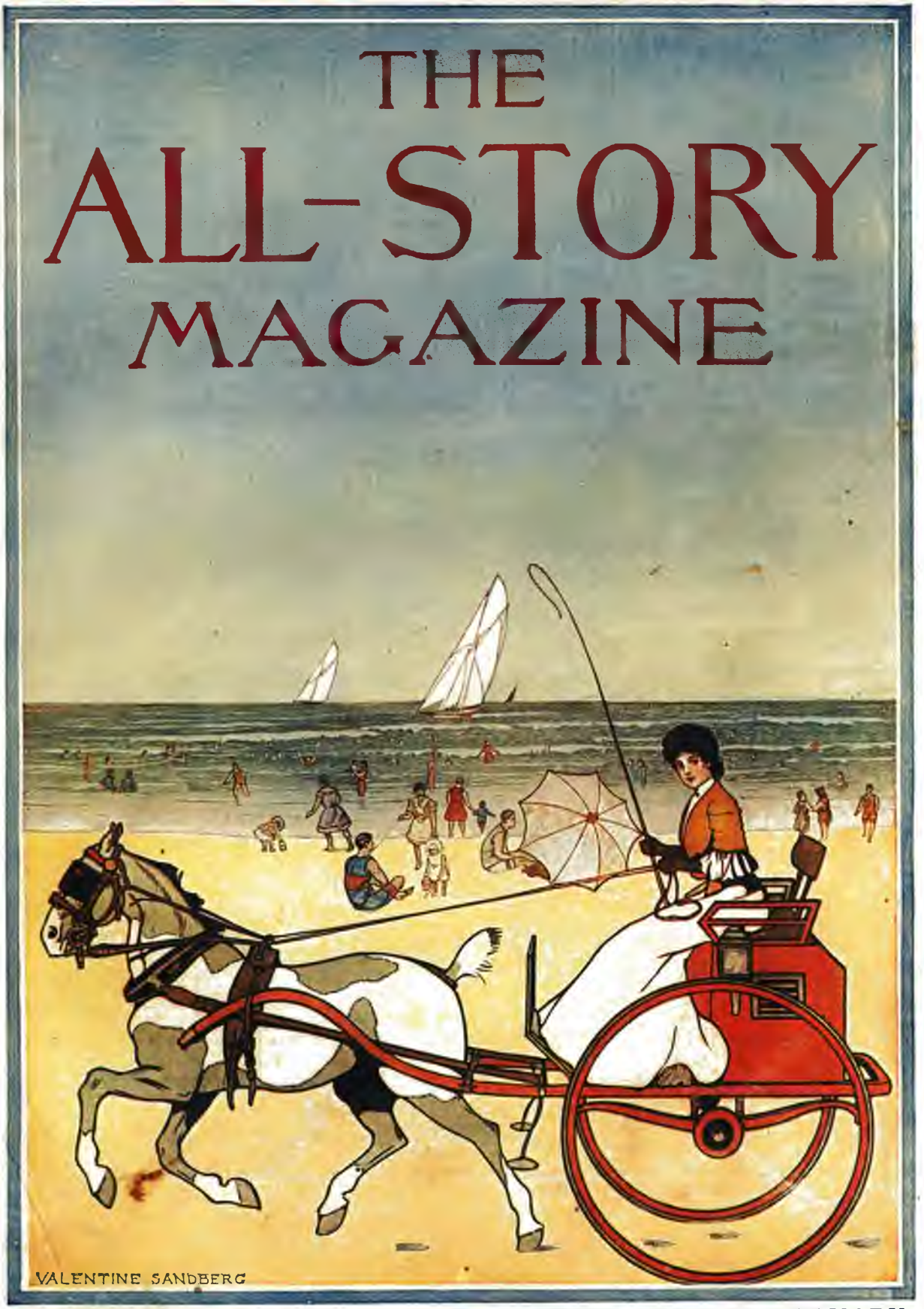
AUGUST, 1906 TEN CENTS

THE ALL-STORY MAGAZINE



THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 175 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

THE ALL-STORY MAGAZINE.

