as useless as the one Chettle had just snapped?

He could hear the latter lumbering heavily after him and cursing vociferously. Nevertheless Ramsay slowed as he neared the camp, this to see how the land lay. He made a strange discovery. Every Auka man was still on his mat!

He went leaping into his own tent, searched out another pistol and his supply of ammunition, then made across the camp ground, stepping over one native after another. They lay so motionless that he almost thought them dead. The sight of them stretched about in awkward positions in the clear morning light was startling.

At Chettle's door he stopped, crouched, and tried to get a glimpse of the oncoming enemy. The latter was not in sight. Then as, scarlet and winded from his run, he swung aside the matting that made the door of the shelter, and entered, he made a second discovery, and one far more amazing than the first. He looked into the blue eyes and prison-pale face of the young chief, Ammar-al.

He could have shouted with joy and relief. He tried to speak, but choked. He reached for the hand of the other, shook it and clung to it, panting and grinning, and

fighting to get back enough breath with which to ask a score of questions.

Ammar-al began to speak: "I saw it was best to wait here, so that Chettle could not come back into his house." Then, taking a look out through a small opening in that side which commanded a view of the end of the path, he added quietly, "I knew he could not shoot you."

"He tried to!" Ramsay answered. "Aimed straight at me and pulled the trigger! The gun didn't go off—a bad shell, or dampness, or something. Ammar-al, I was saved by a miracle!" At the thought of the marvelous good fortune which had been his, he grew cold and trembled from head to foot.

Ammar-al nodded gravely. "I did it," he explained. "In the night, when he was sleeping, I reached my hand to his revolver, and leaving it in his belt, very softly, with one finger, I touched it. The round piece of steel which holds the cartridges turns easily. Out of it I took each bullet, as I might lift the seeds from an evil fruit." To the face of the young chief came one of those rare smiles.

"You're a wonder!" declared Ramsay. His pistols were in good order. He was holding one in each hand. "I owe you more and more! Well, you can depend on it that if I live I'll square the bill."

After that, for a while, they did not speak again, only watched to every side. They did not give much attention to that wall of the shelter which was turned toward the stream, knowing that the bank was too high and sheer to be scaled from the water by anything larger or less agile than a monkey. But Chettle did not approach near enough to show himself.

Presently one or two of the islanders began to rouse, yawning languidly. Soon all were sitting up, talking a little and looking about them stupidly. It was plain that they were not hungry, for not one of them went near the supplies. When, finally, they got to their feet they went prowling off into the jungle.

"Too much drug last night," Ramsay observed, speaking low. "So that he could kill me and not one of them be the wiser." His lean face drained itself of blood as his anger suddenly mounted.

"That's why there wasn't any danger of his piling rocks down on my tent in the night. To smash me that way would give him away. So he coaxed me out this morning to shoot me, bury me before the carriers were awake, cover the grave with leaves, wipe out every trace of the crime. Then if Woodford charged him with murder——"

"He could say you came here, went away, and did not return."

"Exactly! Like his dog."

With a silent laugh Ammar-al gave a jerk of the head that loosened the long, black, horse's tail of hair which was coiled around his neck, and sent it swishing down his bare shoulders. "I killed the dog," he chuckled.

"You! But how did you get here, Ammar-al?"

The young chief again wound his throat with his scarf of hair. "Between two dead volcanoes."

Ramsay gasped. "A woman came with you, too!"

The blue eyes of the other grew somber. "Tani. She was beside your tent, watching. He must have come creeping near it. She cried out to warn you——"

"And?"

"I do not know. I heard nothing of her then, when the jungle was so still that the falling of a leaf was a sound. Afterward, in the rain, I went about with the men, they not thinking who I was. Chettle slept. Tani was nowhere."

"Let's hope she's safe, poor little thing! If she isn't, the bottle won't reach Woodford, will it?"

Ammar-al sought a new vantage point, looked out, satisfied himself that no one was approaching, then answered: "We are the ones who will reach Captain Woodford."

"Chettle was plotting to kill me all the way up. It just shows how little he fears Woodford's coming back. Well, I'll say that he's carrying things with a high hand! I suppose that's the way men get when they're away off from civilization and out of reach of the law. But we're away off, too, where a coast-guard cutter can't get to us. So we'll be the law."

Once more the young chief assented. "If Chettle goes back to his long house," he replied, "only our two spirit bodies will go with him. But, if *we* go back——"

"Right again. If he doesn't take to his heels, if he fights us, we'll settle the whole business here. Ammar-al, in the next few hours there's going to be some ghost mak-

ing." As his companion moved about, once more, watching, Ramsay took time to make a swift examination of Chettle's stores. And found water, food, brandy, tobacco, extra weapons, and cartridges by the hundreds.

The firearms were in prime condition. He laid them out in a handy line. And it was while he was leaned over the small arsenal that an idea came to him. "Ammar-al," he said, "I suppose you've heard of the Great War that was fought not so long ago?"

Ammar-al considered the matter, the tips of his fingers pressing against either side of his forehead.

"The only war I have heard about," he returned, "was that one between a country called Spain and another country called America. I was, at the time, a little boy."

Ramsay grinned. "That war was a tea party," he declared. Then, as the other looked more puzzled than ever, "I mean that it was a small affair—no more than what you would call a feast. No, there was a second, and a big one. To save themselves from being cut into bits by the bullets the men of both sides dug ditches that were many times longer than Auka is long; and they got down into them and burrowed."

The young chief understood. "You watch," he said, "because you know how to use the pistols. This ground has no roots, is full of rain, and soft. And here I have coconut shells that are iron hard."

"But here are mining tools! Chettle was pleased when he found I was bringing this shovel along. He took charge of it. That's what he meant to use to scoop out my grave."

"I will dig," said Ammar-al. As he dug, feverishly, and with all his strength, making a saucerlike hollow in the center of the house of branches, and throwing the moist, rich loam into a bank that soon surrounded them on every side, they sank steadily by inches. Ammar-al became stained a red-brown to the thighs. As for Ramsay, he was reminded of his long months in the French trenches.

"Part of the time in the very boots I've got on!" he thought. "Well, by thunder, if this all isn't as strange and unreal as a nightmare!"

It was less than a half hour later that the two were given proof of the wisdom of their digging in. Ramsay was looking out mountainward when his ear caught a sound. He stared into the wall of heavy growth, then suddenly covered his eyes and threw himself flat in that damp hollow, pulling Ammar-al down with him.

And in that same moment, together, came the blast of a shotgun, and ripping through the greenery of the hut, a shower of lead.

XI.

A second blast came, then a third. After that Chettle held his fire.

To Ramsay the silence that followed the three shots was one fraught with strain. Not because he felt himself in danger, however, but because, lying pistols in hand, he found it difficult to keep himself from answering the attack.

"You're hit?" he whispered to Ammar-al.

"No."

"Curl in against this side—close," and Ramsay pulled at the shoulder of his companion, urging the latter to move away from the center, and against that wall of the round trench which was nearest to the enemy and his rain of iron pellets.

"I forgot all about that pump gun of his," Ramsay went on. "He planted it out in the brush somewhere, so that if he was cut off from this place he'd have it to fall back on."

For half an hour or more they lay motionless, listening, listening. All the while they could hear some one moving about in the jungle above them, but at some little distance away. When there followed a loud rustling, Ramsay got up stealthily and peeped out, but could see no one.

"He won't come down," he assured Ammar-al. "He won't dare. Doesn't know whether he did me any harm or not, you see, and he wouldn't care to risk stopping a bullet."

After that, one hour followed another without incident. Outside the embankment of earth which Ammar-al had thrown up were Chettle's supplies. Cautiously the water, brandy, and some biscuits were lifted over into the shallow pit; and by turns the beleagured men ate and drank sparingly. Next, in preparation for the night to come, they decided, alternating, to sleep.

The rank smell of the moist ground burdened the air of the shelter like thick smoke, and conduced to sleep, and despite their situation neither man had any trouble in falling into a doze. Ramsay rested first,

wishing to be awake when the green-brown light of the interior began to fail.

When night came, and neither could see the face of the other, there began again, but now on the heavily grown slope below them, that strange, steady rustling. From time to time, too, they could hear a low-spoken word. Evidently some sort of work was going forward in which Chettle was directing the efforts of the natives.

However, during the short time that the aging moon lighted the open space about the shelter, Ramsay caught no glimpse of any one. "I suppose they're getting ready for a rush," he told Ammar-al. "Well, if it comes, I'll get a few before they get me."

Throughout the day neither of the two men had trusted himself near that door of matting. But when dark came, for a moment Ramsay drew the curtain aside and leaned out—far enough to feel about on the ground. Early in the morning, when he came up from his bath, he had dropped that square of rubber-lined cloth. Now he found it.

Contrary to his expectations the night passed peacefully. But when the darkness thinned toward morning of the new day, as if it were being brushed aside by a light wind that came down from the sharp summits of the mountains, it was plain to both men that peace and quiet were only a prelude to future warfare. For, on looking out toward the downhill direction of their green lodge, they saw, newly set up among the tall ferns, ten feet or more of stone wall, forming a high, bullet-proof barrier.

"Ha-a-a!" breathed Ramsay. "The gentleman'll stay behind that!"

However, he and the young chief did not fail to watch toward the uphill side of the lodge, to guard against an attack from a quarter which might be considered more unexpected.

But as the morning passed, not even one of the Auka men was glimpsed. And it became evident to the two what plan Chettle had under way. Ramsay and Ammar-al had supplies; however, these were limited, and, being surrounded, they could not come by any more. On the other hand, Chettle had a score of hunters at his command. Which made time the main element of the contest. In time, more drinking water would be a terrible necessity. Hunger, also, would make its demands. While the man on the outside would only have to wait.

"This," Ramsay remarked dryly, "is what you'd call a siege."

He did not relish this being penned up to be fired upon. It was too much like the game of hide and seek he had been forced to play in France. And the sight of those evenly piled rocks was exceedingly exasperating.

The face of the islander, however, was perfectly composed; his blue eyes were steady and devoid of anger. This grandson of an admiral showed not a trace of either irritation or impatience.

Here was no superior officer to command Ramsay to sit and silently endure and wait. "To-night," he said to Ammar-al, "suppose we make a sneak of it and get Chettle when his attention is fixed on this place?"

Ammar-al did not favor the suggestion. "The Auka men are watching us from every side," he pointed out. "If we go from here, and we do not kill Chettle, and we cannot return, then we must live in the jungle."

"We can always do that," Ramsay added. "So we'll just stay where we are. But we won't sit around in here and steam until we're suffering for a swallow of the creek, and taking in our belts. No, sir!"

He determined to influence the course of events and whispered an outline of his plan to Ammar-al. To begin with, there was that certain boyish trick which he had seen American soldiers play upon their adversaries, the Germans—the age-old trick of the bullet-decoying hat-on-a-stick.

He tried it. First, he set the matting at the door in motion. Instantly Chettle's bare head lifted for a second above the stone wall, those round eyes squinted inquiringly, then he dropped from sight again.

It being certain that Chettle was watching, Ramsay now hung his topi on the end of the shovel handle, and very cautiously thrust the white headgear between one side of the matting and the thatch.

At that, again, in quick succession, the shotgun blazed—*bang! bang! bang!*

Following the third shot there was a moment of silence. Then Ramsay uttered a cry—shrill, piercing, full of pain.

Above the wall no head was lifted. From inside the hut came no sound. But half an hour later, once more the end of the shovel was thrust into Chettle's sight. This time to it was tied a small cloth square which was one of Ramsay's handkerchiefs.

It was the white flag of surrender.

XII.

The siege was over.

But when Chettle spied the signal, he did not show himself, evidently fearing treachery. However, having taken plenty of time in which to consider the matter, he called to Ramsay from behind that stone barrier.

"Give up, do you, in there?" he demanded.

It was not Ramsay who answered, but Ammar-al, and he spoke in his precise English: "We now make a finish of the fight."

A muttered exclamation of amazement; another period of silence; then, "That ain't *you,* is it, Ammar-al?"

"This be Ammar-al," replied the young chief.

Chettle delivered himself of a volume of curses. But still he did not trust himself in the open. "Come out of that and let me have a look at you," he commanded; and, as Ammar-al hesitated to obey, "Come on! Don't be afraid! I won't shoot!"

Brown fingers shoved at the piece of matting. Past it was thrust a head wound thickly by a dark cloth. From the cloth and forward over one shoulder fell that long black mane of Ammar-al's. As his earth-stained body followed, and he stood in plain sight just at the door of the hut, through his hands, in that way which was habitual, he drew his hair nervously.

Chettle, as cautious as ever, viewed the figure through some chink in the rock wall. "So the Marys turned you loose, did they, Mister Ammar-al?" he inquired with ironical politeness. "Well, I guess when I get back to the beach I can make 'em a little sorry for that. Yes, I think maybe I can."

"No woman helped me," denied Ammar-al.

"No-o-o! You don't say! You picked the lock yourself, eh?"

The wrapped head nodded. "I cut the iron of my chain with iron," he explained. "Mr. Ramsay sent me the small iron piece with three corners which made the cutting."

"*He* did!"—again that mocking tone. "So he stuck in his nose, did he? And you was so glad that here you come, to take all this trouble for a feller you never set eyes on before. Well, what's he got to say for himself?"

"Nothing," was the low answer. "By one of the small bullets through the eye to the brain, the stranger—is dead."

"*Dead!*" The statement completely restored Chettle to good nature; and from behind the stone wall came a burst of harsh laughter, which prolonged itself into a series of chuckles.

"Dead," repeated the young chief. His chin sank to his breast.

Now Chettle assumed a tone of sympathy. "Say, but that's bad news!" he declared. "It sure is! Such a fine young feller, he was, too. A grand, smart young feller!"

Ammar-al raised his head. "I ask," he said earnestly, "that his body be laid here, deep in the ground."

Chettle indulged in another chuckle. "Easy!" he answered. And, after a short wait, "Then do we go back home and keep our mouths shut?" he asked. "It was the fever carried off Mr. Ramsay, wasn't it, Ammar-al?"

"It was the fever," replied the young chief. He bowed in assent, spread his hands in a gesture of resignation, and stepped from sight.

Immediately Chettle's voice could be heard, giving an order in the island dialect —proof that some of the natives, at least, were close by. And presently, as the white cloth was taken from the handle of the shovel, and the shovel itself was thrown out into the middle of the open space, here, walking fearsomely, with black eyes rolling, came two Aukans. They advanced, and picked up the shovel.

First of all, jabbering to each other, they measured off the length of a long body upon the ground. Then, by turns, they fell to digging Ramsay's grave.

They handled the shovel clumsily; and even in that loamy earth made but slow progress. Also, being unused to such labor, soon both stopped their work and disappeared into the jungle to rest. Then two others came forward and not quite so timidly. However, when these two hunted the shade there was a temporary cessation of the work which lasted during the whole period of greatest heat.

Meanwhile, Chettle had not again spoken; nor had he shown himself, which indicated that he did not yet thoroughly trust what Ammar-al had told him. On the other hand, he had not asked the young chief to throw Ramsay's pistols out of the but—probably for the reason that, if Ramsay were not really dead, even several pis-

tols could not insure his own safety against attack, since he did not know exactly how many weapons the young miner had brought with him.

On the other hand, if Ramsay was dead, his pistols would be useless to Ammar-al, who, as Chettle knew, did not understand the use of firearms.

Late in the afternoon the digging was resumed. And when the grave was waist-deep Chettle showed impatience, and cut the work short by calling out in the Auka tongue for the men to enter the near-by shelter and fetch the body.

It was a task which the natives did not relish. They approached that matting door hesitatingly, Chettle urging them on, even threatening them.

Ammar-al made matters easier for the two. Once more the door matting was shoved aside. Then he stepped out and, holding the hanging aside, motioned the men to enter. Having leaned to peer into the green house and satisfy themselves that they were not in danger, they entered.

The body was in the bottom of the circular pit. Already, so far as it was possible, it had been prepared for burial. About it, wound closely, was that rubber-lined square. It had been so arranged that the most of it was wrapped about the head and shoulders of the dead; and because of this there protruded those high, brown, army boots.

Outside, Ammar-al lamented silently, gently swaying his body from side to side in the native fashion; while with grunts and low-spoken words, the natives lifted Ramsay's still limp form out of the pit to the level ground, then sprang up beside it, took it up by the head and feet, and bore it forth.

Down the clearing, at one end of the stone wall, Chettle now rose into sight, a revolver in either hand. And as the natives staggered with their burden toward the heap of freshly turned-up ground he came strolling forward, thrusting one of his weapons into its holster. On his heavy mouth was a curious, twisted smile.

It grew to a wide grin as Ammar-al, who had moved across the camping place beside his dead friend, suddenly threw himself beside the body and, swaying in the manner of the mourning native, broke forth into a plaintive wail.

Another mourner joined in. Above, at the top of that rocky wall, sounded the plaintive cries of a woman.

Without halting, Chettle looked up. "So that's where you are, is it?" he inquired pleasantly. "Well, Tani, if I get hold of your wrist again there's likely to be a little lesson handed out as to what happens when a Mary don't mind her own business. Yes, somebody'll have a taste of rattan." And he laughed.

Then with a sudden show of annoyance, as he came near to Ammar-al, "Oh, shut up and get back out of my way!" he ordered. To insure prompt obedience, and to give force to his command, he lifted a foot and kicked the kneeling figure.

It stood, and fell back a step. The next moment, even as Chettle was thrusting an inquiring foot against the body prone on the ground, there was a muffled explosion that made the Aukans scream out in terror and bolt for cover; while Chettle gave a strangled cry, dropped the revolver he was holding, and flung up his right hand. From it jetted a stream of red.

But he did not look at his wounded hand. It was as if he did not yet know he was hurt. And he did not attempt to draw a second weapon with his other hand. Like a man suddenly struck dumb, what he did was to stare, his heavy mouth gaping wide.

He stared, not into the face of Ammar-al, but into the face of Ramsay!—Ramsay, to whose head covering was tied that long, black horse's tail of hair cut from the head of the young chief! Ramsay, with every square inch of his body smeared dark with earth.

"Why—— Why——" Chettle was gasping.

"Hate to trick you like this," Ramsay declared good-naturedly.

Appalled, as well as shocked, Chettle's look wandered like that of a drunken man. And all at once he caught sight of his right hand. He clutched the wrist of it to lessen the flow of blood. Then dropped to his knees and pressed his shattered hand under his armpit.

"Get up!" Ramsay urged him. "And let me tie you, or you'll bleed to death."

But Chettle could not stand. He sank sidewise to the ground and sat, white, shaken, the cruel smile gone from his face, his round eyes imploring. "Oh, help me!" he begged. "Don't let me die!"

From three sides was coming the sound

of stampeding feet, as hidden men, struck with fear at the sight of their fallen master, deserted him and fled as if for their lives. Ramsay, leaving his gibbering patient for a moment, and using a pocketknife, hastily cut the strands of rope and vine that bound the prostrate body of the young chief about arms and chest, and booted feet. Then he undid the smothering folds of the heavy cloth from over the face.

Ammar-al up once more, Ramsay had a vision of that native which was penned up in the part white, who shrieked out such wild, strange words in the guttural Aukan tongue that Chettle drew away as from a spear. Those blue eyes were ferocious, and covered by a glaze. Making a queer picture in Ramsay's khaki-colored clothes, he hung above the wounded white man as if he ached to tear, to avenge, to kill.

Ramsay thrust himself between the two. "Ammar-al!" he pleaded. "Listen! Let the cutter deal with him! Not you! Listen, old man! All that prison business is over! Think of that! He can't ever have another word to say on this island!"

Ammar-al listened, but as if the dengue were racking him, his body took on a trembling.

Ramsay laid a hand on his shoulder; and to divert him from the mania that had seized him, gently shook him. "Ammar-al," he went on, "think of what's ahead! Your people will be one tribe! And you will have plenty for them—gold to pay for schools and teachers——"

Ammar-al answered hoarsely. "He made the men into fiends," he charged. "He striped the backs of the women. He sent the children to live with the pigs."

"I know! I know!" Ramsay comforted. "But the gambling, and the whipping, and the drugs—they're all gone! Gone for keeps! That's all over, Ammar-al. And Auka Island's going to have the biggest feast in its history! Ah, the old Hindu was right. Ammar-al! He was right! The Forces *were* on my side!—and look here! Listen! Have you forgotten who you are now?"

Ammar-al straightened. His body ceased to quake as little by little the flame of his wrath subsided. Then his eyes cleared, and once more Ramsay saw on that pale, olive face one of those rare smiles. "No," he answered.

"Ha-ha-a-a!" triumphed Ramsay. "Chief of Auka!"

WHAT LONDON LOSES

LONDONERS have caught the American disease of losing things. In one week nearly two thousand umbrellas were turned into New Scotland Yard. In addition, the following were among the articles that were left in cars, cabs and busses by their forgetful owners: Washstands, household irons, a half pound of suet, two white mice in a wooden box, several officers' swords. Unclaimed lost articles are kept at Scotland Yard for three months and then either given to the bus conductor who found them, or sold. Many women of high social rank are regular callers at Scotland Yard during the social season, looking for lost jeweled vanity boxes and other costly trinkets. One of these forgetful ladies, after recovering an article of considerable value, lost it again in a cab on her way home.

SOME MOTOR FACTS

THERE are over eighteen million motor vehicles in use on the globe to-day. Eighty-eight per cent of them are in the United States.

Last year motor taxes in the United States totaled not far short of a half billion dollars.

American farmers own four and one half million cars and trucks.

Last year there were over three million persons employed, directly or indirectly, in the automotive industry in the United States. Motor-vehicle factories employed 318,000 of them.

On January 1st last there were 430,000 miles of surfaced highways in the United States. Thirty-five thousand new miles of highway were surfaced in 1923. There are almost three million miles of roads in the country.

Motor vehicles were second in commodity exports for 1923.

The Gates of Morning

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "Gold and the Girl," "The Garden of God," Etc.

(*A* ***Four-Part Story—Part IV.***)

CHAPTER XXXII.

AIOMA CURSES THE WIND.

"NEVERMORE shall we see Karolin." The words of Aioma were repeated by the sky, by the sun and the sea. Nevermore would he see Katafa, hear her voice, feel her arms about him. The hard hot deck beneath him, the sun beating on his back, the sounds of the sea on the planking and the groaning of the timbers all were part of his misery, of the awful hunger that fed on his heart.

He loved her as a man loves a woman, as a child loves a mother, as a mother loves a child. He who had killed men and dared death was, in fact, still a child; passionate, loving, ignorant of the terrors that life holds for the heart of man, of the grief that kills and the separation that annihilates. He had never met grief before.

Le Moan watched him as he lay. She knew. He was lying like that because of Katafa; she had lain like that on the coral because of him.

By declaring that vision had returned to her, by seizing the wheel and steering for Karolin, she could have brought him to his feet a well man—only to hand him over to Katafa.

She could not do that.

Her heart, pitiless to the world, was human only toward him. She had braved the unknown and she had braved death to save his life, but to save him from this suffering she could not speak three words.

Aioma watched him absolutely unmoved. If Dick had been wounded by a spear or club it would have been different, but mental anguish was unknown to the canoe builder and you cannot sympathize with the unknown.

Then as Dick struggled to his feet and stood with his hand on the rail, dazed and with his face turned again to the south, the old man recommenced his plaint with the insistency of a brute, while the wind blew and Poni at the wheel kept the ship on her course south, ever toward the hopeless south.

"No," said Aioma, "nevermore shall we see Karolin. Uta has us in his net. Nevermore shall I shape my logs"—he had dropped that business before leaving Karolin—"or spear the big fish by night while the boys hold the torches, and the great eels will go through the water with none to catch them. It is this *ayot* that has brought us where we now are to confusion and a sea without measure, and this wind, which is the breath of Le Juan, and may her breath be accursed. Well, Taori, and so it stands, and what now? Shall we go before the wind or counter it, seek the south *e haya* where nothing is, or the east *e hola* where nothing is?"

Dick turned his face to the canoe builder. "I do not know, Aioma, I do not

know. It is all darkness." His eyes turned to Le Moan and passed her, falling on Poni at the wheel, and the sea beyond.

Aioma had told him that he was taking Le Moan as a pathfinder, but Dick had troubled little about that scarcely believing in it. He had trusted to the current and the light of Karolin as a guide. They were gone, but it was the words of Aioma that removed the last vestige of hope.

He trusted Aioma in all sea matters, and when Aioma said that they were lost, they were lost indeed. Palm Tree vanished. Karolin gone, nothing but the sea, the trackless hopeless sea and the words of Aioma!

Urged by a blind instinct to get away from the sight of that sea, that sky, that pitiless sun, he left the deck and came down the steps to the saloon where he stood, a strange figure, almost nude, against the commonplace surroundings; the table, the chairs, the bunks with their still disordered bedding, the mirror let into the forward bulkhead, a mirror so old and dim and spotted that it scarcely cast a reflection.

He looked about him for a moment, moved toward the bunk where Carlin had once slept, and, sitting down on the edge of it, leaned forward, his arms resting on his knees, his head bowed—just as his father had sat long, long years ago when Emmeline had vanished into the woods to return bearing a child in her arms—bearing him, Taori.

Just as his father had sat all astray, crushed, helpless and lost, so he sat now, and for the same reason.

Up on deck Poni at the wheel turned to the canoe builder.

"And what now, Aioma?" said Poni. "Since Le Moan knows not where to go, where go we?" As he spoke the mainsail trembled, rippled and flattened again.

The canoe builder turned aft. The breeze-up blue, beyond a certain point, lay in meadows, and a far glitter spoke of a great space where there was no wind.

"The wind is losing its feathers," said Poni with a backward glance in the direction toward which the other was looking.

As he spoke the mainsail trembled again as though a shudder were running up it and the boom shifted to the cordy creak of the topping lifts.

Yes, the wind was losing its feathers, dying, fading exhausted; again the mainsail flattened, shivered and filled, only to flatten again, the warble of the bow wash began to die out and the schooner to lose steerage way.

The breath of Le Juan was failing and Aioma, who had cursed it, saw now the calm spreading toward them, passing them, taking the southern sea.

Poni left the wheel.

There was nothing to steer. A ship is only a ship when she is moving, and the schooner, now a hulk on the lift of the swell, lay with a gentle roll on the glassy water, drawing vague figures upon the sky with her trucks, complaining with the voice of block and cordage while the canoe builder, standing with his eyes on the north, felt the calm. Felt it with a sixth sense gained from close on a century of weather influence; measured it, and knew that it was great. Great and enduring because of its extent, complete and flawless as a block of crystal placed by the gods on the face of ten thousand square miles of sea.

He remembered how he had cursed the wind, and turning to speak to Le Moan, found her gone.

Le Moan, following Dick to the saloon hatch, had stood for a moment listening.

Unable to hear anything below, she waited till Aioma's back was turned and then cautiously began to descend the steps of the companionway; cautiously, just as she had come down those steps that night to attack the white men single-handed and save, at the risk of her life, the life of Taori.

Reaching the door of the saloon she saw him half seated on the bunk's edge, his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands, while above him, now on the ceiling, now on the wall, glimmered and glittered and danced the same water shimmer that had danced above the sleeping Carlin. Only now it was a butterfly of gold.

The ripples sent out by the roll of the schooner on the sea surface gave it its tremor, the roll its extent of flight, the sunlight its gold.

It fluttered now, sweeping down as if to light on Dick, and now it was flying on the ceiling above him. It seemed a portent, but of what she could not tell, nor did she heed it after the first glance.

Crossing the floor, she came to him, sat down beside him, and rested her hand on his shoulder.

Dick turned to her. Like the child that he was, he had shuddered and sobbed himself into a state where thought scarcely existed above the sense of despair. He turned to her, the touch of a woman's sympathy relaxing the numbing grip of disaster, yet not for a moment releasing him. Then casting his arms around her neck, he clung to her for comfort as a child to its mother.

Clasping her arms around his body, her lips on his throat, her eyes closed, as in paradise, heedless of life and death and dead to the world, Le Moan held him, flesh to flesh, soul to soul, for one supreme moment her own. That she was nothing to him was nothing; that grief, not love, had thrown him into her arms was nothing; she held him.

To Le Moan, whose soul was, in a way, and as far as Taori was concerned, greater than her body, marriage could have given little more—if as much. She held him.

Above them danced the golden butterfly that no man could catch or brutalize; a thing born of light, of the sea, of chance; gold by day that had been silver by moonlight, elusive as the dreams that had led Carlin to his death and the love that had led Le Moan to destroy him.

Then, little by little, the world broke in upon her, her arms relaxed, and rising, half blind and groping her way, she found the door, the steps, the deck, where Poni stood released from the wheel, and Aioma by the rail.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HE HAS TURNED HIS FACE FROM THE SUN.

THE ocean is a congregation of rivers, the drift currents and the stream currents; rivers, some constant in their flow, some intermittent and variable; some wide, as in the case of the Brazil current which at its broadest covers four hundred and fifty miles; some narrow as in the case of the Karolin-Marua drift, scarcely twenty miles from east to west. The speed of these rivers varies from five miles a day to fifteen or thirty as in the case of the Brazil current, or from ten to a hundred and twenty miles a day as in the case of the Gulf Stream.

Sometimes these rivers, lying almost side by side, are flowing in opposite directions, as in the case of the north-running Karolin-Marua current, and the southerly drift that had now got the schooner in its grasp; and each one of these streams of the sea, from the arctic to the antarctic, has its own peculiar people, from the Japanese swordfish of the Kuro Shiwo to the Gambier turtles on the Karolin-Marua.

Left without wind, the schooner drifted, her sails casting vast reflections on the glassy swell. Sometimes, away out, a slight disturbance on the water would show where a sleeping turtle had suddenly submerged, and overside in the ship's shadow, fucus and jellyfish floating fathoms deep could be seen drifting with the ship. Nothing else. Neither shark nor albacore, nor palu, nor gull spoke of life across or beneath that glacial sea.

The sun sank in a west of solid gold and the stars took the night, the sails showing black against the brilliant ceiling.

Dick, who had come on deck before sunset, stood by Aioma at the after rail. He seemed himself again, but he had not eaten that day, a fact that disturbed the canoe builder, who had turned from dark thoughts and misgivings to a sort of cheery fatalism. Aioma was alive and there was food and water on board for a long time, and the wind might blow soon, or the drift—he sensed a drift—take them somewhere; also he had a feeling that his curses had closed the mouth of Le Juan, also he had eaten well and was full of ship's food and bananas, also his sturdy nature refused depression.

"Of what use," he was saying, "is a man without food? A man is the puraka he eats, and the fish. Go and eat, Taori, for without food a man is not a man."

"I will eat to-morrow," said Taori. "I have no heart for eating now."

Away forward, crouching in her old place, Le Moan listened to the creak of the ship as it moved to the swell and watched the stars that shone on Karolin.

The faithful, unbreakable sense born with her as truly as the power of the water finder is born in him, or the power of the swallow to find its southern nest, told her just where Karolin lay, away on the starboard beam to the north, now dead aft as the schooner turned to some gentle swirl of the current, now a bit to port, now back again to starboard.

She could see the figures of Taori and Aioma in the starlight and she could hear the voices of Poni and the others from the fo'c's'le, the creak of the timbers and the

creak of the main boom as it moved to the rocking of the swell. She too had not eaten that day.

She had done her work and she had received her reward. With his body in her arms and her lips on his neck, she had drunk him as a creature dying of thirst might drink long delicious drafts from a poisoned well, for he had clung to her not in the passion of love, but of misery, and he had let her hold him as a comforter, not as a lover, and she knew that till the stars fell dead and the sun ceased to shine, never would he be closer to her in body or spirit than that.

This knowledge had come to her from the very contact with his body, from the clasp of his arms about her neck. He had told her unconsciously and without speech more than he could ever have told her in words. He was Katafa's.

He was forever out of her reach; sure and certain instinct told her that; yet he was near her and she could see him. They were together.

Only a little before sundown Aioma had said to her, "Le Moan, maybe since the wind has gone the spell of Uta Matu has ceased to work. Shut your eyes, turn, and see if you cannot get a view again of where Karolin lies; is the sight of it still gone from you, Le Moan?"

"It is still gone," she had answered him, "and even if it were with me, of what use, for there is no wind?"

She had told the lie looking him in the face and seeing only Taori.

It was no little jealousy that made her lie. She had no jealousy toward Katafa, whom Fate had bound to Taori before she had seen him. He had not chosen Katafa in preference to her—perhaps that was why her heart held no jealousy; all the same, to bring him back, to take the wheel and steer him into the arms of Katafa—she could not.

To save his life she could easily have died for him, to give him back to joy and love was impossible.

The night passed and the sun rose on another day of calm, and still the schooner drifted, the variable current setting her back sometimes, sometimes leading her a bit more south. Truly it was a great calm, as Aioma had predicted, and it fell on Taori as on the sea like the hand of death. He scarcely ate at all, he had fallen away from himself, his mind seemed far away, he scarcely spoke.

As men who have never met the microbes of disease fall easily victims and die when other men only just fall ill, Taori, who had never before known grief, in the language of Aioma, turned his face from the sun.

On Karolin men had often died like that of no disease, because of insult, because of a woman, sometimes just for some reason that seemed trivial. It is one of the strangest attributes of the Kanaka—this power of departing from the world when life becomes unendurable, too heavy, or even just wearisome.

"He has turned his face from the sun," said Aioma to Poni one morning—the fourth morning of the calm—and Le Moan, who was near by, heard the words.

It was on that same morning that the breeze came, a light air from the north strengthening to a steady sailing wind, and almost on the breeze came the call of the lookout who had climbed to the crosstrees.

"Land!"

Just a few palm-tree tops to the southeast, the trees of a tiny atoll, so small that it cast no lagoon reflection, and Aioma, who had climbed to see, came down again while Poni, who had taken the wheel, put the ship to the southeast, taking his position from the sun not far above the eastern sky line.

Presently the far-off treetops could be seen from the deck, but Dick, as Poni steered, after a glance at the distant trees lost interest.

He had indeed turned his face from the sun.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHAT HAPPENED TO RANTAN.

WHEN Rantan awoke from sleep it was morning. He had slept the clock round. He awoke hungry and full of vigor, and coming out from among the trees he stood for a moment by the edge of the little lagoon above whose sapphire waters the white gulls were flighting against a sky newborn and lovely and filled with distance and light.

The canoe lay where he had left it, high beached now, for the tide was out. The bodies that had been tied to the gratings were gone—the gulls had done their work—and nothing showed but the coconut-

sennit bindings hanging brown like rags and moving to the breeze.

Close to the northernmost of the trees lay a little pond from which he had drunk before lying down. The trees stretching from the pool ran in a dense line for a quarter of a mile, pandanus, coconut palm, breadfruit and a dense growth of mammee apple, shading beach and reef to a spot where the naked reef took charge. The rest of the ring of the atoll showed few trees, just a small clump or two of fifty-foot palms, wandlike and feathery against the blazing blue.

There was food here, enough of a sort, but he had neither knife nor fire nor fishing line. He was naked.

When they had bound him and kept him and flung him in the canoe to take him to the southern beach of Karolin he had not bothered about the fact that he was naked; it had not troubled him at all till now. Now that sleep had restored him to himself, the fact of his nakedness came to him as a sudden trouble making him forget for the moment everything else, even food.

The trouble was entirely psychical. The climate of the beach was so warm that he did not require clothing as a protection, and there was shade enough to shelter him from the sun if he were too warm. All the same, his nakedness lay on him like a curse. He felt helpless, part of his environment that had clung to him for forty years was gone from him and without it he was all astray; naked as a worm, he felt useless as a worm, ready to flinch at anything, without initiative, without power.

Dick had never known the need of clothes. He had never worn them. It was different with Rantan.

The absence of shoes he felt less, though without them he was condemned to keep off the rough coral and hold to the beach sands.

He came along the sands toward the canoe. Had you been watching him and had he been clothed in purple and fine linen you still would have said to yourself, "There is something wrong about that man. Why does he walk like that?"

When he reached the canoe he looked in at the remains of the fruit all squashed and gone bad from the sun, then, turning to the gratings, he began to unfasten the strips of coconut sennit that had tied the bodies of the children.

The birds had pulled the bodies to pieces. Not even the little bones were left and the bindings hung lax. His fingers were not trembling now as they had trembled on Karolin when trying to untie the knots; he had plenty of time to work in and bit by bit the fastenings came undone.

Then the gulls, if they had bothered to look, might have seen a strange sight: Rantan trying to make himself a loin cloth.

Why?

He had neither real decency nor shame in his composition, there was no one to see him in his nakedness but the gulls. Why then did he trouble?

Trouble he did and the result was scarcely worth his trouble. Then, and still without eating, he turned to and cleared the rotting pandanus and other fruit out of the canoe; he could not swill her out as he had nothing with which to hold water, but she had brought in a long piece of weed tangled on the outrigger. The sun had dried it, but he wet it again in the lagoon water and used it as a sort of mop.

Having cleaned her and seen that the mast, sail and paddles were all right, he came back to the trees, plucked some pandanus drupes and began to eat.

As he sat down to the food, he made to hitch up his left trouser leg, a habit he had. Before leaving the canoe to come back to the trees he had tried to put his hand in his pocket. In this way and in other ways and incessantly his vanished clothes spoke to him, reminding him that he was naked, worm-naked on the face of the world.

He ate, staring at the lagoon as if hypnotized by its blueness, and as he ate pictures traveled before his mind's eye, pictures of Karolin lagoon and the two dead women he had left on the southern beach, and then, as a bird hops from one branch to another, his mind left Karolin and lit on the deck of the *Northern Light*, and from that on to the sands of Levua, in whose woods he had betrayed and slain Peterson.

All his troubles had started from the killing of Peterson. It was just as though Peterson had been following him, stripping him steadily and bit by bit of everything down to his very clothes; of the schooner, of the pearl lagoon, of his sea chest, of the few dollars he had saved, of his hat, his shoes, his trousers, his shirt, his coat—

everything. He tried to put away this idea, but failed.

It was now only nine o'clock in the morning of a day that would not end at sunset, of a blue and blazing day that, with night intermissions, would last for months and months—for the rainy season was far off. And he was out of trade tracks.

He stood up, looked about him, and then, walking carefully, picked his way on to the rough coral above the outer beach. Here on a smooth spot he stood looking over the sea to the northeast.

Nothing.

Karolin with fabulous treasure in its blue heart lay somewhere over there, lost, so far that even the lagoon light did not show.

He turned to the southeast. Somewhere there lay the Paumotus.

Should he push off in the canoe and try to reach them?

Since waking this morning there had fallen upon Rantan a double obsession, the paralyzing sense of his nakedness and now the feeling that somehow, in some way, Peterson was following him, following him wearing the seven-league boots of bad luck. He believed neither in God nor in ghosts, but he believed in luck—and his luck had been frightful and it had dated from the killing of Peterson.

This double obsession cut the ground from under the feet of his energy so that the idea of escape in the canoe entered his mind only to leave it again. He came back to the trees, lay down in their shadow and now the gulls began to talk to him.

The little island had two voices, the endless sound of the breakers and the unending complaint of the gulls. Sometimes it would be just a voice or two, sometimes clamor—always indifference, voices from a world that knew nothing of man.

The dead women he had left lying on Karolin beach were not farther beyond the pale of things than he who had slain them, and it came to Rantan as he lay there that he was shut out; no one knew of his fate, he was of no manner of interest to anything that surrounded him, to the wind, to the sunlight, to the trees, to the gulls. If he were to drop dead on the sands he would become an object of interest to the predatory gulls, but alive he was of interest to nothing.

This was not a passing thought; it was kept alive in his mind by his nakedness. His mind had been stripped of its clothes in the form of living beings and accustomed surroundings, just as his body had been stripped of its clothes in the form of shirt, coat and trousers. The two nakednesses were as two voices perpetually talking together, answering each other, echoing one another.

Then, hypnotized by the murmur of the reef, he drifted off into sleep.

He was on the schooner. She was anchored in Karolin lagoon and the crew were diving for pearls. The deck was strewn with heaps of shells and Carlin was showing him a huge pearl in the palm of his hand. It was the last—they had stripped the lagoon clean, and now it was mainsail haul for Frisco, wealth, wine and real life. He was down in the cabin, pearls all over the floor and pearls in the bunks, and as the ship rolled the pearls ran and he chased them about the floor on his hands and knees, and they turned into pebbles as he caught them. Some turned into white mice and ran over Carlin, who was lying dead by his bunk, and then Poni shoved his head through the skylight and called down at him: "Caa—caa—caa," and he awoke beneath the trees to the call of a passing gull.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LUCK OF RANTAN.

HE sprang to his feet and came running out on to the sands. For a moment he could not tell where he was. Then he remembered.

It was past noon and the tide was beginning to ebb. He saw the canoe and he stood—stood for a full minute without moving a single muscle, his mind working furiously, no longer diffident, no longer helpless, as though the dream in restoring his old environment had given him strength, renewed courage and daring.

He must clear out of this place, get to the open sea. The Paumotus were possible, ships were possible, death was possible, but better than this place where nothing was possible, where nothing was, but a beach to walk on, blazing sun and jeering gulls.

The ebb was beginning to run. It would take him through the break. He must act at once.

He ran toward the trees and began collecting pandanus drupes and carrying them to the canoe. He climbed like a monkey

for drinking nuts and just as on the Karolin beach he ran, sweating as he ran, piling the fruit on board; drinking nuts, drinking nuts—he never could have enough of them. Then, the last of his frantically collected cargo on board, he did what he had also done on the beach of Karolin—flung himself down by the little pool and drank till he nearly burst.

It was all a repetition of that business and only wanted the dead bodies of the women to make the picture complete. Then he came to the canoe.

Here it was the same again. He could not get her off. The dead children no longer weighed down the outrigger, but he had stowed his cargo badly and that did the business. The outrigger was bedded in the sand. He labored and sweated rearranging the fruit, then at last she began to move. He pushed and drove, the lagoon water took her to amidships, another effort and she was water borne and he was on board working with a single paddle and getting her farther out.

He was free.

A weight seemed gone from his soul. He no longer felt his nakedness. The power of movement, the escape from the beach and the new hope that lay in the open sea were like wine to his spirit. It was a move in a new game and Daring whispered to him that he would yet beat Peterson.

Working with the paddle from side to side, he got her farther and farther out, and the break lay before him now, and beyond the break beckoned the sea.

He had turned sidewise to take a last derisive look at the prison house of the trees and beach when—aye, what was that? Water ran over his knees as he knelt to the paddling, water that moved with a slobber and chuckle beneath the nuts.

The canoe was leaking. The sun must have done this business yesterday, craftily, while he was asleep. She had been bone dry when he stowed the fruit and now the stuff was awash, or nearly so.

The mat sail was brailed ready to be broken out when clear of the lagoon. He looked at it, then his eyes fell again to the interior of the canoe. The water had risen higher still; this was no ordinary leak that immersion would calk. There was nothing to be done but to return and try to mend it on the beach.

He began to paddle, making frantic efforts to turn the canoe's head and bring her ashore. He was too late; the ebb had her like a leaf and though he turned her head it was only to make her float broadside to the spate of the tide.

The only chance was to try to hit the beach near the break.

He worked like a giant.

Only a few minutes before his heart had rejoiced at his escape. Now, with the prospect of certain death from drowning in the outer sea, the beach seemed to him the most delectable place in the world.

But he could not reach it. The nearer the break the swifter the ebb. The lagoon water had him like a swiftly running river; the canoe twisted and turned to his efforts but he could not alter the line of its travel sufficiently to hit the beach.

Then, flinging the paddle away, he rose, held on to the mast, plunged overside and struck out for the shore.

When he reached it and stood up the canoe was gone, swept to sea to be submerged and tossed on the swell.

His last possession had been taken from him. Schooner, money, pearls, clothes and lastly the canoe—all were gone. He had nothing in the world save the loin cloth made from the bindings of the dead children.

But he was not thinking of that. His life had been saved. He had almost touched death and now as he looked on the oiling current he saw a shark fin shearing along as though the shark that had missed him was blindly hunting for him.

He came back to the trees, hugging the life that had been spared to him and sat down to rest, Death sitting opposite to him —cheated.

This business brought things to a crisis with Rantan. Though robbing him of his last possession, it still had given him a sense of winning a move, and truly, though his luck had been dreadful, there had been an undercurrent of good luck. He had escaped from Le Moan that night, he had escaped from Nanu and Ona who had him bound hand and foot, he had escaped from the sea, coming to this atoll, and he had escaped from the leaking canoe and the shark. His mind took a turn. He felt that he was meant to live, he was sure that now he would be rescued. A ship would come.

And at this thought that seemed clothed in surety, the man's soul blazed up against

Karolin. If she were only a ship with the right sort of people on board he would find Karolin for them and they would rip the floor out of that lagoon and the hearts out of the Kanakas that lived by it.

And the right sort of people would be on that ship and she would come—she would come. He knew it.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RANTAN'S SHIP.

HE fell asleep on the thought and for days and days he hugged it and every day a dozen times he would go to the flat space on the coral and look over the sea for the ship.

One morning he saw something dark on the beach near the break. It was the canoe. The tide had taken her out only a little way and the sea had played with her, submerged as she was, returning her to the lagoon where the full flood had beached her. The water had drained out of her with the ebb and there she was and there he found her, pulling her up higher just for something to do. He found the crack that made the leak. It was quite small and he might have plugged it, but there was no paddle and anyway he would not have used her—he was waiting for the ship that was sure to come.

Rantan had, like most sailors, the full use of his hands, and he craved to use them, but he had no tools or anything to work on. Near the trees and close to the mammee apple there was a patch of coarse grass and the idea came to him to make something out of it. Once in Chile he had escaped from prison by making a grass rope, and the idea came to him now to make another. Anything was better than sitting in idleness, and it seemed a lucky thing to do; for not only had he escaped from the Chile prison by means of the rope, but he had come on a streak of good luck when free. So, gathering grass, he sat down to weave his rope.

The business was a godsend to him.

He limited the work to only a few hours a day so as not to cloy himself, and he would look forward to the work hours as men look forward to a smoke.

While he worked at it, he wove his thoughts into the rope. His desires, dreams and ambitions all were woven into it. The killing of Peterson went in and the memory of the dead women on Karolin beach, his hatred of the Kanakas and of the red-headed one who had come and looked at him—Dick.

As a woman weaves into her knitting her household affairs and so on, the busy fingers of Rantan wove into his rope visions of ripping the pearls out of Karolin lagoon, of hunting the Kanakas to death, of drinking bars and other pleasures to be had with the pearl money—truly if an inanimate thing could be evil, it was evil, for it held Rantan's past. The amount of grass being limited, he sometimes knocked off work for a couple of days and the days became weeks and the weeks went on and on, till one morning when the grass being nearly finished and the rope almost long enough to hang a man, with a six-foot drop, Rantan, coming to his lookout, sighted a ship.

Away toward the north she lay, so far that he could only tell she was of fore-and-aft rig and making either for or away from the atoll. Ten minutes showed her bigger; she was coming for the atoll. She was The Ship.

Then Rantan danced and sang on the smooth bit of coral and shouted to the gulls, and he came down to the sands and ran about on them like a dog in high spirits. He shouted to the canoe and abused her and called her filthy names, then ran back again to see how the ship was growing and back again to the sands to cut more capers.

She grew.

Returning to his lookout post for the fourth time, she seemed to have suddenly shot up in size as if by magic. Now he could see her clearly, her make and size and the patch on her foresail. He took a breath so deep that his chest stood out above his lean belly like a barrel. God! She was the *Northern Light!* The *Northern Light* or a sister ship, her twin image. The eye of a sailor told him that, the patch on the foresail he knew—he had helped to put it there.

He turned and came running on to the sands.

White men must have come into Karolin lagoon and made friends of the Kanakas—the women would have been found dead on the beach, the canoe gone. It was all plain.

They would know that with the wind blowing at that time the canoe would have come in this direction; he was being

searched for, either to be clubbed to death by Kanakas or hanged by whites.

There lay the canoe on the beach and his footsteps on the sand.

He looked round. There was no mark of a camp fire to give him away, nothing but the canoe, the footsteps, the fruit skins and coconut shells he had left lying about, and the rope.

He started to clear up, casting the skins and shells among the bushes. Then, diving into the bushes, he hid there listening, waiting, sweating, the rope coiled by his side.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BATTLE AND THE VICTORY.

THE island grew.

Poni at the wheel, his eyes wrinkled against the sun, steered, Aioma beside him, Le Moan near Aioma and Dick forward near the galley. Dick had taken his seat on the deck in a patch of shadow and now he was leaning on his side, supporting himself with his elbow. The sight of this island that was not Karolin had completed the business for Dick.

For four days he had scarcely touched food and for four days Le Moan had watched him falling away from himself. It was like watching a tree wither.

There was a vine growing on Karolin that would sometimes take a tree in its embrace just as ivy does, grow up it and round it and cling without doing the tree any injury; but if the vine were cut away from the tree, the tree would die.

It semeed to Le Moan that Taori was like the tree and Katafa the vine.

She was right.

Seldom enough, yet every now and then, you find in this wilderness of a world, amid the thorns of hate and the poison berries of passion and the toadstools of conjugal love, a passion pure and unselfish like the love of Katafa and Taori. Who, moreover, above most other mortals, stood apart in a world where there was no room for little things, where the sky was their roof and the ocean their floor and storm and war and cataclysm, halcyon weather and the blaze of a tropic sun their environment, where the love that bound them together had, woven into it—after the fashion of the rope of Rantan—their past.

The thousand little and great and beautiful and terrific things that made up their past—all these were woven into the passion that bound them together.

To cut this bond, to separate them forcibly one from the other, was death.

In hot climates, in the tropics where the convolvulus grows so rapidly that the eye can all but see it grow, people can die quickly of love. Death grows when released with the fountain speed of the rocketing datura and the disruptive fury of corruption.

Dick, cut away from Katafa, was going to die. It was not only the cutting away, but the manner of it that made his case hopeless.

Not only was he cut away from Katafa, but he was also divorced from his environment. His universe had consisted of Palm Tree and Karolin, the sea that held them, the sky above them—Katafa—nothing more.

Then Palm Tree had vanished and Karolin had been taken from him and nothing left but the great vacant world of the sea—that and the grief for the loss of Katafa.

He was going to die. He was dying. His very strength was killing him.

You sometimes find that, find that the power of a powerful man can be turned in against itself by grief or by disaster or disease.

He was going to die, as Aioma said, and Le Moan knew it.

He was dying because Katafa had been cut away from him.

The sound of the bow wash and the sound of the sea as it washed past the counter and the creak of rope and spar kept saying all this.

"Taori is dying because Katafa is no more with him—no more with him."

Meanwhile the island grew.

And now Aioma, cheered by the sight of this bit of land, began talking to Poni in a high-pitched voice. But Le Moan did not hear or heed what he said.

So, Taori was going to die. And it was for this that she had taken him away from Katafa. She had taken him away to have him to herself and he was turning into a dead man. To save him from death, she had given herself up to Peterson, to save him from death she had killed Carlin and risked being killed by Rantan, and yet he was going to die.

She could hear now the faint and far-away breathing of the surf on the reef

ahead mixed with the words of Aioma to Poni; and now harsh and complaining and sudden and near came the call of a gull, a land gull, flying as if racing them.

"Taori is dying because of Katafa—Katafa—Katafa," cried the gull, and Le Moan, following the bird with her eyes, let her gaze sweep back to the deck where Taori was lying, half leaning, the sun upon his bare back where the vertebræ showed and the ribs.

And louder now came the breathing of the surf on the reef, heavy like the breathing of a weary man.

"All life is weary and full of labor," sighed the surf, "and there is no more joy in the sun—and Taori is going to die because of Katafa."

"Katafa," creaked the cordage to the foam that went sighing aft.

The wind freshened and the main sheet tautened and the great sail bellied hard against the blue. The schooner, lifting to the swell, crushed into it with great sighs and long shudders like the sighing and shuddering of a dying man, and the atoll leaped larger to view, the palm trees standing clear of the water above the coral and the visible foam.

"The palm grows, the coral waxes, but man departs," whispered the wind, repeating the old rede of the Islands, and now the lagoon showed through the break, and Le Moan, watching and knowing that there, should they enter that lagoon, Taori would find his last home beneath the palm trees, scarcely knew of the terrible battle raging in the darkness of her mind. Knew only that she was all astray, helpless, useless, pulled this way and that between two opposing forces great as the powers of life and death; while louder now came the sound of the surf, louder and deeper and more solemn, till once again she was on the beach of Karolin, the stars were shining, the little conch shells whispering and chirruping to keep the evil spirits away, for Uta Matu the king was dying and his breathing came from the house like that.

Then, suddenly, with the cry of a dreamer awakened from some terrible dream, flinging out her arms to thrust away the dark spirit that had all but seized her soul and the body of Taori, Le Moan flung Poni from the wheel and seized the spokes, and the schooner, checking, turned, her canvas thrashing and clawing at the wind.