VOL. V. AUGUST, 1906. No. 4.

HIS PRICE.

By HELEN TOMPKINS.

A tale of an artful physician, an insurance policy and various queer accessories.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOOTPRINTS OF DEATH.

"I DON'T say that you are going to die, you know, Hagar," I said soothingly. "I only say—you are very old, you know; why, Hagar, you must be almost or quite a hundred years old—that you are very, *very* sick. You see, your body is like a piece of worn-out machinery."

She sighed restlessly and turned her face to the wall.

"I wish I *knew* whether I was going to die this time or not," she muttered in a voice so low that I scarcely heard. "I wish I *knew!*"

"You have a wonderful constitution, Hagar," I said cheerfully. "Who knows? You may outlive the rest of us yet. Is there anything I can do for you? Is there anything you need?"

She muttered something brokenly and groaned.

"Who stays with you, Hagar?" I asked.

A middle-aged yellow woman, dressed in a frock of faded cotton, with a string of blue glass beads about her throat, came through the doorway.

"I waits on her," she said quietly. "I'm all the folks she has, I guess. My mother was her first husband's granddaughter."

"And your name is——"

"Frances Elliott, sir. It was my husband who went after you this morning."

"Well, Frances," I said, looking again at the old woman, who was seemingly in a stupor, "there is nothing that we can do for Hagar now except to see that her last days are comfortable. There is no need of leaving any medicine."

"I told my old man that this morning," said Frances somberly. "'It's just old age that's killing Granny, Alec,' I said, 'and all the doctors in the world can't give her anything to cure that.'"

I closed my medicine-case.

"Let her have all the food and rest she will take," I said.

I glanced again at the snowy bed, the white curtains, and noted the extreme neatness that characterized the tiny cabin. "You are taking good care of her, Frances," I added gently. "I am glad of that."

The woman's eyes filled.

"Granny took me when my mother died," she said. "I was a baby then and a lot of trouble to her. I don't begrudge anything I can do for her now."

"Who owns this place?" I asked.

"She does, but she has made a will leaving it to me and Alec. Nobody else has any claim on her."

"You can let me know if she is suffering or if there is anything I can do," I said as I walked down the tiny flight of steps. "You can send Alec for me."

The house was set in the midst of a field of corn now in full tassel. It was early morning and the field was set thick-

ly with the faint blue stars of the wild convolvulus that swung green loops of vine from stalk to stalk of the ripened corn. I walked down the narrow path, fringed with the softly rustling, silken blades that stretched beside me in level ranks, and swung myself over the low rail fence.

The grasses were seeding in the fence corners, the tangling blackberry briers were slowly parching as in an oven and the long, slender sprays of the golden-rod were covered at their feathery tips with greenish-yellow buds still tightly closed.

The breeze brought from some near meadow the faint, vanilla-like fragrance of new-cut hay and the stronger, more obtrusive odor of the yellow-starred bitter-weed.

Nature dreamed of extravagance and in her dreams had dipped her paint-brushes in gold.

I had not been long in Rosston. In fact, I had but lately finished my education in a famous medical school in the East, and my fortune was yet to be made. Learning that Rosston was a good place to practise, I followed my sister and her husband to Arkansas. I was devoted to my sister and my sister's babies, and Jock himself was a good fellow, though not blessed with an over-abundance of this world's goods—a man kindly and generous to a fault.

I reached The Syringas just as Effie and Jock were sitting down to breakfast.

"It was old Hagar," I explained. "She is dying."

"She must be more than a hundred years old," remarked Effie curiously. "And the other negroes say that she is a witch. She is not very friendly."

I turned to my brother-in-law. "Did you find that paper?"

"My insurance policy? Yes. Effie had it tucked away."