Turned, the island wheeling to the port quarter and the main boom flogging out with Aioma and Poni hauling at the sheet; turned and held, close hauled and steering for the west of north.

"Karolin!" cried Le Moan. "Aioma, the sight has come to me—the path is plain!"

"Karolin!" cried Aioma. "Taori, the spell is broken! We are free and the net of Le Juan is torn asunder and the spears of Uta blunted."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ROPE.

SAFE hidden among the bushes, Rantan listened. It would take a full hour yet before the schooner could make the break yet he listened as he lay, his rope beside him, his mind active as a squirrel in its cage.

They would search the atoll, they would hunt among the bushes—yet they might miss him.

Should they find him! His dark mind took fire at the thought. Wild ideas came to him of escaping into the lagoon, boarding the schooner, seizing a rifle and turning the situation. He was a white man, a match for a hundred Kanakas if only he could get a foothold above them, a rifle in his hands. In this he was right. As he had slain the women who had him safely bound, so had he the possibility in him to meet this last attack of fate, free himself, and dominating and destroying, make good at last.

Time passed. The reef spoke and the wind in the trees, but from the outer sea came nothing. He peeped through the bushes, getting a view of the reef line to northward. By now, surely, the topmasts of the schooner ought to show, close in as she must be—yet there was nothing.

He came out of the bushes like a lizard, stood erect and then came cautiously toward the higher coral where his outlook post was; literally on hands and feet he crawled, inch by inch, till the sea came in view, and then he crawled no longer. He stood erect.

Far off on the breezed-up sea the schooner, close-hauled, was standing away from the island.

Rantan could scarcely grasp the fact before his eyes. She had been making for him and now she was standing away.

She had not been searching for him, then. Was she after all the *Northern Light,* or had he been mistaken?

Her shape, her personality—that patch on the sail—well what of that? Other ships had patched canvas besides the *Northern Light.* He had been surely mistaken.

As she dwindled, dissolving in the wind, his hungry eyes followed her.

How fast she was going—faster than the *Northern Light* could sail close hauled.

He watched her till she was hull down, till her canvas showed like a midge dancing in the sea dazzle, till it vanished, taken by the round world into the viewless.

Then he came back to the trees.

Just as the ship had gone from the sea, so had his dream ship gone from his mind, taking hope with her, leaving him to his utter nakedness. He went to the old canoe that he had abused and villified in his hour of triumph; the sun had enlarged the crack, the forward outrigger pole had worked loose with the tossing in the swell, there was no paddle.

Yet she could talk to him, telling him of Nanu and Ona and their dead children, and of Carlin and Peterson, and beyond that of Soma and Chile and many a traverse to the beginning of that great traverse, his life.

He wished to be done with it all.

With the going of hope, the fact of his nakedness had seized him again.

It had never quite left him. The feeling of being without clothes had tinged even his dreams. He had fought against it and put it by, but it always returned, and now that hope had departed it was back and in a worse form. For now if he did not fight it hard, it was taking the form, not of discomfort and a sense of want, but of uneasiness, the terrible excitable uneasiness that the stomach can produce when disarranged—stomach fear.

He fought it down, returned to the trees and found that his worry about the ship and his own position had quite gone. He was worrying about nothing, for he was at grips with something new—something born of his naked skin and his stomach that had been feeding on uncooked food for so long, something that had been making for him for weeks, something that threatened to rise to a crisis and make him run—run—run.

Dropping to sleep that night he was brought awake by something that hit him a blow on the soles of his feet; twice this happened, and when he slept he was hunting for his clothes, and when he awoke it was to face another blue day, a day lovely but implacable as a sworn tormentor.

He walked the beach in his nakedness.

The gulls had begun to jeer at him now. Up to this they had left him severely alone, treating him with absolute indifference, but they had found him out at last; they were laughing at him all along the reef, talking about him and every now and then rising above the trees to look at him.

This idea held for a little and then passed, and he knew that he had been the victim of a delusion.

The gulls were quite indifferent to his presence.

Now among the trees and close to the waterside stood a gigantic aoa with raillike branches projecting like limbs across the sand and one big branch standing at right angles from the trunk some fifteen feet up.

Lying now among the tree shadows, and listening to the gulls' voices that had become normal, and the long roll of the unending breakers and the whispering movements of the robber crabs, Rantan fixed his eyes on this branch and saw himself in fancy swinging from it at the end of a rope, free of all his trouble, naked no longer. The rope he had woven and which was lying among the bushes had tied itself to the branch in his imagination.

He saw himself rising, hunting among the bushes and coming out of them with the rope in his hand, climbing the tree, fixing the rope to the limb, making the noose in the free end, placing the noose round his neck, dropping, kicking the air, dangling.

At noon a great gull sweeping across the lagoon from the leeward to the windward beach, seeing the dangling figure altered its line of flight as if deflected by a blow, and a high-going burgomaster, seeing the deflected flight of his brother in hunger circled and dropped like a stone to where Rantan was dangling and dancing on the wind. A naked figure yet capable, had the schooner put in, of boarding it by night, seizing command by treachery, sailing north and sweeping Karolin, for such is the power of the White Man. But Rantan was dead,

slain by the action of Le Moan in putting the schooner about. This was the third time she had sacrificed herself for the sake of Taori, the third time that she had countered danger and death with love.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE GREEN SHIP.

LE MOAN steered. Tireless and heedless of time as when she had brought the schooner first to Karolin, she kept the wheel all that day and through the night, giving it over to Poni for short intervals, while Dick slept.

She had given life back to him and it was almost as though she had given him her own life, for the world around her had become as the world wherein ghosts move; disembodied spirits, not dead but no longer connected with earth.

Before setting eyes on Taori she had lived on the southern beach of Karolin, lonely, cut off with Aioma and the others who had no interests beyond the interests of the moment; as she lived so might she have died, neither happy nor unhappy, without pity and without love or care for the morrow or thought of the past.

Then Taori had come, not as a man but as a light greater than the sun, a light that struck through the darkness of her being bringing to birth a new self that was his—that was he.

She had braved death and the unknown—everything—only to find herself at the end face to face with death, and death saying to her: "He shall be mine—or Katafa's."

Like the woman who stood before Solomon, she had to choose between the destruction of the thing she loved and the handing of it to a rival to be lost to her forever, to see its arms clinging to another, and its love given to another, and its life becoming part of the life of another; and she chose the greater sacrifice, not because she was Le Moan, a creature extraordinary or supernormal, but just because at heart she was a woman.

A woman, acting, when brought to the great test, less as an individual than as a part of the spirit of womanhood. The spirit alterless through the ages and unalterable. The spirit so often hidden by the littleness of the flesh, so seldom put to the heroic test, so absolutely certain in its answer to it. For when a woman really loves she becomes a mother even though she never give birth to a child.

Aioma, who had slept through the night on the deck, spread like a starfish, awoke as the sun was rising.

Poni was at the wheel. Le Moan had gone below. The cabin had no fears for her now, and she had said to Poni just as the sun was rising, and pointing into the west of north: "You will see the lagoon light there."

Dick, by the galley, was still sleeping; Tahuku and Tirai were the watch.

The beauty of that sunrise on that blue and lonely sea, beyond word or brush, was unseen by Aioma.

"It will be over there," said Poni, pointing ahead. "It does not show yet." Aioma went forward and stood looking into the northwest. No, it did not show yet, nor would it show till the sun was twice its diameter above the horizon. Aioma, listening to the slash of the bow breaking the water and fanned by the draft from the head sails, having swept the sky found his eye caught by something far across the sea and right in their course. It looked at first glance like a rock, but at once his birdlike eyes resolved it into what it was—a ship, but with no sail set.

The canoe builder glanced back along the deck past the sleeping figure of Dick to the figure of Poni at the wheel; then he turned his eyes again upon the far-off ship, and now in the sky to the north above and beyond the ship lay the something for which he had been on the lookout. The lagoon light of Karolin, almost imperceptible, but there just in the position where Le Moan had said it would be.

The something he had waited and longed for, but spoiled, almost threatened by this apparition of a ship.

Aioma wanted to have nothing more to do with ships. This traverse in the schooner had turned him clean back toward canoes; for days past, though he had said no word on the matter, all his ancestors had been hammering at the door of his mind shouting, "Aioma, you are a fool! You have forsaken the canoes of your forefathers for this ship, and see how it has betrayed you! And why? Because it is the invention of the white man, the cursed papalagi who have always brought trouble to Karolin. If we could get at you, Aioma,

we would stake you out on the reef for the sharks to eat. You deserve it."

He had said nothing of this, because Aioma never confessed to a fault.

Well, there was another ship, blocking the way to Karolin and sure to bring trouble.

Civilization and trouble had come to be convertible ideas in the mind of this old gentleman who, although he did not know the English word that represents greed, brutality, disease, drink and robbery dressed in self-righteousness, had sensed the fact that the white man always brought trouble.

Well, there it was straight before him heading him off from Karolin. What should he do? Turn and run away from it? Oh, no. Aioma, who had fought the big rays and who was never happier than when at grips with a conger, was not the person to turn his back on danger or threat, especially now with Karolin in view.

This thing lay straight in his path, as if daring him, and he accepted the challenge. They had the speak sticks; there were eight of them, not including Le Moan, and if it came to a fight—well, he was ready.

Without rousing Dick, he called the fellows up from below, pointed out the ship and then stood watching as she grew.

Now she stood on the water plainly to be seen, a brig with canvas stowed as if in preparation for a blow. If any canvas had been set it must have been blown away by the wind, for she showed nothing but her sticks as she lay rolling gently to the swell.

Tahuku, who had the instinct of a predatory gull coupled with the eye of a hawk, suddenly laughed:

"She is empty," said Tahuku. "She has no men on her. It is a dead turtle, Aioma, you have called on us to spear."

Aioma, hit by the same truth, ran and roused Dick, who on waking sprang to his feet. He was renewed by sleep and hope, a creature reborn, and as he stood with the others he scarcely noticed the ship, his eyes fixed on the light of Karolin.

Poni at the wheel called Le Moan, and she came up from below and stood watching while the brig, now close to them, showed her nakedness and desolation beneath the burning light of morning.

Old-fashioned, even for those days, high-pooped, heavily sparred and with an upjutting bowsprit, her hull of a ghastly faded green rolled with a weary movement to the undulations of the swell, showing now the weed-grown copper of her sheathing, now a glimpse of the deserted deck. There were no boats at the davits and now as the current altered her position, giving her a gentle pitch, came a sound faint against the wind, the clapping of her deck-house door.

Aioma, turning, ran aft and stood beside Poni at the wheel, giving him directions. The canoe builder, urged by his ancestors and his hatred of the papalagi, had evolved an idea from his active brain, and Dick, who had let his eyes wander from the brig to the far-off light of Karolin, heard suddenly the thrashing of canvas as the steersman brought the schooner up into the wind.

Aioma was going to board the ship. He was shouting directions to Tahuku and the others. They ran to the falls, the boat was lowered, and in a moment he was away, shouting like a boy. Scrambling like a monkey, when they hitched on to the broad channel plates, he gained the deck and stood looking round him.

Aye, that was a place! Bones of dead men picked clean by the birds lay here and there, and a skull, polished like a marble, rolled and moved and rotated on the planking to the pitch of the hull, the clicking of the lax rudder chain, and the clapping of the deck-house door.

He had brought his fire stick with him and its little bow. From the deck of the schooner they watched him as he stood looking about him. Then, turning, he darted into the deck house.

He was there a long time, perhaps ten minutes, and when he came out a puff of smoke came after him. Holding the door open, he looked in till another puff of smoke, garnished with sparks, hit him in the face. Then having done a little dance on the deck and kicked the skull into the starboard scupper, he dropped into the boat and came back to the schooner, singing.

The boat was hoisted in, the schooner put on her course and the smoking brig dropped far astern. But Aioma, still flushed with his work and victory, heeded nothing.

He sat on the coaming of the saloon skylight, singing.

He sang of the bones of the dead men and the skull he had kicked and the ship he had fired and the cursed papalagi whose

work he had destroyed. Then with a great whoop he curled up and went asleep, undreaming that the papalagi might yet have their revenge; and Dick, to whom Aioma, and the ship astern flaring horribly in the sunlight, were as nothing, watched from the bow the steady growing beacon of Karolin in the sky.

There was Katafa.

His soul flew ahead of the schooner like a bird, flew back and flew forward again calling on the wind; and the wind, hearing, strengthened, so that a little after midday the far treetops of the southern beach came to view, and now faint and far away the song of the great atoll.

Birds flew to meet them and birds passed them flying toward the land, and as the sun began its downward climb to the water the break began to show away on the port bow, and Le Moan, pushing Tahuku, who was at the wheel, aside, prepared to take them in.

For only Le Moan knew the danger of the break when the tide was ebbing swiftly as now.

The waters were against them. It seemed the last feeble effort of fate to separate Dick from the being he loved.

The vast lagoon was pouring out like a river. It was past full spate but the swirl was enough, if the helmsman failed, to drive them on the coral.

Now they were in the grip of it, the schooner bucking like a restive horse, now steady, now making frantic efforts to turn and dash out to sea again; Aioma in the bow crying directions, Le Moan heeding him as little as she heeded the crying of the gulls.

Now they had stolen fighting between the piers. The break on either side of them seemed immensely broad and the grand sweep of the outgoing water lit by the westering sun showed with scarcely a ripple to where it boiled against the piers; gulls flighting above it showed as in a mirror, yet it was flowing at a six-knot clip.

The schooner, with every sail drawing, seemed not to move, yet she moved, turning the mirror to a feather of foam at her cutwater and a river of beaten gold in her wake. The piers dropped astern, the current slackened, the lagoon was conquered and lay before them a blaze of light from the beach sands to its northern viewless barrier.

Katafa was sleeping. She who slept scarcely at all by night and whose eyes by day were always fixed toward the sea, was sleeping when the voice of Kanoa roused her:

"They come, Katafa, they come!"

Raising herself on one hand, she saw the sunset light through the trees and the form of Kanoa making off again to the beach, his voice drifting back to her as he ran:

"They come, Katafa, they come!"

Then where the whole village was waiting, she found herself on the sands, the lagoon before her and on the lagoon the schooner bravely sailing in the sunset blaze, the sails full and now shivering as, curving to her anchorage, the wind left them and the rumble of the anchor chain running out came across the water, rousing her to the fact that what she saw could not be; that what she saw was a ship, but not the ship that had taken Taori away, the ship she had watched and waited for till hope was all but dead and life all but darkness. It could not be! It could not be that she should return like this, so sure, so quietly, so real, the dream ship that held her heart and soul, her love, her very life.

The boat putting off now was a phantom, surely, and Taori as he sprang on to the sands and seized her in his embrace was unreal as the world fading around her, till his lips seized her up from twilight to the heaven of assurance.

"Taori has come back," cried the women, forgetting him as they turned to the men who were standing by the boat, unheeding Le Moan, who stood, her work done, a being uncaring, seeing nothing—not even Kanoa, crouched on the sands half dead with the beatitude of the vision before him.

CHAPTER XL.

ARIPA! ARIPA!

"LISTEN!" said the wind.

From her place among the trees where Le Moan had settled herself like a hare in its form she heard the silky whisper of the sands and the voice of the beach and the wind in the leaves above bidding her to listen.

Far-away voices came from the mammee apple where the men of the schooner and their wives were making merry, and now and then, the faintest thing in the world of sound, a click and creak from Nan on

his post above the house where Taori lay in the arms of Katafa.

To Le Moan all that was nothing. She had bandied death in exchange for Taori; all her interest in life, all her desires. She had not even the desire to destroy herself. The fire that had been her life burned low and smoldered. It would never blaze again.

"Listen!" said the wind

Something moved among the trees. It was Kanoa. Kanoa, his heart beating against his ribs, his hands outstretched, touching the tree boles.

She saw him now as he came toward her like a phantom from the star-showered night, and she knew why he came, nor did she move as he dropped on his knees beside her. All that was nothing now to Le Moan.

Since the night when he had saved her from Rantan, he had been closer to her than the other men of the schooner, but still only a figure—almost an abstraction.

To-night, now, he was a little more than that, as a dog might be to a lonely person, and as he poured out his heart in whispers she listened without replying, let him put his arms around her and take her lips; all that was nothing now to her whose heart would never quicken again.

The wind died, day broke and the wind of morning blew.

Joy and the sun leaped on Karolin. Joy for Katafa, who came from the house to look at a world renewed, for the women whose husbands had returned, for the men, for the children. Joy for Kanoa, his soul shouting in him: "She is mine, she is mine!" and for Aioma, the lust of revenge and destruction alive and dancing in his heart.

He had killed the green ship; this morning he would kill the schooner. The cursed ship—that he had yet loved so dearly only a week ago—was doomed to die.

He hated it now with an entirely new and delicious brand of hatred and if he could have staked it out on the reef for the sharks to devour, so would he have done.

It had given him the scare of his life. It had all but snapped him away from Karolin. It had caused ancestral voices to rise cursing him for his folly and treachery toward his race. It had brought up visions of the Spanish ship, the brutal whalemen, Carlin, Rantan, and the whole tribe of the papalagi. It was theirs and it had got to die.

Besides it was going to give him the chance to set fire to things. He was still licking his chops over the firing of the green ship and the joy of incendiarism was about to be recaptured.

It was the last blaze up of the youth in him. He called the village together and explained matters.

The schooner was accursed. His father, Amatu, had explained it all in a dream, commanding him, Aioma, to attend to this matter. The thing had to burn. If it did not burn worse would befall Karolin.

"Burn, burn! *Aripa, aripa!*" cried the boys.

"*Aripa!*" shrieked the women; the men took tongue and the cry went up like the crackle of flame.

Katafa listened, loathing the schooner. The cry went up from her heart.

Dick stood dumb. Dumb as a man hesitating before cutting away the very last strand connecting him with his past. Dumb as a man about to renounce his race, though of his race and of the civilized world from whence he had sprung he knew nothing—nothing save the fact of the cannon shot of the *Portsoy* long years ago, the white-led Melanesians of Palm Tree, the ruffianism of Carlin and Rantan and the rage in his own breast for adventure that had nearly separated him forever from Katafa.

Then, suddenly, he joined in the shout:

"*Aripa! Aripa! Aripa!*"

Forgetting his chieftainship he raced with the others to help to push off the boat bearing Aioma to his work.

Then he stood with Katafa watching. Near them, and beside Kanoa, stood Le Moan.

They watched the canoe builder clamber on board like a monkey. They saw him dancing on the deck like a maniac, insulting the ropes and spars. Then they heard the ship's bell go *clang, clang* as he made her talk for the last time.

He vanished down the fo'c's'le and came out escorted by a cloud of smoke; down the hatch of the saloon from whose skylight presently a blue-gray wreath uprose and circled on the faint breeze.

Then he was on deck again and away in the boat, and the schooner was burning fore and aft.

Wreathing herself in mist that cleared

now to show two tall columns of smoke rising and spreading and forming spirals on the wind, red flames like the tongues of hounds licking out of the portholes, flames that ran spiritlike about the old tinder-dry deck. The main boom was burning now, the topping lifts were snapped, flames curling round the masts like climbing snakes, and now, like the rumble of a boiler, came the rumble of the fire as it spread in her, breaking through bulkheads, seizing the cargo and splitting the decks.

The sandalwood was burning and the incense of it spread across the lagoon to the white-robed congregation of the gulls wheeling and giving tongue above the reef; burning and blazing till the decks gave utterly and the crashing masts fell sheeted in flame like tall men tumbling to their ruin amid the roar of a burning city.

The flames devoured the smoke and the sun devoured the flames. Forty-foot jets that leaped tonguelike sunward, fell and leaped again. The great conflagration gave no light, it roared and the consuming wood, pine and deal, teak and sandal filled the air with the sound of bursting shells and the rattle of musketry, but the sun of that blazing day ate the light of the flames so that they showed stripped of effulgence, stark naked; ghosts, cairngorm colored, wine colored, spark spangled, illuminating nothing.

And now the port bulwarks breaking in one piece from the stern to amidships fell in a blaze, and the anchor chain, running out, broke from its attachments and she was adrift miraculously on the flood, now bow to the break, now broadside, as the current took her, blazing as she drifted, pieces of her ever going; dipping now by the bow, slipping from sight in a veil of steam as the water rushing in fought the fire and the fire fought the water and was killed. And now there was nothing but driftwood so far out as scarcely to be seen, and a tiny cloud that vanished and a perfume of sandalwood that lingered in the air, ghostlike—gone.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE GREEN SICKNESS.

ALL that remained of her was the boat, the lesser of the two boats which Aioma had saved for the moment.

The island was without a single canoe, and he intended to build one as swiftly as might be for the fishing; that being done he would destroy the boat and so obliterate the last trace of the cursed papalagi.

So he set to work and the work progressed, Le Moan helping with the others. She worked at the making of the sail; Kanoa helping her, happy, ignorant of her utter deadness to all things, yet sometimes wondering.

Sometimes this woman he had taken to his heart seemed indeed a spirit or a lost soul as she had seemed to him that time before the killing of Carlin. Always she was remote from him in mind, untouchable as the gulls he had chased as a child on Soma. Yet she was his and she let him love her and, "Time," said the heart of Kanoa, "will bring her to me and fold her arms around me."

Her strangeness and indifference increased his passion; a child and yet a man, he moved now in a wonder world; he was always singing when alone and there was something in his voice that made it different from the voices of the others, so that when the women heard him singing in the groves they said, "That is Kanoa."

And despite his happiness in her and his love for her and his embraces, despite the joy of new life that filled Karolin and the beauty of the nights in which Taori and Katafa walked together on the reef, never once did the desire come to Le Moan to destroy herself. All that was nothing to her now.

She had torn out her heart and nothing else mattered, even life.

"And to-morrow or next day," one morning said Aioma, "the canoe will be ready and we will burn the lesser ship as we burned the greater. Ah hai, what is this, the reef is lifting before my eyes! Look you, Tahuku!"

But Tahuku saw nothing. The reef was solid as of old and the sun was shining on it and he said so.

The canoe builder shut his eyes and when he opened them again the reef had ceased to lift, but he was weary. Bells rang in his ears and his hands were hot and dry, and now after a while and toward midday one of the papalagi—so it seemed to him—had seized him from behind and tied a band round his head, screwing it so tight that he would have screamed had he been an ordinary man.

He lay on the ground and as he lay a woman, one of the wives of Poni, came running, panting as she ran.

"I burn, I burn!" cried the woman. "Aioma, my sight is going from me! I burn, I burn!" She fell on the ground, and Katafa, running to her, raised her head.

Aioma, turning on his side, tried to rise but could not. Then he laughed.

Then he began to sing. He was fighting the papalagi and killing them, the Spaniards of long ago and the whalemen and Carlin and Rantan His song was a song of victory, yet he was defeated. The white men had got him with the white man's disease. Measles stood on the beach of Karolin, for the green ship with its cargo of labor had fallen to the plague of measles, and Aioma in boarding it had sealed his own doom.

It was Poni who guessed the truth. He had seen measles before, and now, remembering the ship, he cried out that they were undone, that the devils from the green ship had followed and seized them and that they must die.

He had no need to say that.

Aioma only lasted a day, and the lagoon took him; by then the whole population was down, all but Taori, Katafa, Le Moan and Kanoa.

Kanoa had taken the disease at Vana Vana many years ago and was immune; the others, saved, perhaps, by the European blood in their veins, still resisted it.

The people died on the coral or cast themselves burning into the lagoon and were seized by the sharks.

And to Le Moan, as she watched them, it was not the green sickness that did the work, but she herself.

She had brought this curse on Karolin. She had brought the schooner and the white men, she had taken the schooner to meet the green ship, it was the mother of her mother, Le Juan, who was reaching through her to slay and slay. Aioma in a lucid interval before he died had seized her by the hands and told her this, but she had no need of the telling of Aioma. She knew. And she watched, helpless and uncaring. She could do nothing, and the people passed, vanished like ghosts, died like flies, while the wind blew gently and the sun shone and the gulls flshed and dawn came ever beautiful as of old through the Gates of Morning.

CHAPTER XLII.

"I GO TO SAVE HIM."

ONE night when the disease seemed past and only ten people were left of all those who had watched the burning of the schooner, Le Moan, sleeping by Kanoa, was awakened by Katafa.

Katafa was weeping.

She seized Le Moan by the hands and raising her without waking Kanoa, led her to the house above which Nan still stood frizzy-headed in the moonlight.

In the house on a mat Dick was lying, tossing his head from side to side and talking in a strange tongue.

Talking the language of his early childhood, calling out to Kearney whom he had long forgotten, but whom he remembered now.

The green sickness had seized Dick. Resisted for days and days it had him at last.

Le Moan stood in the doorway, and the moon, looking over her shoulder, lit the form on the mat. The reef spoke and the wind in the trees, but she heard nothing, saw nothing and for a moment felt nothing.

Taori was lying on the mat talking in a strange tongue, turning his head from side to side.

Then, as a person all but drowned, all but dead, comes slowly back to life and comes in agony, Le Moan began to feel the world come round her once more, the world she had known before she tore her heart out.

Taori was going to die. And the heart she had torn out was back again and the love that had filled it.

Taori was going to die, to die as the others had died and as surely, and as certainly through her who had brought this curse on Karolin and through whom the hand of Le Juan was still striking.

So great was the power of this thought that it fought with and overcame the passionate desire to fling herself on her knees beside him and take him in her arms; so great was its power that it almost drove the thought of him away before the crowding recollections it brought up of her own disastrous history in which she had brought evil to every one. To Peterson, to Rantan, to Carlin, to Poni, to Tahuku, to Tirai —all whom she had touched or come in contact with. To Aioma—and lastly to Taori.

"Taori is going to die"—the wind sighed it above him, it came mixed with the sobbing of Katafa and the voice of the beach with the rambling voice of Taori himself, talking, talking, talking, as he wandered on the reef of memory with Kearney in a land that knew not Katafa.

"Ai amasu, Taori"—and she dared not bid him good-by. To save him she must go leaving him untouched, for the net of Le Juan was not yet torn, nor the spears of Uta blunted.

Even to look at him was fatal, yet she could not tear her eyes away.

"Ai amasu, Taori"—a great breaker on the coral cried it to the night and broke the spell and turned her toward the weeping Katafa.

"Oh, Katafa," said Le Moan, speaking in a voice clear but scarcely above a whisper, "Taori will not die. I go to save him; the nets are spread for him but I will break them—I, the daughter of La Jonabon, the daughter of Le Juan."

Even as she spoke the voice from the house quieted.

"I who have brought this evil." Katafa heard her voice, not knowing what she said, for the change in the voice of the sick man was speaking to her.

Gliding into the house she lay down beside him, her cool hand upon his restless brow.

Le Moan turned to the beach through the trees. Night rested on Karolin and the moon showed the sands far stretching and filled with the silky whisper of the wind.

Far to the right lay the canoe all but completed, to the left the boat of the schooner. Le Moan came to the boat, the cursed boat of the papalagi.

The tide was full, almost touching the keel. It was a light boat, the sands were firm, and evil though it was it could not resist her. Afloat, with an oar, she drove it out, and raising the sail and shipping the rudder gave the sail to the wind.

The wind was favorable for the break, the ebb was beginning to run, all things were helping her now because she had conquered. Death could do no more against her, for she was his.

To the right lay the moonlit sands of the southern beach from which she had sailed that morning with Peterson and with a dread in her heart that she did not feel now; before her lay the widening break with the first of the ebb racing through it to the sea. A night-flying gull cried above her as the breakers loudened on the outer beach and fell behind her as the wind and tide swept her out to the sea.

Far out, far beyond return by drift or chance, she brailed the little sail, unstepped the mast and cast mast and sail to the water, cast the oars to the water, and lying down gave her soul into the hands of that Power through which her mother's people had gained release when, weary of the world, they chose to turn their faces from the sun.

Northwest of the Paumotus men talk of a vast atoll island half fabulous, half believed in. Shipmasters have sighted a palm line by day, reefless, because, steer as they will, some sort of current has never allowed them to raise the reef, and by night the pearling schooners have heard the breathing of a beach uncharted, and always on the sound a wind has followed blowing them away from the mysterious land.

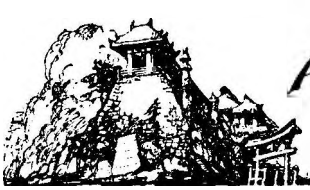
Karolin—the island of dreams, sealed by the soul of Le Moan to the civilization that the children of Lestrange and their child escaped from, a beach that the pleasant sunshine alone lights for me; where Aioma shapes his logs and where I watch, undisturbed by the noise of cities, the freshness we have lost and the light that comes alone through the Gates of Morning.

THE END.

More of Mr. Stacpoole's work will appear in early issues.

HOW CIVILIZATION WORKS

THERE is in the mountains of western North Carolina a county which, prior to "the coming of civilization" in the shape of a railroad and hard-surfaced highways, had recorded in all its two hundred and fifty years of history only thirty-five cases of burglary and grand larceny combined. During the five years of its "enlightenment" that number has been multiplied several times over. Most of the offenders have been newcomers.



At Kamakura

by

Berton Braley

THE motors wait outside the gate
Of Buddha's shrine at Kamakura;
The tram cars clang and jolt and bang
Along their tracks at Kamakura;
An engine's whistle stabs the air,
But Buddha keeps his counsel there.
Amid these varied modern schemes
He sits with changeless poise, and dreams;
Great Buddha dreams at Kamakura.

The temple gongs call faithful throngs
Who seek this shrine at Kamakura;
The priest intones his chants, and drones
An age-old prayer at Kamakura;
He tends the shrine, and now and then
Sells little Buddhas for a yen.
He has an eye for trade, it seems,
While brooding Buddha sits and dreams,
Dreams on and on at Kamakura.

What visions rise before the eyes
Of Buddha there at Kamakura?
Does life seem strange with all its change
As years go by at Kamakura?
Or has he found the goal he sought—
Nirvana? End of deed and thought!
About him now the great world teems,
We know not what may be his dreams,
Great Buddha's dreams at Kamakura!

Galahad of Lost Eden

By William West Winter

Author of "An Irrigation Project," "The Lady of Fossil Creek," Etc.

VI.—"BLUE JOHN" WAKES UP.

The knightly outlaw from Showlow way espouses the cause of his leagured love once too often.

I'VE done heard it said—remarked the old teamster as he sucked on his pipe after the evening's chores had been got out of the way—that hell hasn't no fury like a woman scorned, and while I ain't disputing those dictums none whatever, I'm here to embellish it a whole lot by adding words to this effect: "No serpent's tooth is sharper than a female who's planning matrimony."

Take Miss Hilda Raffe, for an example. I have related to you how she finally inveigles George Rayfield of Camp Verde into declaring himself in unmistakable and irrevocable terms, and I don't claim that she exhibits a large degree of cunning in this maneuver, which, after all, is more due to his reluctance to keep on paying her a large monthly honorarium for running his cash register at the Montezuma Restaurant than it is to any plots or tactics of hers. Nevertheless, when it appears that her troubles have only commenced when she has roped and hog-tied George so he can't escape without paying damages, she certainly sets to work industrious to circumvent the fates that are roughlocking her ambitions that a way.

Their problem, as you recall, revolves around the activities of "Blue John" Adams, who has given notice to all and sundry that he lays claim to the affections of Miss Raffe, having, so to speak, a prescriptive right to them by virtue of the Young Lochinvar stunt he pulls in eloping with her from her nuptials with Bishop Swanson. In enforcing these claims he has sacrificed one lover of the lady, caused another to disappear complete and, possibly, murdered him, while he's also held up a stage and chased a lawyer who's getting her a divorce plumb off the map. Hilda can't marry George until she gets her marriage to Swanson annulled, and Blue John allows that, as long as he's the subject of interest on the part of officers of the law and therefore not competent to court the lady in orthodox style, he prefers that she remain wedded to Swanson in name only, and he frowns on any annulment proceedings a whole lot.

Furthermore, even if she is legally free to wed, she don't dare do it. At least

George Rayfield don't dare, because he has no desires in the direction of leaving his bride widowed at the hands of Blue John before she is out of her wedding silks and into her housekeeping apron. Both of them believe that Blue John is deadly all same like a stinging lizard and that he hasn't no scruples whatever regarding indiscriminate bloodshed.

Personally, I have no doubts that if she'd sent word to John that she loves another and would like to crowd up to the altar with her choice, he'd have reverted to his usual gloom, given her his blessing and sent a wedding present; but she nor George Rayfield don't know this nor would they have believed it if some one had told them. They persist in their delusions concerning him and allow him to remain befogged regarding the state of Hilda's own sentiments, and, in the meantime, the latter wastes a heap of cerebration in cooking up a scheme that is plumb infernal.

Since they don't dare proceed in their designs until Blue John is disposed of, it naturally occurs to Hilda that the best way to get rid of him is to land him behind the bars, where he can't horn in on her domesticity any at all. She proposes this to George Rayfield and although it strikes him at first as being contrary to the code as usually observed, still, his desires being further stimulated by the arrival of another pay day, he yields reluctant and lends himself to the nefarious plot.

While this is going on Blue John remains holed up in a den he has made for himself down on Fossil Creek below the old dam, where he intends to winter. No one knows he is there, because when he has the run in with "Windy Mose" Scott and busts that plutocrat's shoulder for him, he isn't recognized by any of the riders who chase him down to Fossil Creek. And you can gamble that Windy Mose don't go inviting any inquiries either because, at Blue John's instigation, Miss Theba Willing has gone cantering right over to the Verde and laid an information against him for branding her work horses without the formality of first getting a bill of sale for them. Likewise his threats against her and the way he endeavors to enforce them get out and, although the natural impulse of the natives is to deplore the activities of nesters and homesteaders, they aren't so low-minded as to favor any such plays as these. Consequently Windy Mose finds himself so unpopular as to be strictly on the defensive, and he don't make any further attempts to interfere with her fencing her own water all she has a mind to.

Rumors have also spread around that Fossil Creek has developed suddenly into a commercial proposition again, since at this time the difficulties which once attended the long-distance transmission of current have been overcome, and now that there is a greater head of water in the creek capitalistic parties are beginning to sit up and bend an eye in that direction. A lone female who has to give music lessons to Mormon offspring in order to purchase her weekly chuck is one thing and quite different from the same young lady when she appears as the sole proprietor of one of the best hydro-electric propositions in the Territory. For these reasons as set forth, Windy Mose finds himself pretty completely dehorned and makes overtures for a settlement of outstanding accounts which is satisfactory to Theba.

But Blue John doesn't escape another indictment for all of that, though it don't rest on his shooting of Mose. They have discovered the body of "Whistling William" Griffiths over by Heber and identified what is left of it through the dentist who makes his gold teeth. Circumstantial evidence that Blue John shoots this ranger through the back is strong enough to stir a heap of activity and the grand jury up at Flagstaff loses no time in returning an indictment for murder in the first degree, thus adding Coconino to the list of counties in which he is persona non grata. He is already proscribed in Gila, Navajo and Yavapai for various crimes and misdemeanors.

During the winter, except when curious visitors come down to Fossil Creek to observe the new outlet for water which Blue John has blown in the cliff, he spends his time fencing in Theba's land, digging her a ditch and laterals, and plowing the fields for the spring planting. In all of this he has the status of a slave, since he don't get any wages nor anything but his fodder, such place to sleep as he can find in a cave down the cañon and a cold and haughty attitude from his owner, the same being the said Miss Theba Willing. But Blue John doesn't complain. He regards it as due to his chivalrous pretenses to rest a whole lot meek under this abuse.

In a part of his exile in Fossil Creek he has the company of "Panhandle Pete," who has no place to go to any more than Blue John has, since there is several feet of snow up in the Mogollons and Lost Eden is thereby closed to them. But Pete remains sullen and restless and no fit company for any one as he broods on the way Miss Hilda Raffe has treated him and how she endeavors to betray him to the law. He isn't afflicted with the chivalrous sentiments that infest Blue John and he pines a heap for revenge. However, he don't see any way to get it since his spleen don't carry him far enough to go out and visit her iniquities on Hilda in person, and he don't at this time know anything about her entanglements with George Rayfield.

He does know, however, that Blue John loves Hilda a whole lot, and that thought keeps him from explaining why he is bitter, since he savvies the speed with which John can fan a gun and he don't want any battle with him that he can honorably avoid. So he just glooms around at the work and looks like his life holds no more attractions to him until Miss Theba takes pity on him and demands to know whyever he mourns so constant. Blue John is not around so he tells her of the perfidy of Hilda; at which she evinces no surprise, but considerable satisfaction.

"Ah!" she says, "I knew she was that sort of person when I first set eyes on her. You ought to congratulate yourself that you weren't inveigled totally by this designing Jezebel, to the point of matrimony. Which your estate in that case would have been a heap worse than it could possibly be if you were serving a life sentence at St. Quentin. Have you informed John Adams of the iniquity of his lady love as she exhibits it to you?"

"I have not," says Pete promptly. "I never yet refused a sporting risk but I don't go chewing the muzzle off a loaded six-shooter just for the sensation it's liable to give me. Which Blue John shakes the lead out of his gun too fast for me to get familiar with his prejudices."

"Pooh!" says Miss Theba loftily. "He isn't half as dangerous as he thinks he is and of late he has been considerably tamed of what wildness he boasts formerly. Hasn't he promised me he ceases to commit murder on slight provocation? Then what are you afraid of?"

"I'm not afraid of nothing," said Pete, "and I don't care much what happens to me. But I don't hanker even now, to go and stir up any sleeping Mexican jaguars just to see what they will do when they are awake. Which if Blue John discovers that I go courting his calico, he lights on me without no previous negotiations whatever and I have to commit manslaughter or suicide, one or the other."

"Nevertheless," says Miss Theba firmly, "it is certainly due to him to know on what sort of female he fixes his affections and if you won't tell him I feel that it's my bounden duty to enlighten him."

"Which you may if you insist on it," says Pete, forlornly, "but I ask you to give me an even break on a get-away and refrain from these disclosures until to-morrow noon by which time I'll have burned me a trail away from here for twenty or thirty miles. Otherwise, I'm afraid that there will be combat around here which may end in deceasing some one for whom you harbor tender if unreciprocated feelings."

"I'd thank you to explain that insinuation, Mr. Panhandle Pete!" says Theba, boiling right up. But Pete shakes his head.

"I own up to being grateful to you a whole lot and likewise to a sneaking softness toward this Blue John," he says. "Which is why I buries my pride and depart before I'm forced into a compromising situation. I got eyes in my head and likewise I've studied women. Which you wouldn't be half so severe with this unregenerate shorthorn if he wasn't some precious in your sight."

"I agree with you that you'd better go if you can't stay here without voicing follies of that nature," says Theba, with frigidity. "As if I'd take any notice whatever, except out of pity, for a confessed holdup and criminal!"

Whereupon she throws her head right up in the air and marches off in dignity, but Pete has lived down most of his illusions and he doesn't take any chances. That evening he packs his war bags in secret and when morning dawns he has made tracks to parts approximately unknown.

Come noon next day, when Blue John sidles in for his chuck, after a morning's work on the plow, he is greeted by Miss Theba with suppressed and portentous triumph. She is evidently waiting for him to say something to give her an opening but

he is so wrapped in his gloom that he doesn't notice how she is steamed up to break the news to him. So, while he eats regardless, she is forced to boil over without encouragement.

"I suppose you're still thinking of your blond ladylove," she remarks casual; and Blue John heaves a sigh.

"Which I do that continuous and without remission," he asserts. Miss Theba releases audible sniffs in reply.

"Maybe you'd think more or less of her and somewhat different if you knew what plays she has been making of late," she says. "You might ask your friend Pete what she does to him, if you're any ways curious."

"What she does to Pete?" repeats Blue John. "Whatever does she do to Pete, seeing I can't make no queries to him, since he's already pulled his freight last night, taking his war bags with him? Consequently, I'd be obliged if you'd elucidate however that shorthorn comes to be mixed in this here tragedy."

"You don't mean to tell me he didn't enlighten you before he goes?" asks Theba, innocently. "But, then, I suppose he didn't want to injure your sensibilities none. I've noticed that Pete is soft hearted and considerate that a way."

"Agreeing that he is," says Blue John ominously, "it's an even gamble that if he's been exhibiting softness of heart or other sentiments in the vicinity of that lady, he's sure due to encounter something devastating. Kindly explain, ma'am."

Miss Theba acts as though she were reluctant a whole lot but she allows the story of Pete's excursions into romance to be dragged from her by degrees. To her disappointment, however, when he has heard it all, this hopeless Blue John Adams merely breathes a sigh of relief.

"Which I thought maybe he succeeds in inveigling that lady through her ignorance and unsophistication," he remarks, "but it seems she is plenty sharp enough to discern the points of a man. Naturally she acts as she does, when this highbinding holdup comes pirooting around exhibiting his degraded sentiments to her, and she deserves more success in her play than she gets. Which if I'd known she wanted him laid by the heels I'd have forefooted him myself and dragged him into the cuartel for her."

"You mean to say," demands Miss Willing, with blazing eyes, "that you excuse this treachery of that female toward a man who was only doing her the compliment of courting her? And a man who is your friend, too!"

"He isn't any friend of mine," says Blue John, "and I certainly excuse her for using her woman's wit to bulge out of an embarrassing situation. While I wouldn't commend any such maneuvers on the part of a man, with a lone female the case is a heap different."

"Well!" says Miss Theba. "Well! I only hope that the day may not come when you have an opportunity to experience maneuvers of the same nature with yourself as a victim. If she'd do that to one man you can make up your mind that she'd do the same to others."

"I hope she does," says Blue John. "Whenever any shorthorn forces her hand that a way she is entitled to defend herself in any way open to her."

Then Theba stares at him for some time, and at last says, slowly:

"So! And I believed you when you told me things. I don't believe them any longer though. A man who's as besotted as you is capable of anything. You're big enough fool, I now believe, even to have killed that ranger, and your denial thereof don't convince me at all. I regard you as capable of anything egregious, no matter what it may be."

"I never killed no ranger," says Blue John helplessly.

"So you *say!*" says she, sarcastically. "But go and declare your innocence to that tow-headed damsel over to the Verde and don't bother me with it any. I don't believe you have sense enough even to tell the truth and so *I* don't credit nothing whatever that you say. If you'd follow your friend, the train robber, you'd relieve me of an embarrassment."

Blue John gets up from his chair and bows in the way he had.

"Ma'am," says he, "your words are law as always. I regret your loss of confidence in me and the harshness of your judgments. I obey your injunctions regarding my departure and I won't come back none whatever until I've dragged proof along to show you I don't massacre any rangers without reason nor provocation. Likewise I hope to bring you the scalp of this unregenerate Panhandle Pete after teaching him not to

go horning in on female affections that are already bespoke."

Whereupon he goes forth and throws the hull onto his *caballo*, packs his war bags and departs after Panhandle Pete. He trails up through Pine Valley and over by Payson, where he hears that a person answering Pete's description is drifting through, ostensibly on his way to Globe, which, being the nearest railroad point at that time, lends color to the idea that he has ambitions to return to his old profession of holding up trains. He isn't using his lawful or otherwise patronymic, of course, but he hasn't taken any pains otherwise to disguise himself and he isn't hard to trail.

At Payson, Blue John, who also isn't telling his real name, gets the first rumor that there is some one in the country who masquerades under his name. The folks at Bill McKane's Oasis Saloon are discussing the recent advent in these regions of a bandit who has been spreading himself about like a pestilence, whooping from rum shop to rum shop with loud and vociferous boasts, shooting at the lights and scaring peaceable folks half out of their growth with his war whoops and declamations. There is no adequate description extant regarding this curly wolf, but the fact that he invariably declares, after the fifth drink, that he is Blue John from Showlow and that he eats raw human meat that he kills himself is substantiated from every source. It also appears that he flits from spot to spot and he don't rest anywhere long enough for any one to get a line on him. His iniquities have spread to Tucson, however, and there are already rangers in the district looking for him.

At first Blue John is inclined to greet this news with relief, for he naturally concludes that this masquerader will draw the pursuit off his own trail; but when he hears that the impostor has distinguished himself over at Ellison a week or two previous by shooting down an inoffensive Chinaman as he ambles along the road, his blood begins to boil. Even considerations for his own safety don't overcome the impulse to vindicate his name a whole lot. He sure can't rest under any such disgrace as this sport is bringing down on him.

But he don't know any more than any one else where this horned toad is to be found, so, for want of somewhere else to go, he takes the trail after Panhandle Pete and two or three days later he rides into Tonto not more than half a day behind him. He desires a word with Pete, so he sets out to look him up, seeking, for that purpose, the three saloons that this hamlet boasts in those days. In the first one he draws a blank but in the second he ambles in on a scene to take your breath.

He has just slid down at the door and dropped his rein to tie his horse to the ground when he hears loud voices inside and pauses to listen. There are two horses standing at the rack and one of them intrigues him as being Pete's, while the other has a vaguely familiar look he can't place. Likewise, one of the voices, which is reciting a war song, recalls faint memories of forgotten times, being shrill and feverish to remind one of a coyote.

"I'm the ring-tailed terror of the prairie," recites this hombre, in a sort of chant. "I'm the ring-tailed terror of the wild prairie, and I'm about to recite my song! Whoop!"

And he lets off a shot out of his six-shooter which knocks a hole through the swinging doors of the saloon. You can hear the scattering of the onlookers as they slide for chairs and tables to get behind.

"I was weaned on the milk of a loafer wolf and raised on the raw red leavings of a catamount! My favorite drink is giant powder dissolved in nitric acid! When I grind my teeth it's like a lightning flash, and when I yells there's the sound of thunder! I'm a raging lion and a fierce jaguar; a ring-tailed tiger and a puma on the mountain, and when I roar the wolves slink to their dens! I'm a sleeping volcano and an earthquake that's awake! I'm the north wind blowing off of Baker's Butte and a snowstorm whirling down from Hudson Bay. I'm a desperate, devastating hurricane, and I hone for blood!"

Whereupon he lets off his cannon again two times in rapid succession and gives vent to a ferocious howl.

"I'm Blue John from Showlow and I slay men as a pastime!"

Blue John starts and is about to make one leap through the door when he is stopped by another voice which he recognizes as that of Panhandle Pete.

"What's that?" it says, sharp and loud.

"I'm Blue John, the desperado!" shrieks the bandit inside. "I'm the slayer of rangers, the sacrificer of sheep-herders and the Nemesis of chinks! Show me the man

that disputes it and I hangs his scalp on the door!"

And, *bang!* goes his gun to add emphasis to the declaration.

"Wherever does this impostor get them notions!" yells Pete. "You may be 'Blue Hell' from Brimstone Crossing, but you ain't no Blue John. And don't you point no gun at me, because I'll slap you silly if you do!"

With that there's another yell and a bang, echoed by another shot and the crash of tables and chairs. Almost immediately the swinging door departs from its hinges and goes off down the road around the neck of a scrawny party who is touching nothing but the highest spots on the pathway. Right on his tail comes a-boiling Panhandle Pete, mad clear through and smoking up this fugitive party with each leap that he gives, the bullets puffing dust beneath him each time his toes touch the ground.

"Blue John!" says he. "I'll make you bluer than John ever was, you four-flushing imitation of a wild wolf!"

And then he collides with the real Blue John and brings up with a start.

"Hello, old-timer!" he shouts. "Which you see that I'm avenging insults aimed at your name a whole lot!"

"And you're chasing my game plumb off the mountain also," says Blue John, hurried. "Wait here until I come back, when I'll have a argument to make with you. Just now I'm after that 'Rabbit Dick' who's burning the atmosphere all up out there!"

So saying he takes off and alights in his hull with one jump and rowels his horse as his heels come together. He picks up the reins on the run and goes swooping off after the figure Pete has put to rout. As he gains on him, the fugitive's speed having slowed down after his first burst, he uncoils his lass' rope and flips out the loop. In another minute or so, despite the frantic ducks and dodges of his quarry and its plaintive squeaks of terror, he drops the loop over his head and sets up his horse, bringing Rabbit Dick to a head-over-heels stop. Then he turns and rides back, dragging him along in the dirt. A crowd boils out of the saloon, gaping at the sight and wondering why some one else hasn't long ago fished up the sand to call this loud-mouthed party's bluff.

Blue John comes up and dismounts. He turns to Pete and frowns on him.

"I'll attend to you in a minute," he says, "and don't you think you can get away with any ranikaboo after lacerating a lady's feelings the way you-all have done! But right now I'm on the trail of a mystery and I'm making deductions like a detective. You, Rabbit Dick! You slide up there under that sign over the door while I visit on you the requitals you-all have earned seven times over!"

He slings his rope end over the beam the sign is hung from and climbs into his saddle again, taking a hitch around the horn. He then turns to Rabbit Dick.

"Do I understand that you claim to be this outlaw Blue John, who's being looked for all over the Territory?" he asks.

"I ain't any Blue John," shrieks Rabbit Dick, as blue about the gills as ever John was, but from a different cause. "I ain't any Blue John. I'm just Rabbit Dick, born Maverick Richards back in Oklahoma where I was raised!"

"So!" says Blue John coldly. "You aren't Blue John, but from what I hear you're guilty of various crimes and misdemeanors all the same as if you was. I recall you now as a shorthorn whom I last see up on the mountain being led away to the cuartel by one Whistling William Griffiths, who's a corporal of rangers. I likewise hear that this William sport is found deceased over by Heber and I'd admire to hear how you explains this and how it gets around that Blue John beefs him!"

"I don't know nothing about it!" whines Rabbit Dick. Whereupon Blue John sinks his spur and his horse moves, dragging Rabbit Dick off his toes until he turns purple. He claws at the rope and shrieks until his wind's plumb cut off and then Blue John lets him slide down a bit.

"About that ranger, now?" he asks, and Rabbit Dick gurgles out the truth.

"I killed him!" he blurts. "He was marching me down afoot, holding his gun on me. He searches me before we starts but I didn't have no gun then. However, I had found where Blue John Adams hides one of my guns when he takes them away from me and when we start I get a chance and sneak it into my shirt. This ranger is careless, thinking I'm not armed and turns his back that night when he is sitting up to watch me. He thinks I'm asleep and nods some himself and I get a chance to

shoot him from behind as he sits by the fire."

"And you likewise murder a Chinaman in Ellison, if rumor is correct," says Blue John, looking at this puerile maniac in wonder. "Now, whyever do you perpetrate that unprovoked butchery?"

"Why," snivels Rabbit Dick, "I got a reputation, I have, and I just naturally have to shed blood to maintain it. And," he adds, as innocent as pie, "there wasn't no one else handy I could slay without running a risk."

A deep red blush overspreads the manly countenances of the assembled listeners as they grasp the fact that this tinkling cymbal has been running a blazer on them with his ferocity and that he's merely a congenital maniac without no more courage than his real name implies. There are growls of rage and revenge and more than one reaches for John's lass' rope to give it a pull or two, but John waves them back and sits there for a moment, considering. Finally he turns to them.

"Gents," he says, "I'm Blue John Adams from Showlow, and if you-all knows brass from gold you likewise savvy that I never slew any rangers nor other folks except in self-defense and for adequate cause. I'm therefore going to turn this short sport over to you and trust you to deliver him with proper accounts of what happened into the arms of the nearest officer, not being in a position where I can do it myself. He ain't worth lynching, so I rely on you to leave him to the firing squad down to Tucson or the strangler hired by the Territory."

"There's a ranger over to Oxbow that'll be glad to get his hands on him," says one of the crowd.

"Give him to the ranger then," says Blue John, "with my compliments. But don't summon him until I've had a start, and don't none of you remark the way I go. There's a little matter of another sort that I have to settle and I only pause to do it before I depart."

Then he looks at Panhandle Pete with a thoughtful frown.

"Pete," says he, "I ought to come among you-all spraddled out for trampling on the sensibilities of a female I respect, but there are other things to consider. In the first place, I vows to vindicate myself in the eyes of that young female prickly pear in Fossil Creek and in order to do so I have to have a witness to what happens here. I can't take no one else in there but you, for obvious reasons, so I don't see nothing for it but to postpone any warfare with you until you've ridden back to Fossil Creek and elucidated to this skeptical young woman who-all kills this ranger and how. After that, you and me will measure off a place and settle things."

"I don't give a damn whether you're vindicated or not," says Pete hotly. "Whyever should I rack back all that way with you? Besides, it was me flushed this skunk here and exposed his pretensions, not you. So if common gratitude ain't governing you any, you can start the baile here and now and save me getting saddle sore riding around with you."

Then Blue John heaves a sigh. "Somehow," he says, "my natural weakness stands in my way. I can't help liking you, Pete, even if you ain't worthy. I admits that you does me a favor by exposing this odorous animal, and the debt ties my hands for further hostilities with you. Come along, then, and if you never mention that lady in my hearing, we'll call it square."