Alec was waiting for me when I quitted the breakfast table.

"Granny is worse," he said. "She wants you."

"I meant to go to town," I said irresolutely. "I have a patient there who is very low with typhoid fever and needs me. And there is not a thing that I can do for Hagar, Alec. There's nothing in the world the matter with her but old age. She may live for weeks yet." But Alec shook his head.

"Granny says she is dying now, Dr. Leonard," he said, "and seems like she is just bound to see you. Frances tried her best to pacify her, but it wasn't no use."

I followed without another word. We found things at the cabin much as I had left them, save that the old woman was bolstered up in bed, staring blankly at the half-open door.

"Well, what is it now, Hagar?" I asked, a little vexed by the old woman's insistence.

"I want Frances and Alec to go away down to the spring. There's something I must tell you, doctor, and I haven't any too much time. I am nearly gone."

Signaling to the two negroes to leave the cabin, I poured out a strong restorative and held it to the old woman's lips.

"Take your time, Hagar," I said gently. "Talking will be easier for you directly."

A grayish shadow crept over the wrinkled face. "Is the door shut?" she asked.

I closed the door.

"No one can hear you now, Hagar," I said.

"I will have to begin by telling you about things that happened a long time ago," she said feverishly. "I am not like the other negroes, doctor. You see I have had better education than they have. And I know other things, too, besides reading and writing.

"At the plantation where I belonged there was an old woman called 'Dithe, and she and I kept things straight about the place.

"People said that 'Dithe was nearly a hundred and fifty years old. She was a voodoo woman and taught me all about 'conjure tricks.' Not the foolishness the niggers talk these days, but sure-enough spells.

"One night, not long before she died, she and I were sitting alone by the fire, and she said:

"'Hagar, do you know that when Death comes into this world he leaves a track just like people do?'

"She looked at me kinder queer and

I thought she was just trying to scare me.

"'No, I'm not,' she said just as though she knew what I was thinking, 'and I'll prove that I'm telling you the truth. Old man Coleman——'

"I looked up at her quick enough.

"'Old man Coleman is nearly dead anyhow,' I said, 'and has been for over a year. They sent for his children to-day.'

"'All the same he's not going to die *now*,' she said crossly. 'I didn't see the sign till to-day.'

"I looked at her foolishly.

"'Six months before anybody dies,' she said, leaning over and looking at me with her keen eyes, 'Death comes and lays his hand upon them. I don't care *how* they die. And if you know about it and look sharp you will find the track of Death somewhere about the place. I don't know why this is. Maybe it's just a plan so that nobody can say they haven't been warned. Anyway, there it is. I have seen it myself more than a hundred times, I guess.'

"'What does it look like?' I asked.

"She sprang up and caught me by the arm. 'Come, and I'll show you,' she said.

"The Colemans didn't live but a little way from our place. It was a stormy night. There had been a heavy frost that had loosened the leaves on the trees, and the wind was heavy and was whirling them in every direction.

"We had a lot of hounds, and so did the Colemans, and so did another man that had bought the old Gallegher place on the other side of us, and it seemed that every dog was howling at once that night. I walked a little closer to 'Dithe.

"'That's what's the matter with the dogs,' she whispered. 'Death has been here and they smell him. Lots of nights I have heard them make a fuss like this and somebody would say: "I wonder what *is* the matter with the dogs? Seems to me I never heard them so noisy before!" And sometimes I've laughed and sometimes I've felt a lot more like crying than laughing, knowing what I did.'

"Just then she dragged me through the fence and into a clump of rose-bushes by the side of the gate. I started to speak, but she pulled me down on the ground beside her, and looking through the open window, I saw old Major Coleman himself. He was choking with asthma and swearing at the dogs with every breath he drew. And just then I looked down a little and saw——"

She stopped and shivered.

"Never mind what I saw, doctor," she went on in a lower voice.

"I have seen the same thing often enough since." She waited a moment.