"Which you can bet I'll never mention her in nobody's hearing," says Pete sourly, "seeing that what I'd say wouldn't be fit to apply to no one of her sex. And all I'll add to that is that I'm hoping you-all will learn enough some day to graduate from the class in imbecilities now attended by you and such animals as this Rabbit person. Which you are plumb alike in some respects."

Blue John don't ever exhibit heat whenever he himself is the subject of invidious remark, so he passes this over and after a bit Pete crawls into his hull and they turn about on the back trail.

In the course of time they arrive back at Fossil Creek and drag their ropes up to the door of the cabin, where Miss Theba meets them. If they'd come several days before she wouldn't have been fit to be seen because for some time after Blue John rides away she spends her time weeping copiously and getting her eyes all reddened up, but by this time she has settled into composure and all they note is a slightly melancholy aspect, which she tries to make scornful. But there is a light in her eye which ain't either scornful or melancholy.

The upshot of it is that Pete delineates

to her all that has happened regarding the capture and exposure of Rabbit Dick and clears Blue John of massacring the ranger party. But she doesn't evince any enthusiasm over this, insinuating, instead, that if Blue John didn't kill him and commit worse crimes than that, it was because he lacks the opportunity. Which hurts John somewhat, of course, but for some reason which he doesn't take the trouble to investigate it's got so that it takes more than scorn and dirty looks to drive him away from the vicinity of Fossil Creek.

Of course he tells himself that he only comes back to vindicate himself and that he only stays because Miss Theba needs an able-bodied man around to perform the agricultural chores. In any case he doesn't have any trouble in persuading himself. As for Pete, however, that reformed train robber is a heap restless and evinces a disposition to pull his freight again just as soon as he has stowed away a reserve supply of Theba's flapjacks and lamb chops. His gloom grows on him and gnaws inwards just as Blue John's blueness, for some reason or other, shows symptoms of lightening up. And it don't do any good that Theba endows Pete with copious smiles and attention during the next day or two. Nothing at all will disperse the clouds that infest him mentally.

They haven't been there for more than two or three days and Blue John is engaged in breaking up more ground with a plow, and actually whistling while he does it, when he perceives a shorthorn of some kind picking his way down the west wall of the basin where some sort of trail has been worked out in place of the one that Blue John blows out of the county the time he increases Theba's water supply. Having no desires to interview visitors, Blue John shags it for the cabin pronto and stops just long enough to warn Pete and Theba before he dives for his cave below the falls, expecting Pete to follow. But Pete, for some reason unknown, retreats only as far as the hay barn behind the house where he ensconces himself until the visitor has gone.

This hombre rides up on a mule and, as he doesn't look like any ranger or other officer of the law, and talks some sort of spangled lingo that she can't hardly translate, Theba welcomes him and listens as best she can, finally making out that this alien is seeking Blue John, claiming to be a friend of his, and that he has news of importance to bestow upon him.

Theba doesn't confess that Blue John is here right away. She is filled with suspicion regarding this hombre, in fact, but he protests so much, identifying himself as Mario, the Basco sheep foreman, of whom she has heard previous, that she finally hesitates to some extent. She don't allow that John is here, but she does supply this foreigner with chuck, and while he eats it she canters out the back way and makes tracks for the old dam, where she signals Blue John and informs him regarding this visitor. When she describes him, Blue John recognizes Mario and goes back with her.

Mario falls on John's neck with loud exhortations of affection when he sees him and babbles excitedly and unintelligibly for some time. But after he is calmed down and slowed down a bit, Blue John finally gets the basis of his remarks. Which they are to the effect that, being in great suffering and mental distress, Miss Hilda Raffe recalls her protector and devoted slave and therefore requisitions the services of Mario in conveying to him her need of his further services. After which Mario fishes a greasy letter out of the sweat band of his hat and extends it to John. During this Theba listens with a face in which you can't read anything at all, except that her lips are set in straight lines and her eyes are as level as if they were ruled. Furthermore, seeing Blue John come back, Panhandle Pete has deserted the barn and crept up to the rear door where he listens intently to the disclosures, without being noticed by any one.

Blue John is approximately loco where this Miss Raffe is concerned, but he isn't completely imbecile for all of that. He wonders how she comes to select this Mario for her messenger and he questions him carefully. But Mario explains all that. He informs Blue John that for several days Hilda has exhibited in his vicinity a countenance marked with plenteous woes and that on more than one occasion when Mario and she are the only occupants of the lobby or the restaurant she drops her head on her hands and weeps indiscriminate and copious. Wherefore, knowing that this young woman is a whole lot precious in the sight of his admired Blue Johnny, as he calls him, Mario summons courage to inquire whyfor she suffers from all this grief. She explains with sighs that she is the vic-

tim of persecution and unrighteousness and that her only hope of escape is to get word to Blue John to come and rescue her once more. But she don't know where Blue John is holed up no more than a squirrel.

Then Mario owns up that maybe he can find Blue John. He has scouted around a heap since John leaves Lost Eden, and his sheep-herder compatriots have kept their eyes and ears open. They know all about Fossil Creek and the fact that a strange man is frequenting that locality and they guess the rest. Mario don't tell Hilda where John is located, but he intimates a whole lot that he could find him if it was necessary. She then intrusts a letter to him which he brings right along and now tenders to Blue John.

This is satisfactory to Blue John, but it isn't to Theba. She wonders a whole lot how come this Hilda Raffe so conveniently exposes her griefs in the purview of the only man who can convey messages to Blue John. She doesn't know that Hilda has been deducing things right industrious, figuring out how and why Blue John knows that Ranger Griffiths, known as Whistling William, is coming up after him, why and how he learned that she is on her way to Jerome and Prescott to get her a divorce, how his proclamation warning folks with sentiments away from her appears on the door of the Montezuma, and other straws which give her some idea of which way the wind blows, coming finally to the conclusion that Blue John probably has sources of information in the Verde and that those sources are likely to center in this Basco foreman of George Rayfield's. She don't give Hilda credit for all this shrewdness, but she suspects that Mario may have turned against Blue John and owned up to acting in concert with him.

Blue John, of course, don't suspect nobody, but reads his letter with eagerness, it being the first time he has ever had any billy-dews from his ladylove.

This letter starts off, in a sort of foreign way that Miss Hilda has about her and never does get completely rid of:

My Benefactor: I must say farewell forever unless miracles have not ceased to happen and you can once more snatch me from the hands of the evil men who oppress me. Alas! your heroic deeds are all in vain. I am again in the hands of cruel men who have no pity on my helpless condition.

Mr. Rayfield, with whom you interfered in order to make my life bearable, has lived up to the letter of your demands and has indeed paid me the sums you stipulated. But within a week afterward he has invariably regained nearly the whole amount by fining me for delinquencies which he invents. Further he has plotted with debased cunning until he has me in his power. I cannot escape, although I have racked my brains. He has forged evidence to show that I have robbed his cash drawer, a base lie which should choke in his throat but doesn't. He holds this over me, threatening to send me to prison unless I marry him. Alas! What can I do? I have no friends, unless you, poor persecuted and fugitive hero, are still a friend. But you are far away and helpless. There is no hope. I cannot bear the thought of a prison!

So—unless you, by some miracle, may fly again to my rescue—I yield to his base designs. Better matrimony even with him than a prison cell! The time is set, the parson notified, and on the coming Tuesday, at nine p. m., I become a degraded, suffering victim of this villain.

So, farewell, my chivalrous knight; farewell forever—unless you can again perform a feat at which men must gasp with wonder. If you can—come before the hour set for the wedding, which takes place at the Montezuma. But don't come sooner than an hour before, or otherwise you will spoil all.

This epistle is signed in trembling hieroglyphics with the lady's name. Blue John reads it aloud, his mouth open and his eyes flashing. Miss Theba sniffs disgustedly.

"Something about that letter smells like fish bait to me," she says, scornfully.

"It has truth in every line of it," says Blue John, stanchly, though, somehow, he doesn't feel all the indignation about this outrage that he is used to feeling. He whips himself up to the proper state of mind, however.

"I never heard that this lady has got her divorce as yet," says Theba. But Mario undeceives her.

"She get it by default one, two weeks ago," he explains. "You no hear maybe because you no read the paper. Those Mr. George, he get it for her from Prescott."

"The scoundrel!" says Blue John, trying hard to make it emphatic.

"Humph," says Miss Theba. "So you're her benefactor and her hero, and her knight and all the rest of it, are you? Which it doesn't sound natural that she evinces those sentiments for you-all of a sudden after concealing her appreciation of your actions all this time. Are you heeding this epistle or are you not?"

"I sure am," says Blue John, deter-

minedly. "This lady is my especial care and I owe her all the service I can give her. Which I am going to rack right into the Verde and put this George Rayfield where there ain't no marriage nor giving in marriage. She don't call me in vain, none whatever!"

But Panhandle Pete has been listening as the letter is read and he gives Blue John a pitying look, while he grins with pleasure for himself. Pete has been doing a lot of cogitating of late and he is not so helpless regarding women as John is. He guesses a whole lot and jumps at the rest, getting most of it right. And, chuckling to himself, he slides out unseen and begins to cinch the hull onto his horse preparatory to pulling his freight.

It's Monday now and Blue John calculates that he'd better be moving too if he wants to get there in time. He puts the letter in his pocket and slides for the door, but Theba steps in front of him.

"Are you really going?" she says, pale and with her face set.

"I sure am," says Blue John, emphatic.

"Even if I ask you not to—for my sake?"

John hesitates just a minute and draws a long breath. But he takes hold of himself immediately and shakes his head.

"You-all don't need me," he says, "and she does. I've got to go."

"Well," says Theba coldly, as she steps aside, "go, then. But if you find out—find out what you will find out—don't come back here for sympathy because there's no such word in my dictionary. And give me that letter, please!"

"Why?" asks Blue John, who has stuffed it in his pocket.

"I want it as a souvenir. Won't you let me have it?"

Before he can answer she snatches it from his pocket where the end is sticking out. He looks as if he ought to grab it back but he can't without using violence. Theba smiles coldly as she folds it and tucks it away.

"You're so innocent," she says scornfully, "that you'd take it and carry it where they could get hold of it and destroy it. It might be evidence of some value some day, so I'll keep it for you."

Blue John again looks as if he's torn between two horns of a dilemma but he finally sets his face and dashes out. Mario puts on his hat and climbs his mule, departing without no further manifestations. When the Basco has gone Theba retires inside and shuts the door and then she puts her head down on a table and resorts to sobs.

As for Blue John, he assembles his necessaries and sets out in due time, but he don't go in the joyful, determined way in which he sets out on previous expeditions of the sort. Instead, he rides along at a slow jog, his head down, and although he continually strives to dwell on the perils and the wrongs of Hilda Raffe, he finds them persistently obscured by the recollections of Miss Theba's face as she stands before him, asking him not to go. And he wonders whether he'd have gone at all if he hadn't, so to speak, been committed to the deed in advance. With each step he covers toward the Verde his memories of Hilda's attractions gets dimmer and the knowledge of Theba's waxes stronger and clearer. Just like the needle of a compass swinging around to the pole, his predilections begin to swing until they complete the half circle away from blondes and toward them of brunet specifications.

However, it's too late, as he views it, to correct matters now, and he plays the game to the end. He rides out on the flat near Camp Verde and takes refuge in a haystack. Toward evening he sets out again and rides into the town and up to the Montezuma about a quarter past eight. He finds all quiet and no signs of a wedding, which puzzles him a whole lot, but as he's anxious to get the affair over as soon as possible he loosens his gun in the holster, makes sure it's tied down and throws open the door and enters the lobby. There, sitting together near the clerk's counter, are Hilda and George Rayfield, both pale and agitated.

"I've come," says Blue John, looking at them. But there ain't any threat in his voice. He observes the lady he'd thought he loved and one idea alone bursts through his brain.

"She *is* fat!" he tells himself, with astonishment and something like relief. And then knowledge jumps right on him and bulldogs him. He sees her eyes roving from him to the sides, sees her licking her lips and drawing quick breaths—and he knows!

"Throw up your hands, John Adams!" comes the hail from the side of the lobby,

where the alcove is. John slowly raises them over his head, smiling queerly. From the alcove, from a closet behind the door and from the restaurant door steps three rangers with guns leveled and ready.

"I see you aren't taking any chances," he remarks easily, and laughs. One of them comes up and draws out handcuffs while the others keep their guns trained on him. Blue John looks at Hilda and again he smiles.

"If Panhandle Pete was here," he says agreeably, "I'd sure beg his pardon for being a fool. I reckon there are two of us."

"But I was cured first!" The voice seems to come from back of George Rayfield and that gent makes a leap out of the way and tries to flee. But up from behind the counter where George clerks for the hotel whenever there's need of a clerk, which is seldom, arises a figure recognizable as Panhandle Pete and it bends the butt of a gun over Rayfield's head with one motion, whirls and reverses it with another and the next instant, it is roaring and spitting like a tomcat in a battle. The handcuffs go flying from the ranger's hand, another of them sinks with a hole in his arm and the third hasn't time to shoot because Blue John has all of a sudden leaped on him and borne him to the ground.

"Whoop!" yells Panhandle Pete in high glee. "Shoot 'em up! Let's clean out the town, Blue John!"

Hilda faints. Blue John leaps up from his victim and makes for the door. "Come on, you fool!" he roars. "We're going back home!"

He grabs Pete and shoves him through, draws his gun and drives the recovering rangers back with the threat of it and backs out. He hears Pete wheeling and spurring his horse and he turns and runs for his own.

He gets it and swings up, plying the rowels and whirling off in the dust. But this time he don't get clean away. A mozo busts out of a saloon across the road and blazes away at him. He vanishes the next minute, hidden in the dust and the smoke of his gun. But he's carrying a busted leg where a bullet has smashed his thigh.

Another Galahad of Lost Eden story in the next issue.

BY WAY OF COMPROMISE

JAMES J. DAVIS is the man who went to work in the steel and iron mills of Sharon, Pennsylvania, when he was eleven years old and is now rustling the leaves of the portfolio of secretary of labor in the Coolidge cabinet. It is not surprising, therefore, that he agrees with the psychologists that much of the younger generation's tendency to sidestep hard work is the fault of the coddling, indulgent and "easy" parents. He knows a Pittsburgher whose experience bears out his theory.

This man, the head of a large corporation and possessor of millions of dollars, had a son in whom he took enormous pride. Nothing was too good for the boy. Anything the youngster wanted he got. Having plenty of brains and a pleasing personality, he made a hit at college and won his "letter" in athletics. After that, he took a job in his father's company; and a week later the father's eyes began to open. The ideal young man was wasting neither his muscle nor his mind on his work.

"Son," the indulgent parent told him one day, "I've done nothing but hard work all my life. I had nothing to start with, but, thanks to me, you've had everything. And now I'm getting tired. I've earned a rest. In a year or two I'm going to retire from active business and let you run the works. What do you think of that?"

"Well, I'll tell you, dad," the boy answered without a moment's hesitation; "that might do, in a pinch. But I've got still another idea. Why don't you stick to the grind a few years longer than you had intended, and then the two of us could retire together?"

Talks With Men

By Martin Davison

I HAVE a position as foreman in charge of the coffee-roasting department in the warehouse of a big chain-grocery outfit," writes K. P. "Some time ago they started a bacon-slicing department. As I used to work for Swift & Company, this new department was also put under my supervision. I am forty-two years of age, not college educated, but have usually held executive positions. I was in the marines during the war—also during the Spanish War. Like many others in the service, after my discharge I could no longer get a position at forty to forty-five dollars a week and was seven weeks looking for work and then was glad to get fifty cents an hour. As I have a wife, all my savings went during my period of enlistment and when looking for work. When I finally got work we were about two hundred and fifty dollars in debt. My wife took a part-time position and we wiped out the debt and have five hundred in the bank besides having two weeks' vacation the last two years.

"I was with my present employers as a laborer about three years ago, did my best and now get forty-five a week and have the position I mentioned. I think I have done well there and can in time get a few dollars more, but I cannot see any very big position ahead of me as they take young college men and break them in for their higher executive positions. This I find to be true in many large corporations. Many will not employ men over forty.

"Now my problem is this. Ought I to try to get a better-paying position with some other firm before I get too old to be accepted? Or should I stay where I am, do my best and see what may come of it? I had an interview with the head of an organization which sells meat-slicing and coffee-roasting machinery with reference to getting a position with them as salesman and instructor on the coffee-roasting machines. I have had no selling experience but believe I could learn to sell, though I am not what is called 'a good mixer.'

"If I took this position, it would pay three thousand a year to start with and I think I would get ahead faster, have better hours and less manual labor than at present.

"My wife is afraid I would not make good as a salesman and advises me to stay a few years longer where I am. I think if I stay a few years longer where I am I will be too old to get with another firm as this seems to be the age of young men in business.

"With election coming on things are getting dull in many lines and sometimes I think it not wise to make a change just now. Yet again I feel if I don't make one soon I never will make one. This is rather a long letter and I trust it does not bore you."

FAR from boring me, the letter is most interesting. Last night, when I read it first, I was inclined to advise K. P. to make the change and try his fortunes as a salesman. To-day, reading it again, I feel differently.

K. P. says one thing commonly held to be a fact that is utterly untrue. He says this is the age of young men. It is anything but the age of young men. The time of full maturity is growing later and later with each generation. There was a period in the world's history when a man was at his best in the early twenties. Those were the good old days in which hardly any one lived to see forty. The Egyptian

mummies, examined by surgeons indicate that at that time the average age at death was twenty-five or so. That was the age of young men.

K. P. is a soldier, having served two separate hitches in a real fighting organization. Let him remember that the greatest soldier of antiquity, Alexander, had conquered the civilized world and passed to his grave before he reached thirty and that Napoleon, the greatest soldier of a century ago, had done all his best work before he was forty. How many generals in the last war were under fifty? It would be hard to name them.

No, this is not the age of young men—nor is it the age of old men. It is the age of young men of forty and fifty and sixty and upward. K. P. is nowhere near the line where age is an actual handicap.

AS for a college education—it is true that many firms do give a preference to college graduates. It is understandable that they should. It insures a certain class and type of applicants. But any one who has had any practical experience with men as efficient units in an industrial corporation knows that there is many a man who has never seen college who can give the average college graduate cards and spades and beat him easily. This is not saying anything against college either. A college education is a great thing for the man who can afford it—but no man should allow himself to feel inferior because he is without it. The best college of all is practical experience—and two wars with the marine corps ought to be equal to four years on a varsity team.

K. P. ought to stay where he is for the present and bend every effort to impress on the company the fact that he is a young man and that he has enjoyed what is equivalent to a thoroughly good college education. In three years he has advanced himself from the position of a laborer to that of a head of a department. He has doubled his salary in that time. Let him stay where he is for a while.

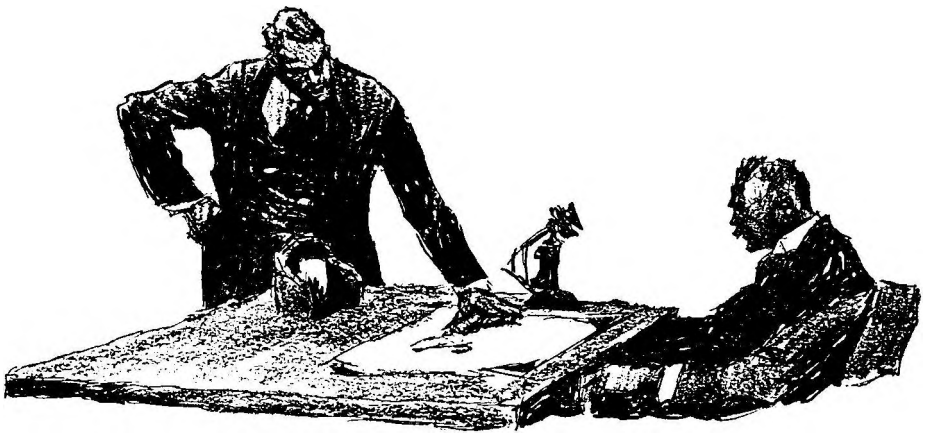
HIS own argument—that he is getting old—is all against his trying a new occupation such as salesmanship. If he were out of a job it might be different—but he has a good job and in spite of the fact that he can see no present advancement in it, it is a practical certainty, if one is to judge by the past that it is going to get better in future years.

Ask any salesman if selling goods is such a cinch. As a matter of fact the labor turnover in selling organizations is very large. People tackle it for a while, do well at it for a while—then the enthusiasm evaporates, the list of prospects is used up and the job fizzles. Many brilliantly successful men have started life selling things. This is not because selling things is so easy, but because it takes a really gifted man to make a success as a salesman.

K. P. says that he is not a good mixer. Also his wife doubts his ability as a salesman. Depend upon it, Mrs. K. P. has a better line on him than any one in the world.

There are two parts to every job One is to do what you are expected to do. The other is to do the things you are not expected to do—something original in the way of thought and suggestion. This is just a hint tc K. P. who, in my opinion, is going to convince his present employers that he is still young and that he does not need a college education.

If the three-thousand-dollar job were guaranteed for a number of years, if it were certain that the article to be sold was going to make a hit and create a steady demand, it might, of course, be different.



White Emeralds

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "The Futurist Muse," "The Smiling God," Etc.

The Great Macumber restores a fortune and saves a reputation.

FROM my own indubitably intimate knowledge of the man I should say that the Great Macumber's ultimate farewell tour at the head of his hand-picked company of European wonder workers—the same, for your exclusive information, in the main consisting of myself from mid-Ohio and the McGuirks from Winthrop, Massachusetts—lies some score of seasons in the future.

The Great One's heart is with his calling, as no one realizes more certainly than I. He loves the eternal battle of wits with audiences who sit before him solemnly resolved to penetrate the secrets of his magic and he lives for the applause which, religiously clocked back stage, serves notice season in and season out upon aspiring rivals that Macumber maintains his supremacy over the professional miracle men of his generation.

Yet there are times, none the less, when the Great One alleges himself to be fed up with the footlights; times when he is moved to utter what I dare hope a considerable section of the public which supports vaudeville in its present estate of red-plush luxury would accept as a sinister and all but personal threat; times, in short, when he vows he'll quit.

"Lad!" he'll proclaim, trumpeting out of a silence as black as the devastating tobacco crammed into his pipe; "Lad, we cannot go on! It's not to be endured. We must make a choice of minding other people's business or minding our own. And since the affairs of others are so infinitely more fascinating to deal with, ours may go hang. Tut, tut, youngster; don't argue! I've not spoken without proper serious thought. I mean what I say. I shall wire Lieberman to cancel us from this day week —and would the Lord it could be to-morrow!"

Something of the kind I've heard from Macumber a dozen times, and in a dozen cities. It's an outburst which marks a clash between vocation and avocation such as I suppose plenty of other men know. Thus he orated in Cincinnati last spring when the exigencies of our schedule took us off on a three-hundred-mile jump and he was forced to abandon, scarce more than begun, his inquiry into that singular sequence of crimes since explained in some small part by the suicide of the retired brewer Hoffmeister. Thus, too, in another Western city when he was obliged to entrain as per contract for Seattle, leaving the exhilarating intricacies of the lately notorious Wish-

art case for the local police to wrestle with in what he bitterly—and, as developed, not unjustifiably—predicted would be their "fatuous, flatfooted" way.

In Toledo, in Los Angeles and in St. Louis, among divers other places, I've heard similar speeches in similar circumstances from the Great One. By everything holy, and many things not, he has sworn to have done forever with the road; promised to hang out a shingle somewhere in the neighborhood of Times Square, New York, and apply himself professionally to the dissection of other men's mysteries, taking his own good time to each case in hand with no thought of imminent bookings to harass him.

Yet somehow that telegram to the bellicose little Mr. Lieberman—who has served Macumber as booking agent and personal representative these many years—never has been sent; and still the Great Macumber finds occasion and opportunity to exercise those remarkable talents which, were he really to forsake the stage, would assuredly win him recognition as one of the foremost criminologists of his day.

There are indeed certain advantages to Macumber's position as a dilettante in criminology which in calmer moments he himself confesses might be sacrificed should he turn detective in sober earnest. As Macumber the magician he commands a degree of confidence that Macumber the crime investigator would perhaps not inspire. The very fact that he is independent of fees, and would no more dream of accepting money for riding his hobby than would His Royal Highness of Wales for riding to hounds, places him aside from and above those who will indifferently engage themselves for hire to keep cases on your cashier, shadow your butler, or look about a bit for your stolen bonds. And, given wide word-of-mouth publicity by grateful ones whom he has served, it brings to his door not only poor men with poor men's perplexities but men of wealth with causes which they deem too delicate to trust to venal hands.

Of the latter class of client was Mr. John Oliphant Twiner, whose card proclaimed him—and in whom readers familiar with subdivisional developments in the vicinity of New York will probably recognize—the head of the well-known real-estate auctioneering firm of Twiner-Blessing-Jones.

"I am in a quandary," announced Mr. Twiner, deciding after a momentary hesitation on stepping into our smoke-fogged living room at the Rawley in favor of the simple declarative.

"As often I have been," remarked Macumber encouragingly.

"I think of going to the police. And yet that——"

"And yet that is a thing simpler done than undone."

"Exactly. On the other hand, what I've heard of the average private detective——"

"Is disturbing. And you've likely heard nothing but the truth, Mr. Twiner. They're a filthy lot as a class, although there are of course exceptions. People given to playing two ends against the middle."

"According to my information. I made up my mind to have none of them. Then Mr. Thomas Randolph offered the suggestion——"

"That you come to me? Sound advice you'll find it, I hope."

Mr. John Oliphant Twiner dropped his tall, loose frame into the chair which I had brought near the Great One's, and made further effort to deliver himself of a complete sentence.

"Randolph has told me about——" he began tentatively.

"I recall the matter. It was a trifle. Rather interesting in its way. But let's put it aside. This present trouble of yours, Mr. Twiner—what is it? Is it because of the youngster yonder that you hesitate? Tush, sir! He's the soul of discretion. My assistant on the stage and my confidant off. You may safely forget he is with us."

With apologetic vigor Mr. Twiner denied that he harbored distrust of a third party.

"Not that. Not that at all, Mr. Macumber. It's nothing scandalous I've come to you with. Just something unusual—to me inexplicable. I—ah—may I ask if you are a judge of precious stones?"

"As much of a judge, mayhap, as the next layman. I'd not set up as an expert."

Our visitor placed a long and slender case on the table at the Great One's elbow, and rays from the reading lamp struck fire within it as he snapped back the top.

"What's this?" cried Macumber.

"I ask you," said Mr. John Oliphant Twiner.

"It appears to be a very valuable dia-

mond necklace," replied the Great One, and lifting the flaming circlet from its bed of silk he calmly dropped it into the glass water pitcher beside him. "But it's not so brilliant now, is it? The most simple of tests, Mr. Twiner. The stones are not genuine. Merely imitations of, I should say, an excellent quality. I sincerely trust you've not been persuaded to exchange anything of considerable value for the bauble."

The auctioneer's chest rounded with the welling of a sigh.

"It hasn't been a question of persuasion. I am a business man, Mr. Macumber, and it would be as contrary to my code as to my nature to buy or advance money on any property real or personal without adequate assurance as to its value. As concerns realty values within say fifty miles around Manhattan I should consider myself a competent appraiser. But in regard to diamonds, I'd naturally look to a jeweler for an opinion."

Macumber was carefully drying the dripping necklace on a corner of the table cover.

"Am I to understand," he murmured, "that these quite palpable frauds deceived an expert?"

Twiner shook his head and, delving into his coat pockets, grouped a half dozen other jewel boxes of assorted sizes and shapes and colors around the long case to which the Great One was restoring the condemned brilliants.

"You'll find here other various articles—rings, another necklace, eardrops and the like. But I shan't ask you to put them to a test, Mr. Macumber. It's not necessary. The gems one and all are spurious; as you have suggested in the case of the necklace, rather good imitations of the real thing. I've been aware of that fact since early this afternoon."

"From which I gather that the trinkets have not just come into your possession?"

Mr. John Oliphant Twiner gazed sorrowfully down at the glittering show on the table.

"Just when they did come into my possession," said he, "I have no way of telling. I have been robbed. The cunning fakes you see here were substituted for jewels which cost me upward of sixty thousand dollars. When that happened—how it happened—I shall not venture to guess. It is utterly beyond me."

Macumber lifted a gleaming brooch from its case and held it under the light.

"When and how are relatively unimportant questions at the moment, Mr. Twiner," he said. "What you undoubtedly can tell me, and yet have omitted to mention, is—*where?*"

Our visitor sighed again.

"That is the baffling part of it all. Three walls of steel have stood between the thief and his objective. How he managed to get through them is rather for a magician to say than for me."

"The jewels were in a vault, you mean?"

"In my own private vault at the office. A vault within a vault. And in that inner vault they lay in a locked drawer of steel."

"We may count that lucky. It narrows the field. How many of your employees have access to the vault, Mr. Twiner?"

"Oh, a dozen, I should say. To the outer vault, that is."

"And to the inner vault?"

"Not one. Upon my word, not one. Not even Mr. Blessing or Mr. Jones. The inner vault is used by me exclusively. It has a separate combination and time lock; and not in years have I left the office—even for luncheon—without setting the time lock against my return. There are frequently large deals in which I engage as an individual rather than as a member of the firm, you must understand, and it is essential that I have a private place of safekeeping for valuable papers and confidential memoranda. In many of the transactions in which I serve as broker a leak through the office might cost my clients hundreds of thousands of dollars."

"It was only to-day you discovered the substitution, eh?"

"This afternoon."

"What were the circumstances?"

"I made the discovery by merest accident. Between you and me, Mr. Macumber, I'm no more interested in jewels than in calf's-foot jelly—which is to say, not at all. Except as Mrs. Twiner has had occasion to deck herself out in all her glory, I've never had a glance for her gems. They could have lain in the vault until the end of time and I'd not have had the slightest inclination even to look at them.

"But to-day the subject of jewelry as an investment chanced to come up while I was in conference with one of my clients, Mr. Nels Petersen, who'd been told some stuff

and nonsense down in Maiden Lane to the effect that diamonds bought at the present market would increase more rapidly in value than the average suburban tract adjacent to a great and growing city.

"Petersen, it seemed, had a natural fondness for jewels and it occurred to me he might be interested in examining the things I've bought for my wife in the last two or three years—for very good years they've been to me, Mr. Macumber, I must confess.

"It was the necklace I showed him first, just as I showed it first to you.

"'Pretty, perhaps,' said I, 'in the eyes of those who care for such things. But I know of twelve acres less than thirty miles out, with two lines of steel already running toward 'em, that I'd a damned sight sooner have the money in.'

"Petersen gave me a funny sort of look.

"'Any time you can get twelve acres less than thirty miles from anywhere for the price of this, Twiner,' said he, 'you may buy 'em for my account.'

"I didn't like his tone.

"'You're rash, Petersen,' I told him. 'There's a lot of suburban property you'd be stuck good and plenty on at fifteen hundred the acre.'

"He laughed at me.

"'Fifteen hundred an acre, man! Why, you're talking as if you had diamonds there. Don't you think I know the difference?'

"I was dumfounded, for Petersen was obviously not joking. I showed him these other things, which he also pronounced to be frauds. Then together we went to Maiden Lane. Two jewelers there—one of them a friend of mine for many years—confirmed Petersen's verdict.

"My impulse was to go to the police at once, but something told me it might be well to wait. Returning to the office I rang up Randolph who is, as perhaps you have surmised, my lawyer. 'I can't advise you,' he said, 'but I think I know a man who can.' And yours, Mr. Macumber, was the name he gave me."

The Great One smiled.

"If Mr. Randolph has been in my debt, he has paid me off handsomely," said he. "I wonder if you realize, Twiner, the really exquisite beauty of the problem you have brought to me? Ah, no; I suppose not. The jewels were not insured, by the by?"

"Not a penny's worth. They seemed safe enough in the vault."

"Aye; they should have been sufficiently well protected there. And perhaps we shall learn that they were."

"I don't understand you."

"I mean to say, Mr. Twiner, that it may develop the gems were not in the vault when the substitution was effected."

"Impossible!"

"How so? Did you not confess to me a while since that genuine diamonds and paste would be the same to your eyes? May I ask where you bought the things?"

Mr. John Oliphant Twiner lifted a protesting hand.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "I know what is in your mind, and you were never farther wrong in your life. I got exactly what I paid for. In purchasing the jewelry I dealt personally with Mr. Hendry senior of Hendry & Co. Who could be more dependable, more responsible—more honorable?"

"No one, I must admit. I banish the unspoken thought. But the jewels have not lain continuously in the vault since the time of their purchase, Mr. Twiner?"

"Practically continuously. In the last year I do not think Mrs. Twiner has worn her diamonds more than two or three times. And on those occasions there has been absolutely no chance of any funny business. It is my custom to drive by automobile to and from my home in Montclair. While in my brief case, I assure you the jewelry has been as safe as when in the vault—or on Mrs. Twiner's own person."

Macumber leaned forward to brush a flake of cigar ash from our visitor's waistcoat.

"So it may have seemed to you, Mr. Twiner," said he. "But you must remember that the world is full of clever rogues. Not all criminals work with the pistol and bludgeon, you know. The underworld still holds artists all its own. Who knows but that a half hour since, in the subway or on the sidewalk, you may have surrendered your watch to a craftsman of whose operation you were unconscious?"

Automatically the auctioneer's fingers crept to his watch pocket. His long face became suddenly suffused with red.

"By God!" he cried. "It *has* been taken!"

A cluck of astonishment escaped the Great One.

"Fancy that!" said he. "Would you have believed it? But a watch is only a watch, after all—and didn't you say you'd put sixty thousand dollars into the diamonds you came to consult me about? Let's forget for the time the later and less important loss, and hew to the line. Do you recall how long it has been, Twiner, since your wife last wore her jewels?"

"It was about two weeks ago, I should say. Yes; a little more than a fortnight ago."

"Then we may be sure the substitution was made between that time and to-day, you think?"

The auctioneer shook his head.

"I can be sure of nothing."

"But certainly Mrs. Twiner could not have been deceived by diamonds that were not diamonds. Women are extraordinarily keen on that sort of thing."

"I don't know whether she could have been fooled or not. As a matter of fact, she was scarcely more interested in gems than I during the first twenty years of our married life. Never went in for that sort of thing, and so far as I know never thought about it. It was the same with clothing. I don't suppose her gowns and hats cost me one tenth what the average man of my income has to lay out on his wife to keep peace in the family. Until Bella took a sort of spurt, that is."

"I see," nodded the Great One. "I've known such things to happen before, Twiner. Women wouldn't be women without their vagaries. They're bound to come out."

Our visitor fingered his graying mustache.

"In Bella," said he, "I don't mind saying they came out in a rather surprising way. I've never been much on society myself, and neither was Mrs. Twiner until—well, when was it these newfangled dances began to be taken into our best homes? Three years ago? Four? Well, that was about the time Mrs. Twiner made her second début. Comfortably past forty, too, but the pace she went when she started would have tired out any schoolgirl I ever saw. She'd spend her afternoons tripping it, and then'd drag me off to the country club or some such place in the evening and dance me and a half dozen others off our feet. Amazing she stood it as long as she did."

"The dancing phase didn't last, then?"

"Oh, no. A year of it seemed to be enough for her. Then she was her old self again. Hasn't danced since, to speak of. It's only in the last few months she's had a renewal of her attack of socialitis. We've got an enormous place at Montclair for just the two of us, and she's been livening things up with evening parties. They say we've had the biggest crowds of the Montclair season—and I don't doubt it. Lots of folks there always that I've never seen before, and wouldn't know again if they were to walk up and shake hands with me. But all that's aside from the mark."

"I'm not so sure," said Macumber. "Big crowds you've been drawing, eh? That would seem to argue a chance for inimical strangers to saunter in. And Mrs. Twiner has been wearing her jewels at these affairs, I suppose?"

"Naturally. It's about the only chance she has to show 'em off. But so far as strangers are concerned, it's damned little chance any one would have had to tamper with the jewelry in Montclair. The moment Mrs. Twiner takes it off it goes into a wall safe, and next morning it travels back to the city with me and lands in the vault. No, what's happened has happened right in my office—happened way back in the vault."

"No one but yourself has the combination of the inner vault?"

"No one. And I'll anticipate another question I suppose you'll be asking, Mr. Macumber. There's been no tampering with combination or time lock. I had a man from the safe company in just before I came uptown. If I hadn't had to wait for him, I'd have been here a couple of hours sooner."

The Great One rubbed his chin.

"So much for that, then. Have you advised Mrs. Twiner of your loss—or hers?"

"Not yet."

"Then I don't think I'd breathe a word to her. Not for the present, at any rate. It will only make her unhappy. Time enough to break the news when we've recovered her jewels—if we're to be so fortunate—or when we've been forced to resign ourselves to the thought that they're beyond our reach. In the meantime, of course, she'll have her new emeralds to console herself with."

Mr. John Oliphant Twiner looked up quickly and wonderingly.

"I didn't think I'd mentioned the emeralds," said he.

"Nor have you," smiled Macumber. "It wasn't necessary. I know, of course, that you bought a very valuable emerald necklace within the last month—or should I say six weeks? Further, I know that the necklace was formerly the property of the late Mrs. Aubrey Burke. And if you would test my knowledge beyond, I could tell you that the price you paid for the bit of jewelry was forty-eight thousand five hundred dollars."

Some obstacle seemed to have taken shape in the auctioneer's throat to impede his speech. Staring at the Great One, he swallowed hard—and swallowed again.

"You're right!" said he after a moment. "Most amazing man I ever met, I assure you. What is this—necromancy?"

Macumber tapped a mound of wicked tobacco ash into his palm.

"Not at all," said he placidly. "Merely in line of proof that I have an excellent memory. You'd really be surprised if you could know what a store of apparently inconsequential facts I carry about in my mind, Mr. Twiner."

"But—but how could you know?"

"Tush! Is that what you marvel at? Nothing in this world could be simpler. Do you not ken that Mrs. Aubrey Burke was one of the great actresses of the time, and that public interest in her and what was hers did not end when her own need for milk baths passed? The facts of the auction of the Aubrey Burke jewels and furnishings were duly chronicled in the press, Twiner, as you might have seen for yourself had you looked. And your name, of course, was there as the buyer of the emeralds. The price? Upon my word, you'd ask me how I come to know of that? Have you—an auctioneer—ever heard of price being secret at an auction?"

Mr. John Oliphant Twiner's bewilderment seemed scarcely to have been decreased by the explanation.

"Extraordinary!" he ejaculated. "Astounding! Don't see how the devil you can do it!" And then after a little pause he inquired: "But what advice can you give me—or what aid? What shall I do? Tell my story to the police?"

The Great One held a match to his pipe.

"As to that, it's your privilege to suit yourself. But I'd be against it personally. It will do no harm, I think, to hold off a while. The detective bureau will still be doing business at the same stand if it seems needful to solicit official assistance later on, but in the meantime I'd prefer to have the field to myself. Where, will you be good enough to tell me, are the Burke emeralds?"

Twiner's eyebrows went up.

"Oh, they're safe enough. No need to worry about them. They're at Hendry's. Mrs. Twiner hasn't worn them yet."

"But she expects to wear them soon, I fancy?"

"It *was* her intention to make her first appearance with them this coming Saturday night. We've another party on then, worse luck."

Macumber sent a series of smoke rings wafting off through pursed lips.

"I think," said he, "that I'd let Mrs. Twiner carry out her intention. Yes; decidedly I should. They may prove an attraction for the fellow who's got the rest of the jewelry. And if you were to invite me, Twiner—ah, that's good of you. I shall surely be on hand."

Mr. John Oliphant Twiner rose.

"Very well, then," said he. "Until Saturday, at any rate, I'll make no report to the police concerning the theft of the jewelry. In regard to the watch, though, I ought to——"

The Great One chuckled, and extended a hand.

"You may spare yourself the trouble, my friend," he grinned. "'Twas an honest legerdemain that got the watch from you as well it may have been a criminal legerdemain which got the gems. Take it, Twiner—and may you regain your diamonds as easily!"

II.

"I wonder," said I, when Twiner had gone, "just how accurate the information was that our friend got from the safe expert."

Macumber regarded me quizzically.

"You speak as if you were afflicted with an idea, lad," he remarked. "Out with it!"

"I mean, I wonder if those people don't stand in pretty well together."

"What people?" demanded the Great One.

"The fellows whose business it is to set and reset combinations on safes and vaults. Twiner, for example, told us that no one

but himself knew the combination of the inner vault. That can hardly be true. Some one must have showed *him* the combination, and it would have been simple enough for that person to have preserved the figures in a memorandum. Has it ever occurred to you that mechanics employed by safe companies might find a very profitable side line in the sale of certain combinations to crooks—if they didn't, that is, take it into their heads to turn crook themselves?"

Macumber paid me the tribute of a long and sober look.

"Now, now," he murmured, half to himself, "that is a notion."

Then he smiled.

"But," said he, "the person we must be looking for will be one who would have a motive for concealment of the theft. Else why the bother and expense of the substitution? Even necklaces of paste and solitaires of glass run into money when they have to be made to order to duplicate genuine jewels. So I fancy it would rather be with the jewelers than with the safe companies that our search should start—if you'll excuse just now the sidetracking of a generally excellent thought, lad. There'll not be more than a dozen firms in town that specialize in replicas of the real thing, and to-morrow I should be able to get about to all."

"And I?"

"You will stay by the telephone, youngster, for I'm expecting a call from a South American gentleman who may, I think, point us the way to a bright and shining adventure. 'Twill be a matter we should not miss, for I've a feeling this affair of Mr. John Oliphant Twiner will be only too soon done with. What, what? For the good Lord's sake don't gape at me, lad! A deep, dark mystery you deem this disappearance of the Twiner diamonds? Oh, tush. I've no patience with you—not the slightest!"

And in demonstration thereof the Great One went into a smoky silence that endured until we turned in. The next morning he took leave of me after an early breakfast, and I did not see him again until evening.

"What luck?" he queried. "Did Señor Alvaro ring up?"

"Haven't heard a peep out of him," said I. "The telephone hasn't so much as jingled all day. I could as well have been saving you a few steps."

"I've taken few myself, lad," said Macumber. "It's been a grand spendthrift day. I've used taxis. And I'd not be regretting the expense."

"You've had success?"

"Beyond my hopes."

"Found where the replicas in paste were made?"

"That I did. 'Twas the last shop but one on my list."

"And there's a possibility of tracing the person who ordered them?"

"Say rather the persons, lad. There were two. A man and a woman. I have excellent descriptions of both. And I'm thinking I shall have no large difficulty in finding them."

"You don't mean to tell me they left their names and addresses?"

"No; they were not so obliging as that. It would be too much to expect, youngster."

"But you really have a plan for tracking them?"

"I don't think we shall have to do any great amount of tracking."

"And why?"

"Because," replied the Great Macumber serenely, "I shall be very much surprised if we don't see the two in the crowd at the Twiners on Saturday night."

"What's to be done in the meantime?" I demanded. "Do we sit idle?"

Macumber tenderly tilted the last bottle of MacVickar at the moment remaining to us, and cast an eye about for the soda.

"On the contrary," said he, when the dust was out of his throat. "We shall be busy digging up the good Señor Alvaro; for I fear we'll be out of a mystery with the passing of Saturday night."

III.

Save that it lacks the element of magicianly craftsmanship which it has been my purpose to stress in my recountings of the Macumberian exploits given me to share, our quest of the volatile and disappointing Chilean might make a story in itself. But it is not a story, whatever way, for telling here.

Enough to say that it was on the afternoon of the Saturday following John Oliphant Twiner's visit to the Rawley that we at last came upon Señor Alvaro in a dingy

hotel off Union Square, and that when Macumber bade a firm and final farewell to the gentleman we were obliged to abet a grave infraction of the traffic laws in order not to be left behind by the last decent train for Montclair.

The Twiner place was on the outskirts of the town—a stone-walled estate of certainly not less than twenty acres just now overhung by the atmosphere of carnival. When the taxi which we had picked up at the railroad station was still a quarter mile away we knew that Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner would be no niggardly hostess. Not only was the great house ablaze with light, but a thousand gay lanterns flared out over the grounds.

"A garden fête Twiner said 'twould be," murmured Macumber as he climbed out of the cab at the gate. "But it's more reminiscent of Mardi-gras time at Coney Island, wouldn't you say, lad? Ah, Twiner, happy to be here. A brave show you're making. I was but this instant remarking upon it. And Mrs. Twiner! One of the rare moments of my life, madame!"

It was a woman plain and plump, almost dumpy of figure, over whose hand the Great One was making his courtliest of bows. To picture Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner in her quondam rôle of queen of the dance was, I felt, a little beyond me. She looked, indeed, as if any exercise more violent than a leisurely stroll along a well-shaded way would be abhorrent to her if not downright unbearable. Yet not two minutes had passed when she and Macumber were footing it among the score of couples who had crowded onto the star-roofed dance floor on the lawn at the opening blare of a fox trot. I caught a despairing glance from the Great One, and then Twiner took my attention from his martyrdom as he and his partner were swept into the vortex.

"My wife," said the host, not without a trace of pride, "is all for doing things in a big way when she does them at all. The servants tell me we've close to a hundred and fifty people here. Blessed if I know half of them—and I don't believe any one else present does, either. It's open house with Bella when she entertains. People are used to that sort of thing nowadays, she says. Notice the emeralds, did you?"

"They were inescapable," said I. "Wonderful. I can understand why such stones command a fortune. I don't think I've ever seen a more beautiful piece of jewelry than the necklace."

Twiner shook his head.

"Can't help worrying about it, somehow," he said. "I've got a feeling we won't get through the night without some sort of mess—with the emeralds at the bottom of it. Mrs. Twiner seems to feel the same way, although she hasn't said a word. She's been sort of nervous all evening. Not herself."

"You haven't told her about the disappearance of the diamonds?"

"Haven't even given her a hint. She didn't ask about them, and I didn't volunteer anything. Seemed to be her pleasure that the emeralds should shine alone tonight. Aren't they worn with diamonds, maybe? I don't know. Well, here they come back, and I suppose I'll have to rush around and smile at some more strangers. But tell Macumber for God's sake not to let the green goods get away from us, won't you?"

Presently, when Mrs. Twiner after a moment of inconsequent and I thought rather labored chatter had left us, I delivered her husband's message to the Great One.

"What but a wish to keep the emeralds in sight does he suppose would have brought me so far from Times Square?" he asked. "Tush! In all but what concerns real estate the man's a fool. That delusion of his in regard to his holy-of-holies vault, for instance. What a ninny!"

In process of keeping the emeralds in sight we subsequently watched the stout Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner curvet and pant through two more fox trots and a one-step. Once she danced with her husband; again with a red-faced elderly beau in white flannels, and finally with a sleek-haired youth with a spidery waist and trousers belling bravely over his shoes.

After this third dance I momentarily lost track of Mrs. Twiner, and of Macumber too. I was seeking him aimlessly in the crowd when I felt the Great One's touch at my sleeve.

"Come, lad!" he whispered. "Our moment approaches. I wouldn't have you miss it."

Still with his hand on my arm, he steered me through the press, past the big house and toward a small lake within the Twiner grounds that lay snowy under the moon. Through the trees bordering this lake Ma-

cumber threaded his way cautiously until, when at last he halted, we stood within twenty feet of a rustic bench at the water's edge. On the bench, with her pudgy profile toward us, sat a woman; and I did not need the Great One to tell me who she was. Starshine and moonbeams were lighting gorgeous and nameless scintillant greens in the treasure that hung about her neck.

"Mrs. Twiner!" said I.

"The lady of the emeralds—and lately of the diamonds," whispered Macumber. "And now who comes? Look!"

A second since I had heard light footsteps crunching in the gravel of the shaded path leading to the lake. Now I saw a shadow moving toward us under the trees. The shadow evolved itself into a figure I was at no loss to place. It was the youth who had performed the one-step with Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner for his partner.

At the bench by the water the newcomer halted. He glanced back over his shoulder toward the crowded lawn about the dance floor, a hundred yards or more away, and then spoke a few words in so low a tone that they did not carry to us.

And then the thing happened which Macumber had been so anxious I should not miss.

The wide hands of Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner went to the back of her neck, and for an instant I saw them trembling there. Something that was green and lovely with the captured gold and silver of the stars and moon went from wide hands to a white and slender hand—from the white and slender hand into the coat pocket of the dancing young man.

When I felt the breath back in my body the two who had met on the pond shore were making their way, by separate paths, back toward the music and the lights.

I looked at the Great One, and he was smiling.

"What does it mean?" I gasped.

Macumber's smile faded. He regarded me with a frown that softened almost immediately to an expression of solicitude.

"I guessed it," said he, "at the moment I was told the woman had been dance mad. Great Lord, lad, can it be possible that *you don't* see it yet?"

IV.

Twiner fell upon us as we came under the beam of the jack-o'-lanterns. His face was gray.

"It's gone!" he groaned. "Gone! Where the devil have you been?"

"What's gone?" asked the Great One coolly.

"The necklace! The emeralds!"

"Eh? You can't mean it. Impossible."

"It's true."

"Stolen, you tell me?"

"I don't know. Bella doesn't think so. She says they probably dropped off. She'd been strolling off by herself, to get away from the crowd and the racket. Felt ill, she says. And there was something wrong with the clasp. She'd noticed it when she put the necklace on. I'm getting together some of the servants to hunt for it. You'll join?"

"In just a moment. Where's Mrs. Twiner?"

"She's gone into the house. Hasn't any more life for her party. Heartbroken."

"As I can imagine," murmured Macumber. "I'll have a word with her and come back to you. It may be worth while. Don't let me stop you now."

We watched Twiner off into the crowd; and then, achieving the veranda at a bound, the Great One called:

"Mrs. Twiner! A moment, please!"

The door had been closing. It opened again. Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner, sometime queen of the dance, sometime lady of emeralds and diamonds, looked wanly out upon us.

"Oh, it's you, Mr.—ah——"

"It's I. Macumber's the name, madame."

"You—you've heard already of my misfortune?"

The Great One permitted a small interval to elapse.

"Misfortune?" he queried then, and there was something in his voice that perceptibly quickened the woman's breathing.

"My emeralds," she said. "They cost Mr. Twiner a fortune. And I've lost them."

"What is lost may be found," Macumber told her gravely.

"But with so many here! So many I scarcely know. I'm afraid we may never see the necklace again."

"Let us hope it's not so bad as that. Have you no idea where you lost it?"

"That is the tragedy of it. I can't imagine. It may have been anywhere. I felt ill, and walked around alone for nearly an hour—all over the grounds."

The Great One's steady gaze caught and held the woman's eyes.

"Perhaps," he said softly, "perhaps I can help you to locate the place where you last had the emeralds. I chanced to be strolling among the trees beside the pond. You were sitting on a bench there, and were wearing the necklace then. When you went away I am sure you did not have it."

"You saw——"

"I saw," said Macumber, "how the emeralds were lost."

Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner's faded china-blue eyes widened, and the color that was her own left her touches of rouge standing out in unrelieved glaring splotches on her cheeks.

"You saw!" she repeated. "And my husband—you've told him? Oh, God!"

"I've told no one but yourself what I saw," said the Great One. "Nor is it needful that I ever tell any one else. If only I could understand——"

It was a straw; the woman clutched at it.

"I wonder," she said, "if any man could understand. If only Johnny could understand. I've been a fool; an old fool, which is worse; a dancing old fool—which is the fool of fools. That boy! You saw him? He was a nice boy when we danced together once upon a time. A devil now, if ever a devil had the shape of a man. But not always. He was different. I couldn't have believed there was any harm in him. One day when I'd gone to the city shopping and had tired of the stores I met him in a *thé dansant*. He had no partner, and came to me. Very polite, very respectful. I could have been his mother.

"He danced divinely. Said he liked to dance with me. Wanted to see me again. I consented. We saw much of each other after that. A day came when he confessed he was in need of money. I saw no harm in helping him. It was indiscreet, but I had grown foolishly fond of him. He could have been my son, don't forget—might have been.

"As weeks went on—months—his embarrassed little borrowings became almost demands. I came to my senses then. I stopped dancing, except a little here at home. I saw no more of him.

"Ted kept dancing. I don't think he ever worked. Perhaps he was not vicious naturally, but he fell in with a bad crowd. A few months ago, after a lapse of years, he came to me. Like a ghost. He was ugly. He had a letter which I might have written to a son. But I have no son.

"'*Pay!*' he said. I paid. What money I had he took. Then he returned. '*Pay!*' To meet his price I turned my diamonds to paste. He showed me how that could be done—ordered the first of the replicas himself. There was no attempt at self-justification on his part, even. He didn't plead he was hard pressed. Instead he boasted that he was hoarding my jewels to dispose of abroad; that he would sell nothing until he had got the emeralds, the last of all. This was when he had read of Mr. Twiner's purchase at the Aubrey Burke auction. Counting in the emeralds, he said, there would be enough to keep him in comfort—in dancing clothes and dancing shoes—for life. And now——"

Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner wept. She wept almost comfortably, for there is merit in confession. Macumber permitted his hand to fall on her shoulder.