"I saw it no longer ago than last night," she whispered. "That is why I sent for you."

I felt the tightening of an icy hand about my heart. The old woman gasped a little.

"Your sister is a pretty woman," she said after a little while, half contemptuously, "but I have known widows just as young and just as pretty."

I felt the blood leave my face. "What do you mean, you old hag?" I asked sharply.

The withered body seemed to shrink and fall together.

"I am telling you the truth!" she whined. "When you go back home this morning just look under the clump of syringas in the front yard by the gate and see if what you find there don't bring the cold sweat out on you like rain.

"Then if *he* has any getting ready to do, see that he does it. Six months from yesterday and your sister—poor little thing!"

Again I shivered under the words. "I'll prove that I'm speaking the truth," she said suddenly.

"There's a little girl in Rosston sick with typhoid fever. They tell me you have been waiting on her. I heard yesterday that she was better, but, doctor, you had better look out for your patient. I saw the sign for her six months ago to-day."

"She is out of danger," I said quickly; "clear of fever and out of danger."

She laughed harshly in my face. "They will bury her to-morrow," she said sullenly. "Mind that I told you so."

I felt troubled and nervous and the morning sunshine seemed suddenly to have grown cold.

"Is that all?" I asked, but she did not answer.

She had died with those last words on her lips.

CHAPTER II.

ONE MAN'S PRICE.

My panic, for I can call it little else, lasted until I was safely out in the sunshine again.

"No wonder the negroes call the old woman a witch," I said to myself foolishly as I walked between the tall ranks of yellowing corn.

There was no one at home when I reached The Syringas. My sister had gone somewhere with her husband and had taken the babies. The cook did not know how long they meant to be gone—possibly until night-fall.

I had told myself over and over on my way home that nothing on earth would tempt me to go near the syringa bushes, where Hagar had been so sure that I should find the footprints of "Death." Yet I think I knew—I must have known all the time—that I fully meant to go, and that the sooner it was over the better it would be for my peace of mind.

The house was an old one. We had bought the place at a bargain because it was old and because the land was worn out. The grounds, rather extensive, were a mad riot of shrubbery, unpruned and uncared-for.

A bois-de-arc hedge separated the lawn from the fields beyond, and a tangle of crape myrtles hid the well and the out-houses from the view of any one coming in from the front. The Syringas was almost or quite a mile from the town of Rosston, and had belonged originally to a wealthy planter—the Major Coleman of whom old Hagar had spoken.

There was a clump of syringas, the syringas of which she had spoken, in a corner of the front yard. I had averted my face to keep from seeing them as I passed up the flagged walk a few minutes before.

But I now crawled under the tangled boughs of the syringas. It was dark and cool away from the sunlight, and I shivered a little as I stooped to begin my search.

Maybe I had better not tell what I found, after all. When I crept back into the wide sunshine again I was still shivering, although my pulse was racing like mad and my whole body was covered with perspiration. It seemed to me that I carried the brand of the terrible thing which I had seen, like Cain, upon my forehead. I mopped my face with my handkerchief again and again. At sight of me the dog shrank away with a mournful howl.

"Is this Dr. Leonard?" said a voice near me.

"Yes," I answered, turning sharply. "Have you a message for me?"

"Dr. Carter sent me out to see you, sir. He said that you were not very well, or wasn't very well yesterday, and that I might by coming save you a trip to town. He said to tell you that little Elsie Dudley died very suddenly this morning with heart-failure."

I looked at him, more startled for the moment than I cared to have him see, and again the old sickish qualm swept over me at sight of the tangled syringa bushes and turned me faint.

"I do not understand," I said slowly. "Elsie seemed to be doing very well yesterday. I intended to dismiss the case this morning."