"Please stop," said he. "This is a moment for action, and not for tears. You have trusted me, and I shall not betray your confidence. Have no fear of that. I think I may be able to help you. But you must trust me further. You must rely upon me absolutely. Your promise? Good!"

And off into the night of jack-o'-lanterns went the Great Macumber, with a single hand wave for the two of us left upon the veranda to divide.

Minutes passed, and though I strained my eyes for him I could not pick out his stalwart figure in the throng below and beyond us. When finally he returned, two men were with him—one whose shoulders were slender, and one whose shoulders were broad. The slender shoulders were the shoulders of the Ted who danced and bled. Macumber introduced the other pair sonorously.

"Sergeant Rourke of the Newark detective bureau," he announced. "And Mrs. Twiner."

The young man with the flat and glossy hair nodded to the woman.

"These people," said he, "seem to be crazy. I wish you'd make it plain to them that I'm not a stranger here."

Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner, her tears whisked away, was making a spartan effort at composure.

"What's the trouble, Ted?" she asked with more of steadiness than I had thought it possible for her to achieve.

"They tell me I'm a burglar."

The Great One raised a voice in mild protest.

"It's not fair to say that, really. That isn't the idea. I haven't made any accusation against you, my dear fellow. I've merely whispered a suspicion. Something of large value has been stolen in this neighborhood to-night, and I happen to think that something is in your possession. Why do I think so? Ah, there is where I'll not be specific. Let it be that I simply do not like your looks. And Sergeant Rourke has been long enough acquainted with me, I fancy, to trust my judgment of a man's looks."

The plain-clothes man nodded.

"I'll take a tip from this gentleman any day," he said.

The dancing youth glowered.

"I can make it damned hot for you if you go too far," he warned. "I've told you I haven't got anything that doesn't belong to me."

"Perhaps not," said the Great One mildly. "In which case I shall owe you an apology which you may have without demand. I'm only asking you to prove it. I don't see why an innocent man should object to being searched in the interest of common justice."

"I object," said the perfect figure of the dancing man, "because the proposition itself is an insult. You see that Mrs. Twiner knows me. That should be enough for you. I'll take that apology now."

"Unfortunately," sighed Macumber, "it is not enough. So are you going to submit gracefully to a search, or are you going to be searched willy-nilly? For you may be sure——"

He broke off, and wheeled about. The door behind him had slammed. John Oliphant Twiner was with us. His face had lost its grayness, and was very red.

"What's this?" he demanded. "Have you all heard about it? No, that can't be. It's only a minute since Mrs. Snedecor discovered her loss. By Godfrey, Bella, I believe your emeralds must have been stolen, after all. We seem to have a whole troupe of performing thieves with us this evening. Lil Snedecor's diamond necklace is gone, too!"

Macumber turned a grim face upon the dancing man; and the grimness hid, I thought, a sudden confusion.

"You hear that?" he said. "Is the search to proceed with or without your consent?"

The dancing man's eyes were on Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner's.

"Hold on!" he cried. "I'll make you a sporting proposition. I want to do the decent thing—and I'm willing to leave it to Mrs. Twiner to decide what the decent thing is. Proper enough, isn't it? If Mrs. Twiner says it's right for me to submit to search, I give you my word I'll do it. In return, I want your word that you'll abide by her decision if it's in my favor. Dare you?"

The Great One nodded.

"I agree. And I speak for Sergeant Rourke. Yes? Thank you, sergeant."

The ballroom Adonis had not taken his gaze from our hostess, although her own eyes were darting from his to Macumber's and on to her husband's.

"It's for you to say, Mrs. Twiner. Am I to let them search me?"

The woman was at the point of panic. With the Great One's eyes upon her, her lips shaped a "Yes;" but the word remained unspoken. And as speechless as she, John Oliphant Twiner stood staring at her—staring wonderingly at us all.

"For you to say," reiterated the dancing man; and now I saw the trembling lips form the "No."

Macumber's voice rose ringing before the answer was out.

"Madame, you have promised me your confidence. I claim it at this moment. I would not see the rascal go. Do we search him?"

For an agonizing instant the woman hesitated. Then, with hands clenched and lips compressed, looking at none of us, she nodded.

She did not nod alone. The dancing youth was nodding too. The lip that bore his vague little mustache had drawn up, exposing a rodent tooth.

"So that's what you say, is it?" he snarled. "You want me searched, do you? Well, they won't have to search me. I'll give up—give up clean." He threw back his polished head, and turned his glare upon Macumber. "You guessed something, you did. But not the half of it. You think I've got a necklace in my pocket.

Well, I have. And there's a story goes with it. I'm going to give them both to you together."

"The necklace first, if you don't mind," suggested the Great One.

Our ornamental young man hesitated, but not for long.

"Oh, well," he said. "What's the difference?"

His hand went into the pocket into which I had seen the emeralds go, down by the little lake. When it came forth it held, surely enough, a necklace. Yet somehow in the moonlight it seemed the emeralds had been bleached. The dancing youth stared, I stared; and the Twiners were staring, too. Not one of us found a voice. It was the Great Macumber who spoke up, calm and cheerful:

"Diamonds, eh? And beauties! I can understand the temptation they must have been to you, my friend. Won't you pass on the good news to Mrs. Snedecor, Twiner —and then put in a call for the local police?"

V.

I have never been a believer in the condonation of crime; and, personally, I should have enjoyed nothing better than to have seen young Mr. Edwin Bartonet off for a long sojourn in one of those cool-walled resorts to whose populating the Great Macumber in his day has so liberally contributed.

But, as Macumber rather feelingly remarked when all was over, one can't have everything in life.

At least in the case of Mr. Edwin Bartonet, liberty—as effected by private arrangement between Macumber, Sergeant Rourke and two reasonable uniformed men of the Montclair police force—came high.

Out of its price, the Great One was enabled not only to assure Mrs. John Oliphant Twiner that her troubles were all in the past, but also to perform a major miracle in the transmutation of the paste in the Twiner-Blessing-Jones vault into diamonds that no expert might sniff over.

Just how this last-mentioned miracle was worked Mr. John Oliphant Twiner isn't aware, to my certain knowledge, even at the present time. And indeed it was only by the exercise of a proper persistence that I myself was saved from walking for once in outer darkness.

Many think I suspected, but a full week had gone by before I could persuade Macumber into anything like a heart-to-heart discussion of the events of our social evening with the Twiners.

"There was something I didn't quite get in connection with that necklace business," said I, at his first evidence of thawing. "I saw Bartonet drop the emeralds into his coat pocket. There can't be any question of that. And yet within a half hour he's taking diamonds from the same pocket, and you're turning up with a string of emeralds which you allege you found in the grass. What's the answer, maestro?"

The Great One made a movement of his head as if he would have shaken me off.

"It behooves a man who deals with a snake to be wily," said he. "In the circumstances I would have felt myself justified in going to far lengths. We may thank our stars—and so many others—that things ended as they did. By the by, they've a double-header at the Polo Grounds this afternoon, lad. You'll be my guest?"

That drew a scornful laugh.

"When I've had the answer to a certain question, I'll tell you," said I.

Macumber regarded me morosely, but I held with him eye to eye. I saw him weaken; a double-header makes a subtle and irresistible appeal to the Scotch in him.

"Give me the question, lad," he said presently.

"It's this," I told him. "On the evening alluded to you displayed an uncanny knowledge of the theft of a diamond necklace—seemed to know it had been stolen before even the owner saw it was gone. Now, how in the sensible world could that have been?"

He looked at me longer and harder, but the weakness was growing upon him. I saw the light of confession creep into his eyes as it had come into Mrs. Twiner's.

Then, "Tush!" cried the Great Macumber. "Didn't I steal it mysel'? Up, lad, and we're off for the ball game!"

Another Rohde story in the next issue.

A Chat With You

ONE lady we were talking to had the air of reproaching us for not being a farmer. She said that farming was the most honest way in the world of making a living. The farmer did good to everybody and hurt nobody. Generally speaking also, he was most inadequately rewarded for his toil and life of self-sacrifice, which makes him still more an engaging and heroic figure.

Another lady indicated that we had perhaps wasted our life by not studying medicine. The profession of the doctor was the noblest, the most useful, the most unselfish of all. The doctor is the man who is really needed in time of emergency. Where would the farmer be, what good would all his wheat do him, if he did not have a trusty surgeon handy when he happened to be laid low with appendicitis?

By the way, the first of the two ladies mentioned above has a brother who is a farmer; the second has a brother who is a doctor.

* * * *

THIS sort of stuff is rather discouraging. We have an ingrained and settled belief—loath as we are to admit it—that we would never be able to put it across as a farmer. The gypsy moth or the seven-year locust or something else unpleasant would get us. As for being a doctor—it is too late in life to start that now.

We met other people who had settled opinions as to what was the noblest means of livelihood. One friend was all for being a soldier—he happens to be an officer of cavalry. He claims that wars are necessary and even beneficial. Another friend told us that a miner was the only really honest man in the world.

We mentioned the claims of the farmer to that distinction but this friend shook his head.

"No," he said, "the farmer impoverishes the soil and slowly but surely his farm is getting poorer and poorer. He robs future generations for the benefit of the present. The miner digs something of value, gold or silver, right out of the ground and gives it to the world."

We could never get the logic of his position quite straight, but we may mention that his profession was that of prospector and pocket hunter. He had located many a mine and handed over many a nugget to the world.

* * * *

WE have had railroad engineers explain to us that life on this continent without good freight and express trains would be practically impossible. Also sea captains have pointed out to us the needful and beneficial nature of their calling. Brokers have proved, to their own satisfaction at least, that without the operations on the Stock Exchange, civilization would wither and we would go back to the Dark Ages. Dentists have shown us that human happiness and progress is mainly a matter of teeth and lawyers have told us that human happiness depends in great measure on the unselfish and ethical position of the legal profession. We suppose that bricklayers, plumbers, manufacturers of women's clothing can all prove that theirs is the one most honorable calling.

WE had a pleasant thrill, a surprise that left us glowing, this morning when a visitor assured us that the people responsible for a good magazine were the real benefactors of the human race.

"Everything," he said, "our whole future as a nation depends on education. And the thing that educates the people is what they read. The schools and colleges just furnish the groundwork. The real education of a man consists in his daily reading as much as anything else. And what do people read now? Essays, histories, biographies, special articles? They do not. They read the fiction magazines and that's where they get their education. Furthermore, the better magazines insist to-day on such accuracy and fidelity to life in the stories they publish that the education they hand out is a sound one. And the facts are handed out in the way most easily assimilated."

* * * *

SERIOUSLY, and trying as hard as may be to set aside the consideration that our great effort in life is to get out the best fiction magazine possible, we think there is something in what our visitor said.

People live, after all, in quite as great a degree with their thoughts as they do with their physical needs and ailments. It is what a man thinks and believes that in a great measure makes him what he is. Further than this it is true that most people are too busy with daily occupations to delve into histories and heavy works for their information. They take it, diluted to a certain extent, in the form of fiction. None of our newspapers have national circulations. And all the magazines of national circulation depend, almost without exception, on the fiction they run for their appeal.

* * * *

THE successful magazine fiction of to-day may not always, or even often, represent the work of genius, but it is certainly not trash. It is sound, helpful, informative, thought provoking. It is not a dope that lulls people to sleep. It is a tonic that has no bad after effects. The man who has the habit of reading current fiction is certainly better off for it.

This is one of the oldest, the biggest and most widely read fiction magazines in the country. It was really a pioneer in the new field of furnishing the best fiction buyable for the most people. It was never so good, we think, as it is to-day. The book-length novel—really a two-dollar book—given complete in the next issue is "One Night in Zanzibar," by Ralph D. Paine. The rest of the magazine represents the best work of such men as Stacpoole, Percival Wilde, Niven, Coolidge, Rohde and Winter. It would be well to order in advance the number for October 20th.

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CRISP and flaky grains of selected wheat, puffed to 8 times their normal size, light as the air, and with the rich flavor of nut meats.

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Quaker Puffed Wheat

Quaker Puffed Rice

Perfect Health — why not?

This simple food has given it to thousands

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.

"I believe that I am a pioneer in the Yeast-for-Health habit. I was one of those unfortunate youngsters who are neither sick nor well. I had a very poor appetite, and my mother humored me when she discovered that I liked yeast. (This was years ago.) It was not very long before the yeast started to take effect. . . . I had a desire to play. My body seemed to grow stronger, and my mother said that I was like a new child. I have been using Fleischmann's Yeast ever since, whenever I felt the need of a regulator—a matter of thirteen years."

(Miss Laura Banker, Albany, N. Y.)

"For two years I was never free from boils. While touring with the *Irene* Company one broke out on my chin which caused my whole neck to swell and turn purple. The hotel doctor said that if I would take fresh yeast and would keep taking it he would guarantee I would never have another boil. I started right in taking Fleischmann's Yeast and in two days the boil was drying up. That doctor told the truth: I have never had a boil since."

(Mr. M. W. Robertshaw, New York City)

"After several years' strenuous work of studying I faced a new position with lowered resistance and depleted nerve force, and a splotchy, yellow complexion. Frankly, I scoffed at the idea of yeast helping, but the first benefit I noticed was—a long-standing chronic constipation relieved. Next, a clear complexion that was a surprise to my friends. In two months I faced life cheerfully, buoyantly and confidently."

(Miss Alice D. Nelson, Wilmington, Del.)

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! You can order several cakes at a time, for yeast will keep fresh in a cool, dry place for two or three days.

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-9, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York City.

"If you don't believe it, I'll show you!"

—*what Listerine does to onion odor*

THEY had been reading a magazine advertisement about Listerine, the well-known antiseptic, and about its wonderful deodorizing power. It spoke of how Listerine removes onion odor and it challenged the reader to make this test:

"Rub a bit of fresh onion on your hand. Douse on a little Listerine. The onion odor immediately disappears."

She was skeptical and bet that it couldn't be done. He had seen it demonstrated before and set out to prove it to her. The girl lost her bet. But she gained a valuable bit of information.

Listerine *is* a really remarkable deodorant. And Listerine advertising does not overstate the case.

That is why so many thousands use it daily to combat halitosis (the medical term for unpleasant breath). And that is why so many thousands of women are coming to use it as a perspiration deodorant, They just apply it clear. It is non-irritating, refreshing, does not stain garments and *it does the work.*

Try it this way some day when you don't have time for a tub or shower. It requires only a moment. You'll be delighted—*Lambert Pharmacal Company, Saint Louis, U. S. A.*

LISTERINE  —*The safe antiseptic*

The Seventh Shot

By HARRY COVERDALE

A Detective Story that starts with a bang which echoes throughout the book

It happened on the stage during a dark scene. Six shots echoed, followed by a seventh.

The first six were part of the play. The seventh was not. It proved a messenger of death for Alan Mortimer. Who fired it?

Mortimer had many enemies and few friends. There was no lack of motive on the part of a dozen different people. Thus, you will readily see that the detective had no small task before him. His name is Barrison, and he is clever.

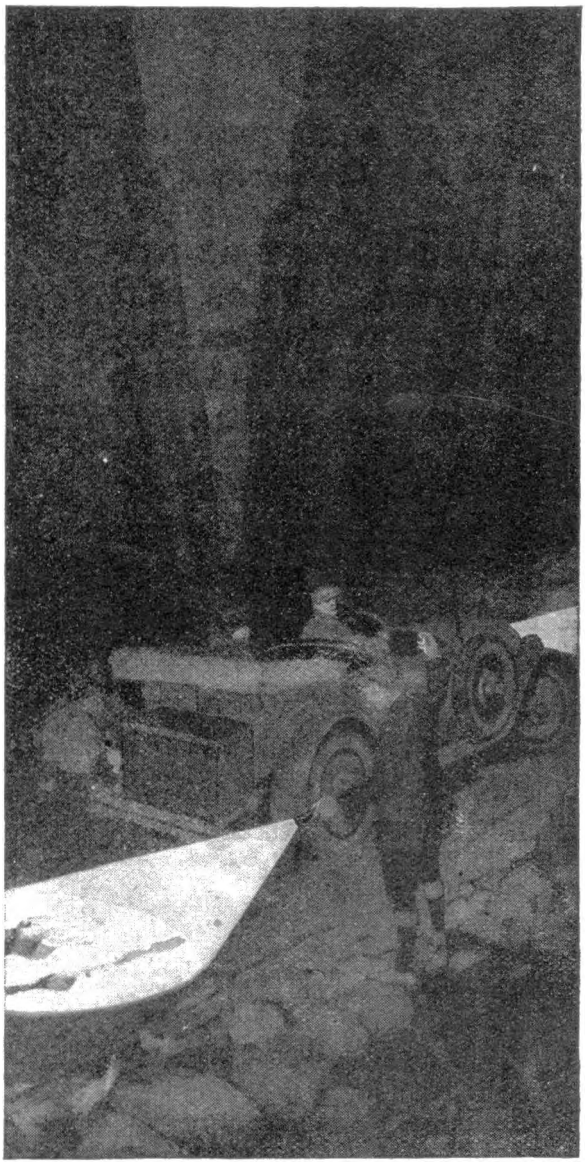
Price, $2.00 net

CHELSEA HOUSE

79-89 Seventh Ave. New York City

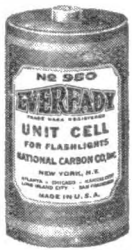
EVEREADY FLASHLIGHTS & BATTERIES
—they last longer

Backing around at night—*use your flashlight!*



No. 2071—*Eveready 2-cell Focusing Spotlight with 200-foot range.*

Eveready Unit Cells fit and improve all makes of flashlights. They insure brighter light and longer battery life.



PITCH-BLACK night . . . narrow, high-crowned road. To back around, use your flashlight! Avoid ditches and dark embankments.

Use your Eveready to examine the carburetor. Play safe. Use it to see how much gas is in the tank. (You could safely poke a lighted Eveready into a barrel of gasoline!) Use it to change a tire, to find the jack or pliers, to put the curtains on.

The long-range Evereadys are great for motoring. Shoot a beam 200, 300 or 500 feet, depending on which focusing type you select. Read road-signs with them without leaving the car.

The aluminum Evereadys at 65c and 75c, complete with battery, are small and practical. Handy to have in the car or carry in your coat-pocket. A good type to use around the house too.

Reload your flashlights and keep them on the job with fresh, strong Eveready Unit Cells. And if you haven't a flashlight, see the nearest Eveready dealer at once.

The improved Eveready line has many new features, new designs. Standard Eveready features are retained. 65c to $4.50, complete with battery—anywhere in the U. S. A.

Buy from electrical, hardware and marine supply dealers, drug, sporting goods and general stores, garages and auto accessory shops.

Manufactured and guaranteed by
NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC.
New York San Francisco
Canadian National Carbon Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

The Range-land Avenger

By

George Owen Baxter

A Western Story

about a man who lived up to the name of brother at the risk of all he held dear in life.

Riley Sinclair trusted only one man, and that man was his brother. When that brother was left to die on the burning sands of the desert by men who had been his bunkies, Riley swore vengeance.

Quick on the draw, and sometimes brutal in his expression of hatred, nevertheless there is a great deal of native honesty in his make-up. It is inevitable that such a man makes his mark upon the lives of others about him. This, Riley does, and when summed up after a most adventuresome career, we think that you'll judge the balance is for, not against him.

Price, $2.00 net

CHELSEA HOUSE

79-89 Seventh Ave. New York City

Boyce-ite

Every time you buy gasoline

Look for the Boyce-ite advertisement in

Saturday Evening Post
Country Gentleman
Hearst's International
Cosmopolitan
Red Book
System
Munsey's Magazine
Everybody's Magazine
Munsey's Magazine
People's Magazine
Popular Magazine
Short Stories
Adventure
Argosy-All Story Magazine
Detective Story Magazine
Western Story Magazine
Love Story Magazine
Top-Notch
Sunset Magazine

and leading newspapers here and abroad

Experienced motorists of America have formed a new habit—the habit of using Boyce-ite every time they buy gasoline.

The Boyce-ite habit is a good habit—an economical habit.

—Boyce-ite makes your motor start easier.

—gives it more power—smoother operation.

—adds from 1 to 6 miles to every gallon of gasoline you buy.

—and does away forever with the expense and annoyance of grinding valves, cleaning spark plugs and removing carbon.

Boyce-ite makes old cars run better and new cars last longer. No one knows how far a carbonless motor will run.

Now the proper and economical way to use Boyce-ite is not occasionally—not now and then—but every time you buy gasoline.

Occasional use of course affords temporary relief—but it seems foolish to remove carbon today and allow it to form again tomorrow.

Even a speck of carbon causes premature wear, perhaps at some vital part—and all gasoline forms carbon until it has been treated with Boyce-ite.

The moment carbon begins to accumulate, your car is headed for the repair shop.

Remember, Boyce-ite has passed the "wonder if" stage—every motorist who has used it continuously knows that it is the best fuel for his motor, and whether you drive a Ford or a Rolls-Royce you will find it true.

You are not pioneering when you join the army of those who use Boyce-ite every time they buy gasoline but are lagging behind the times until you do.

Harrison Boyce

To date over 11,000,000 cans of Boyce-ite have been sold—Boyce-ite is now carried by dealers in every city, town and hamlet in the United States.

Convenient touring package fits the pocket of your car—contains 3 cans of Boyce-ite—$1.00.

Boyce-ite can also be obtained in ½ gallon, 1 gallon and 5 gallon containers.

BOYCE & VEEDER CO., Inc., *Manufacturers of Boyce-ite exclusively*, L. I. C., N. Y.

This advertisement copyright by Harrison Boyce

Genuine BAYER

ASPIRIN

SAY "BAYER ASPIRIN" and INSIST!

Unless you see the "Bayer Cross" on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer Aspirin proved safe by millions and prescribed by physicians 24 years for

Colds	Headache	Neuralgia	Lumbago
Pain	Toothache	Neuritis	Rheumatism

Safe

Accept only "Bayer" package which contains proven directions.

Handy "Bayer" boxes of 12 tablets
Also bottles of 24 and 100—Druggists.

Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid

TYPEWRITER PRICES REDUCED

FREE TRIAL

ON ALL STANDARD MAKES

Big bargains, easy payments on *late model* Underwoods, Royals, L. C. Smiths, Remingtons, etc.—perfect machines expertly remanufactured by the "Young Process" guaranteed like new for five years. Shipped direct from our factory to you at big saving. Our big illustrated catalog sent *free and without obligation* to buy. Write for yours today.

Young Typewriter Co., DEPT. 152-A 654 W. Randolph St. Chicago, Ill.

FORDS-34 Miles

on Gallon of Gasoline with Air Friction Carburetor

We guarantee all other cars nearly double present mileage, power and flexibility. Models for any car, truck, tractor, marine or stationary engine. Makes old cars better than new. See our mileage guarantees.

Ford.....34 mi.	Chevrolet....32 mi.	Dodge.....28 mi.	
Maxwell.....30 mi.	Overland....32 mi.	Oakland.....24 mi.	

Mileage-increase guarantee on any other car sent on request.

SENT ON 30 DAY'S TRIAL You can drive any car in heaviest traffic without shifting gears. Starts off on high in any weather without priming or heating—No jerking or choking. Agents Wanted.

AIR-FRICTION CARBURETOR CO.
1248 Raymond Building Dayton, Ohio, U. S. A.

$2 Brings This Genuine DIAMOND RING

SIMPLY send $2.00 for the *most sensational, price-smashing diamond ring offer ever made.*

A perfectly cut, guaranteed, blue white, fiery diamond is set in an 18 Karat white gold cup; ¼ Karat size. Latest design, hand engraved mounting.

10 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

We take all chances—if you are not satisfied at the end of ten days for any reason whatsoever, return the diamond ring to us and your deposit will be refunded to you. *Send only $2.00,* and receive this genuine steel blue white diamond ring exactly as illustrated; in a handsome gift box charges paid. A legal guarantee bond as to quality and value accompanies each ring. After ten days' trial pay balance $6.46 a month for twelve months. **Price only $70.50.**

NO RED TAPE—NO DELAY

Order Now! *This offer is limited. It may never appear again. Don't delay. Just send $2.00 as a deposit.* If you wish to return the diamond ring after trial, your deposit will be refunded.

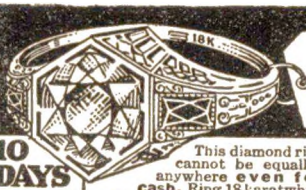
FREE BOOK OF GEMS

Most complete Jewelry Catalog ever issued of Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry—*newest designs at lowest prices.*

A full year to pay on everything you order from our TWO MILLION DOLLAR STOCK.

Address Dept. 1123 *Est. 1895*

ROYAL DIAMOND & WATCH CO.
35 Maiden Lane - New York



Genuine Diamond
Two blue Sapphires, 18 kt. White Gold. $29.85

10 DAYS FREE TRIAL

This diamond ring cannot be equalled anywhere **even for cash.** Ring 18 karat white gold, beautifully hand engraved and pierced, set with perfect cut, **blue white diamond** and blue sapphire on each side. Simply send $1.00 to us today and we will ship ring to you. Wear it ten days and if you don't agree it is an **amazing bargain,** we will refund your money. If satisfied, pay $1 a week until our bargain price of **$29.85** is paid.

Sent for $1

Free Send today for big catalog showing thousands of other bargains in diamonds, watches and jewelry. Prices $10 to $1,000. Wonderful values. **Cash or Credit.**
Established 1890 Address Dept. E41

BAER BROS. CO.
6 MAIDEN LANE - NEW YORK

MAKES AUTOS GO 40 MILES ON A GALLON OF GASOLINE

SIOUX FALLS, S. Dak.—The Western Specialty Company of this city announces the perfection of an amazing device which is enabling car owners all over the country to more than double their mileage from each gallon of gasoline used, and at the same time remove every particle of carbon from their motors. When the device is attached, automobiles have made over 40 miles on a gallon of gasoline—increased their power and pep tremendously and eliminated all spark plug difficulties.

This inexpensive little device is entirely automatic and self-regulating and can be easily attached by anyone in a few minutes without tapping or drilling.

The management of the company states that in order to introduce this startling new invention they are willing to send a sample at their own risk to one car owner in each town who can show it to neighbors and handle the big volume of business which will be built up wherever it is shown.

Just send your name and address to the Western Specialty Co., 902 Lacotah Bldg., Sioux Falls, S. Dak., and get their free sample offer.

MAKE MONEY AT HOME

YOU can earn good money at home in your spare time making showcards. No canvassing or soliciting. We show you how, supply both men and women work at home no matter where you live and pay you cash each week.

AMERICAN SHOW CARD SYSTEM LIMITED
240 Adams Building, Toronto, Canada

For the growing youngster Beeman's is a pure and healthful treat—its daily use is *"a sensible habit"*

BEEMAN'S
Pepsin Gum

AMERICAN CHICLE CO.

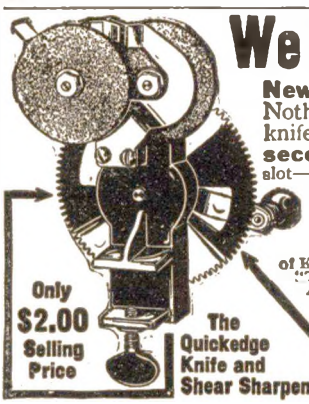
LAW STUDY AT HOME

Become a lawyer. Legally trained men win high positions and big success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Lawyers earn

$3,000 to $10,000 Annually

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Let us send you records and letters from LaSalle students admitted to the bar in various states. Degree of LL. B. conferred. Thousands of successful students enrolled. Low cost, easy terms. We furnish all text material, including fourteen-volume Law Library. Get our valuable 120-page "Law Guide" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them—NOW.

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 976-L Chicago, Ill.



The Quickedge Knife and Shear Sharpener

We Want Agents at $50 to $90 a Week

New Invention—Just out. Needed in every home every day. Patented. Nothing else like it. Low priced—**Sells on sight.** Sharpens any kitchen knife, paring knife, carving knife, bread knife, or shears and scissors **in ten seconds.** Mechanical masterpiece. A child can use it. Just put knife in slot—turn crank—sharpens both sides at once automatically. **We want representatives at once**—men and women hustlers. Get this position where **profits start first day.**

No Experience Necessary—200% Profit

Make as much money next week as these men are making now. J. C. Lewis, of Kansas, says: **"I have sold one hundred sharpeners in four days."** Hobart Kerr, of Md., writes: "The women can hardly wait till they get them." Herbert Cain, of Ky., sold nine after supper. At the end of the first day, J. W. Gordon, of Pa., writes: "I sold two dozen and **I sold to every one I saw."** Wm. G. Hall, of N. J., says: "I think it is great. I sold six in about one-half hour. The machine is a mighty fine proposition. **I am a mechanic and I know what I am talking about." You can make this money. WRITE TODAY. TERRITORY FREE. Get busy at once.**

QUICKEDGE SHARPENER CO., 1130 Sharpener Bldg. 159 West Pearl St. **Jackson, Mich.**

~~$45.00~~ Bed Room Outfit

Sale Price Complete $34.85

Outfit Includes:

2-inch post Steel Bed; 45 lb. Mattress; Link Fabric Spring; 2 Fine Pillows; 1 Bed Sheet; 2 Splendid Pillow Cases; 1 pr. Voile Curtains; 1 Oval Woven Rag Rug

Regular Price $45.00
Sale Price Complete— $34.85

Sent for Only $1.00 Down

30 Days' Free Trial—Send Coupon Today

Once you see this quality outfit installed in your home you will realize that here is the most astounding value ever offered in attractive bedroom furnishings.

THE BED—a genuine Simmons product, continuous post, all steel construction. The head 50 in. high; the foot 34 in. high; posts 2 in. in diameter; fillers oval in shape; finish, the Vernis Martin gold bronze, comes only in full size 4 ft. 6 in. wide.

THE MATTRESS—full 45 pound weight and reversible. Heavy layers of soft cotton felt on both top and bottom, sanitary excelsior between. The beautiful floral art ticking is deeply tufted, with double stitched roll edges and round corners.

THE SPRING—a fully guaranteed link fabric construction, built to last a lifetime. Kept perfectly stretched so it cannot sag by helical steel springs securely anchored in the angle iron frame. Finished in black Japan.

PILLOWS—Stuffed with double dusted, steam dressed and cured feathers, sanitary, odorless. Floral art ticking to match mattress.

RUG—An oval, Colonial Style Woven Rag Rug, strongly sewed and sized to lay flat. Assorted colors.

CURTAINS—of very fine quality ruffled voile, hemstitched, with tie backs. Each curtain 27 in. wide; full 2¼ yd. length.

BED SHEET and 2 Pillow Cases—splendid quality, bleached, 3 in. hem.

FREE

Send at once for a free copy of our latest catalog Everything to make your home complete; everything at bargain prices and a wonderful variety to choose from. But just see for yourself. Send for the catalog now.

Simply mail the coupon with $1 and the complete outfit as illustrated and described above will be shipped to your home on 30 days Free Trial. If it fails to come up to your expectations, you are free to return it to us, and we will return your $1 deposit, with freight charges both ways. Can you imagine a safer way to buy? We can make this exceptional offer only because we know you will be delighted with your purchase and will gladly pay the balance in our easy monthly installments of only $3. Take advantage of this offer now, while you can. Remember, a regular $45 value for only $34.85, if you order at once. Mail the coupon, with only $1.

L. FISH FURNITURE CO.
2225-37 W. Pershing Road,
Dept. 10-87 Chicago, Illinois

L. FISH FURNITURE CO., Dept. 10-87
2225-37 W. Pershing Road, Chicago

Enclosed is $1.00. Ship advertised Complete Steel Bedroom Outfit No. A600 I am to have 30 days FREE Trial. If I keep the outfit, I will pay you $3 a month. If not satisfied, I will return the outfit within 30 days, and you are to return my $1 deposit and any freight charges I have paid.

No. A600—$1 Down; $3.00 a month; Total $34.85

*Name*_____

*Address*_____

*Post Office*_____ *State*_____

If you only want latest bargain catalog just send put X in box ☐

LOFTIS
BROS. & CO. EST'D 1858

DIAMONDS WATCHES
CASH or CREDIT

No. 27
Blue White, perfect-cut Diamond. Solid 18-k White Gold. Price $160. Terms: $10 down, then
$2.50 A Week

No. 28
Blue White perfect-cut Diamond. The ring is Solid 18-k White Gold, $37.50. Pay $3.75 down, then
$1.00 A Week

Genuine Diamonds GUARANTEED
We import Diamonds direct from Europe and sell direct by mail.

Send For Free Catalog
Over 2,000 illustrations of Diamond-set Jewelry, Watches, Wrist Watches, Pearls, Mesh Bags, Silverware, etc. Sent prepaid for your FREE EXAMINATION

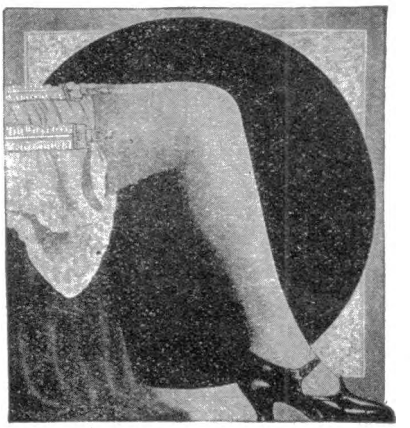
TERMS: Goods delivered on first payment of one-tenth of purchase price; balance in equal amounts within eight months, payable weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly, at your convenience.
Money back if not satisfied

WEDDING RINGS
All Platinum, $25 up. With Diamonds: Three Diamonds, $65; five Diamonds, $80; seven Diamonds, $95; nine Diamonds, $110; surrounded by Diamonds, $225. Solid White or Green Gold, $5.00 up.

No. 16 — Wrist Watch, Solid 18-k White Gold. 17 Jewels, **$29.75.** 14-k, 15 Jewels, **$24.85**

Railroad Watches—Guaranteed to Pass Inspection
HAMILTON No. 992. 21 Jewels, Adjusted to 5 positions. Gold filled 25-Year Case - - - $55
ELGIN'S LATEST RAYMOND. 21 Jewels; 8 Adjustments. Runs 40 hours one winding. Gold filled 20-Year Case - - - $55

LOFTIS BROS. & CO. Est'd 1858 — THE OLD RELIABLE ORIGINAL CREDIT JEWELERS
Dept. E222 — 108 N. State Street, Chicago, Illinois
Stores in Leading Cities



Velvet Grip

Hose Supporters for All the Family

Are preferred, principally because the quality of webbing and workmanship never varies and is always of the best. The Oblong Rubber Button keeps stockings taut without twisting, eliminates runs and tears.

Baby Midget, the smallest member of the Velvet Grip family, for infants. Has non-rusting clasp. Send to us direct if you cannot obtain them. Silk 18c, Lisle 12c.

George Frost Co., Boston
Also makers of the famous Boston Garter for men

SLENDER ANKLES CAN BE YOURS $2.95

PEOPLE ADMIRE DAINTY ANKLES

Thick or swollen ankles can quickly be reduced to dainty slender shape by a new discovery of special processed rubber.

Lenor Ankle Reducers
ANKLES ACTUALLY LOOK THIN WHILE GETTING THIN

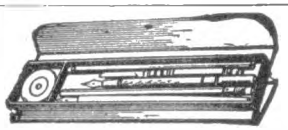
Different in reducing action from all other reducers. Slip on when you go to bed and note amazing results next morning. Reduces and shapes ankle and lower calf. Slips on like a glove. No strips of rubber to bind and cause discomfort. Nothing to rub in or massage. Enables you to wear low shoes becomingly. Worn under stockings without detection. Used by prominent actresses. Send $2.95 and we will send you Lenor Ankle Reducers in plain package subject to your inspection. Give size of ankle and fullest part of calf.

LENOR MFG. COMPANY
Dept. N10, 503 Fifth Avenue, New York

DENT'S
Toothache Gum
Stops Toothache Instantly

Insist on Genuine Dent's!
All drug stores or by mail—25 cents. Made for 35 years by C. S. Dent & Co., Detroit, Mich.

SCHOOL BOX FREE



with Fountain Pen, Pencils, Knife, Pen Holder, Eraser, for selling 30 packages Chewing Gum at 5c a package. Write for Gum.
Bluine Mfg. Co., 171 Mill St., Concord Jct., Mass.

Try the New Cuticura Shaving Stick
Freely Lathering Medicinal and Emollient

TYPEWRITER PRICES CUT

Your choice of the World's best typewriters—Underwood, Remington, Oliver—full size, late model, completely rebuilt and refinished brand new. Prices smashed down to half. Act quick.

Free Trial

$2 and it's yours

Just send your name and address and we will mail you our complete FREE CATALOG prepaid, fully describing and showing actual photographs of each beautiful machine in full colors. Tells every detail of our direct-to-you small-payment plan. Write now for tremendous saving. No obligation whatever. Still time if you act now.

International Typewriter Exchange
186 West Lake Street — Department 139 — Chicago, Illinois

Buy Today 10 Months to Pay $2.00 Down Makes Any Article YOURS

Any article you select sent for your thorough examination and approval—you need send only $2 as deposit. After you convince yourself that the article you have selected is an exceptional value, keep it. You can pay the balance in 10 easy, monthly remittances. Unless you are thoroughly satisfied, deposit will be returned immediately. GUARANTEE VALUE BOND with every diamond, 7½% yearly increase in value. GUARANTEED! Transactions strictly confidential. NO RED TAPE—NO DELAY!

SWEET Diamonds possess a rare blue white color, and are scientifically cut for maximum brilliancy, fire, snap and animation.

SS 1. 7 perfectly cut and matched diamonds, PLATINUM set. White gold top. 14K. shank. $48.50.

SS 2. Radiant diamond of superior quality, perfect cut. Engraved 18K. W. G. ring. $50.00.

SS 5. Dainty, 15 jewel wrist watch. Engraved, 14K. white gold case. Sapphire set crown, silk grosgrain ribbon, white gold fittings. Guaranteed against repairs for a year. $18.50.

FREE Our new Diamond Book "Gifts for every occasion": Diamonds and Watches, Jewelry, Novelties, Silver and Toilet-ware. 3000 exceptional values—10 months to pay. Write to

SS 3. Men's ring, with sparkling, perfect cut diamond, 14K. shank. Engraved white gold ornaments. $60.00.

SS 4. ... quality, blue white diamond set in 14K. gold Engagement ring. White gold prongs. $60.00.

SWEET STANDS FOR SERVICE

Dept. 184-R "THE HOUSE OF QUALITY" CAPITAL $1,000,000.

L·W·SWEET INC.

1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

The Cow Women

A Western Story

By GEORGE GILBERT

Big, stanch Ed Fraser, a ranchman with a most lovable and lovely daughter, decided to try matrimony a second time, to the satisfaction of his enemies and the consternation of his friends.

You will like Ed and his daughter. You won't like Brazos Kingston, wily as a fox, and slippery as an eel, who managed to live without working, but you will be mightily interested in his actions.

Price, $2.00 net

CHELSEA HOUSE

79-89 Seventh Ave. New York City

Slender Women are more popular

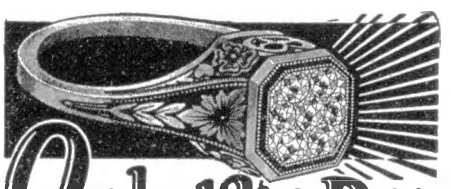
A graceful slender girl holds a fascination which only slender women have.

Men admire a youthful silhouette. Instinctively, they are drawn towards the woman whose figure is graceful and shapely. That's why slender girls are always popular.

But why worry about being overweight? It's easy to reduce. Use Marmola Tablets (thousands of men and women each year regain healthy, slender figures this way). These tablets will make you slender again. Try them. No exercises or diets.

All drug stores have them—one dollar a box. Or they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid, by the Marmola Co., 1715 General Motors Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

MARMOLA
Prescription Tablets
The Pleasant Way to Reduce



Only 12¢ a Day

Pays for This Beautiful

GENUINE DIAMOND RING

Almost a year to pay

You are wasting enough money every day to pay for a Diamond Ring. A small first payment and 12c a day buys this wonderful ring with seven Blue-white Diamonds set to look like brilliant $500 solitaire. Dainty 18 Kt. White Gold mounting. Free examination--not one penny in advance. Protective guarantee insures you 8 per cent yearly dividends--also 6 per cent bonus.

Write for full details of this offer; also Million Dollar Bargain Book. Everything sold on amazingly easy terms. Buying a diamond this way makes you save money. Diamonds are always worth more than you pay. Write for book now--Free. Address

J. M. LYON & CO., Inc.
2-4 Maiden Lane Dept. 1927 New York City

$1,000.00 in cash prizes

For NEW ways of using

G. Washington's

Delicious-Instant

Coffee

Housewives everywhere know G. Washington's Coffee—how good—how convenient it is. The coffee ready to drink when dissolved in hot water. The coffee with the delicious flavor.

G. Washington's Coffee is wonderful for preparing desserts, ices, jellies, cakes, candies and other dainties. By simply adding G. Washington's Coffee to other ingredients, a delicious coffee flavor is obtained. It comes in concentrated powdered form and no water is required. Its use in desserts is simplicity itself and results are certain.

If you can make good cake, a new dessert or confection, enter this contest, which is limited to those who have used G. Washington's Coffee prior to September 1, 1924.

$1,000 in cash prizes for new G. Washington's Coffee recipes. First prize is $500. No restrictions, no conditions.

LIST OF PRIZES

For G. Washington's Coffee New Recipes

For the best	$500
For the next best	250
For the next best	75
For the next best	50
For the next best	25
For the 20 next best, $5 each	100
Twenty-five prizes in all	$1,000

Contest Closes Dec. 31, 1924

All prizes will be paid on or before February 1st, 1925, and in event of tie for any prize offered, the full amount of such prize will be awarded to tying contestants.

The judges of the contest will be chosen from a selected list of managers and famous chefs of the leading hotels of New York City.

Write recipe on one side of paper only. No letters can be answered concerning the contest. All recipes must be mailed on or before December 31, 1924, and to become our property.

Use the coupon below, or a copy of it, attaching your suggestions for new recipes.

COUPON

G. Washington Coffee Refining Co.
522 Fifth Ave., New York City. Contest Dept. No. 7.
Enclosed find recipes for using G. Washington's Coffee.

Name.....

Street and No.....

City.....State.....

A Full Capacity 6-Volt STORAGE BATTERY

$14.65

Formerly $20.50

The Sign of "Friendly Service"

Service Stations Everywhere

An Achievement in Values

For Radio "A" Batteries

Radio users without exception have found Prest-O-Lite "A" Batteries highly dependable and steady in their current out-put.

"B" Batteries

Prest-O-Lite wet "B" Batteries give years of constant, dependable service. An occasional recharge and they're as good as new. Their initial cost is surprisingly low.

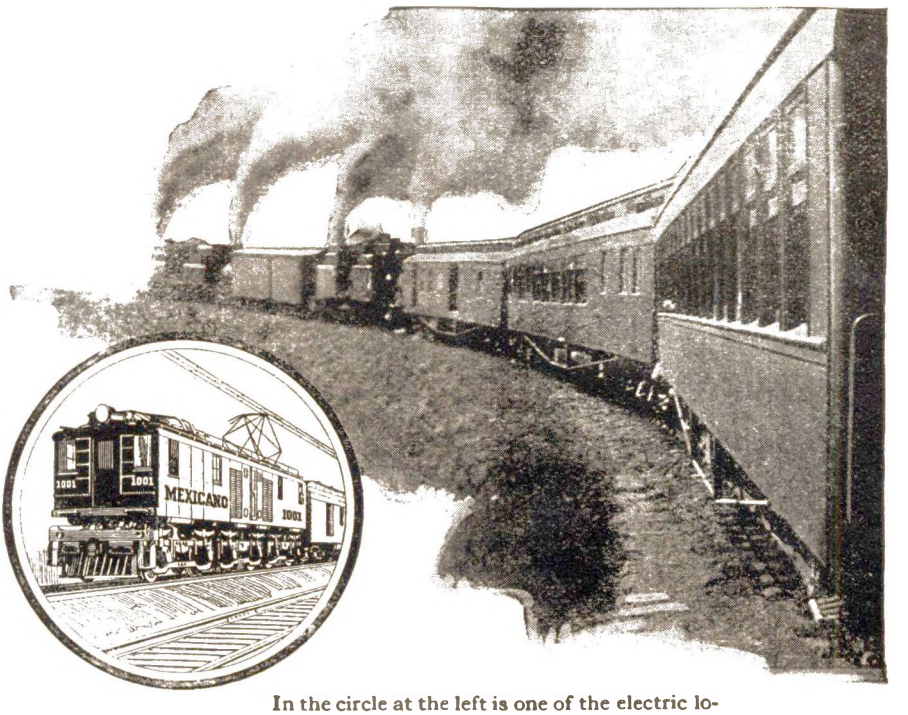
Here is the most extraordinary battery value ever offered the motorist—the high quality improved Prest-O-Lite battery at $14.65, a reduction from $20.50. This achievement could be accomplished only by an organization such as Prest-O-Lite with its enormous resources, up-to-date methods of manufacture and perfected system of distribution.

This is the realization of our desire to furnish the well known full capacity Prest-O-Lite battery at a price within the reach of all car owners.

Investigate the very latest battery development
—Our Prest-O-Lite *Super-Service* Battery

THE PREST-O-LITE COMPANY, Inc.
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.
New York Office: 30 East 42nd Street
Pacific Coast Factory: 599 Eighth Street, San Francisco
Canadian Factory: Prest-O-Lite Company of Canada, Ltd., Toronto, Ont.

THE OLDEST SERVICE TO MOTORISTS



In the circle at the left is one of the electric locomotives that will replace the steam engines.

10 locomotives will take the place of 25

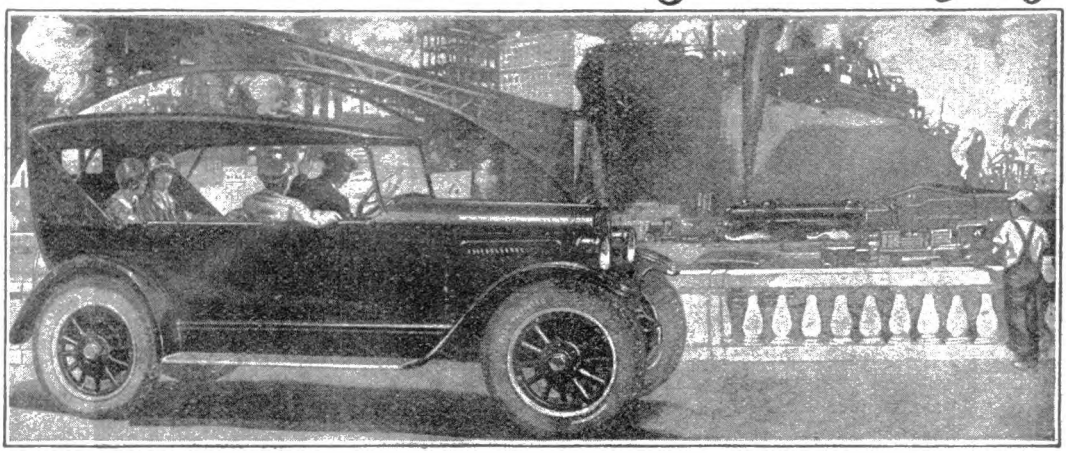
Electric locomotives draw long trains 650 miles over the Rocky Mountains on the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul. Eventually most of the railroads in America will be electrified—engineers estimate that this will save more than a hundred million tons of coal a year.

The General Electric Company is electrifying the Mexican Railway between Orizaba and Esperanza. On the first section—with many curves and heavy grades—10 *electric* locomotives will take the place of 25 *steam* locomotives.

Economies resulting from electrification will repay the cost of the improvement within five or six years.

GENERAL ELECTRIC

All Steel Adopted for Greater Safety



With Everlasting Baked Enamel Finish

Most motor car bodies are skeletons of wood, with thin sheets of steel nailed outside—whereas the Overland body is *all* steel, a frame of steel covered with steel—all steel, welded into one-piece solidity.

Wood collapses at a bending stress of 5,000 lbs. to the square inch—whereas steel will stand a stress of 35,000 lbs. to the square inch. That's the kind of strength and safety and durability Overland gives you!

—the *only* touring car under $800 with coachwork entirely of steel! Body by Budd, pioneer in steel bodies.

—the *only* touring car under $800 with a genuine finish of hard-baked enamel!

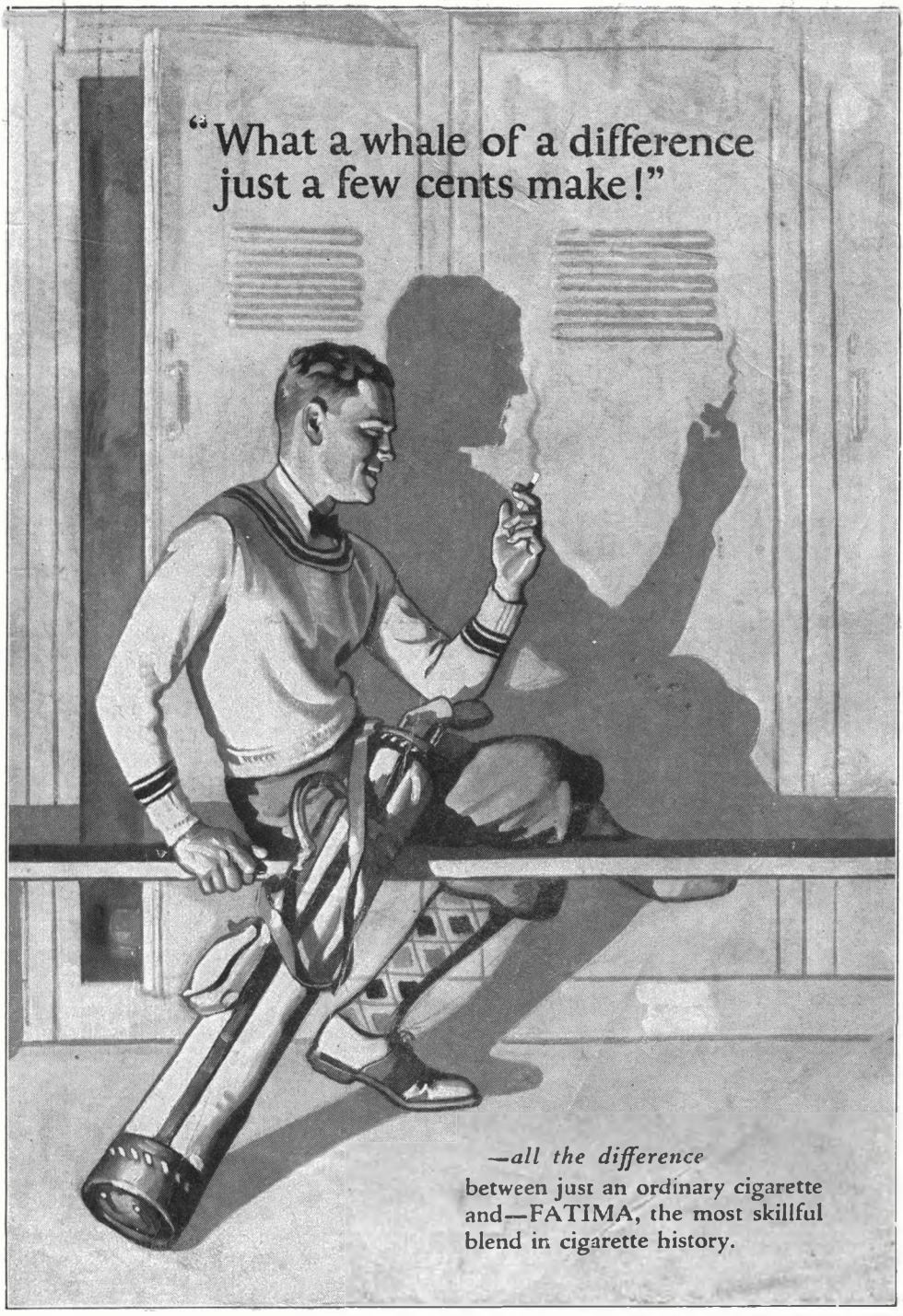
You can pour scalding water on this finish or scrub it with strong chemicals used to remove road tar—and even turn the scorching flame of a blow-torch on it without marring its gleaming beauty. A finish that keeps its good looks in spite of time, dirt and weather . . . In an age of steel, drive an all-steel reliable Overland!

Willys-Overland, Inc.,
Toledo, Ohio

Overland

Willys-Overland Sales Co. Ltd.,
Toronto, Canada

OVERLAND


"What a whale of a difference just a few cents make!"
—all the difference
between just an ordinary cigarette and—FATIMA, the most skillful blend in cigarette history.

Black Jack

"that good old licorice flavor!"

"Aw gee!"

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