"That is just what Dr. Carter said, sir. 'Oscar,' he said to me, 'Dr. Leonard has taken a fancy to the child and her death is going to be a blow to him. He is not very well, anyway. Tell him that I said I would look after his cases for him to-day and that he had better stay indoors. He is not acclimated to the Terre Rouge yet. And he mustn't worry too much about Elsie. She always had a very weak heart.'"

I mentally thanked my colleague for his kindness. My head was aching, and I rather anticipated a return of the fever and ague that had marked my introduction to the somewhat malarial conditions that surrounded my new home.

I dismissed the boy, and walked for a long time up and down the leaf-strewn walk. Was I naturally superstitious? Had the old woman's fevered words struck an answering chord in my own heart, I wondered? The sudden, unlooked-for death of little Elsie might be only a curious coincidence. Still——

What ought I to do? Jock's death would leave my sister and her babies entirely unprovided for.

He owned no property and the insurance policy of which I had spoken at the breakfast-table was a very small one, of five hundred dollars, I think, taken out to cover a small debt which he had contracted during Effie's illness the summer before. Aside from that, his family was an extravagant one; there must be many debts.

I tried to look the matter squarely in the face without prejudice. Jock was a model of manly strength and had the constitution which belonged by right to a man of his massive, rugged frame. Although a good fellow, he did not drink, nor was he addicted to other questionable habits that usually constitute a man's right to that title. The enjoyment of an occasional cigar marked his only tribute to the claims of friendship.

There could be no better risk for an insurance company, nor one whom they would welcome more heartily.

Still — a thought restrained me. Granting that there could be anything in the half-crazed words of an imbecile old woman, no man upon whom the death-sentence had been passed could have his life insured with more difficulty than could Jock.

And yet—— I am honest enough in a way. God only knows how anxious I was to have my sister provided for. She and her husband and children were the only people in all the world for whom I cared.

My own life I knew could not last very long. A noted specialist, who had examined me rigidly, mercilessly, the week before, had closed the door of hope most effectually for me; the door which I had hoped his words would open wide.

He had told me brutally that I could never be quite well—quite strong—again. By removal to a warmer, less variable climate—by strict adherence to certain rules of health—I might hope to live a year—probably two—possibly three. Most certainly not longer.

"You are a physician yourself, Dr. Leonard," he had said roughly. "What I am telling you can be no news to you. You must at least have suspected—the truth."

"I did suspect it—yes," I said gently, and I told him the truth too after a fashion. But even the man who is sentenced to die on the scaffold at a certain time—on a certain day—always looks for a reprieve, and I had thought——

So Effie, delicate—unused to hard labor—left unprovided for—encumbered with two little ones—could expect little help from me, and there was literally no one else.

My money had paid for the house on the Terre Rouge, but neither she nor Jock could have other than a life-interest in The Syringas. I had great confidence in the further development of that part of the country and little Allen was my namesake. The place must be kept intact for him and his brother.

So it came back to the old question again at the end of it. What should I do with the knowledge before me? Should I tell Jock?

This question, at least the last phase of it, was easily answered. The telling would involve elaborate explanations of something which could not be explained.

I could have Jock's life insured for enough to take care of Effie as long as she lived—to educate her boys—to send her away maybe when it was all over and she had neither husband nor brother between her and the world—to a more genial climate where her own constitution might be built up. Was I justified in doing this?

Suppose I should go to the insurance company and lay the case before them. My cheeks burned at the thought, for I knew that not an insurance company in the world in the person of its representative would refuse the risk—provided I never allowed Jock himself to know anything about the circumstances.

I have heard that every man has his price. While not subscribing to this theory in its entirety, I personally acknowledged the truth of it in my own case. I would cheerfully have spent the remainder of my own days in a charity hospital—have been buried by the hands of unfeeling strangers in a pauper's grave, rather than have benefited by money on which the shadow of a taint rested. But for my sister——

The day passed drearily enough. For hours I walked up and down the flagged

walk alone. I heard the faint knell of the tolling bell that announced little Elsie's death, and turned away with a shudder.

A little later I saw a thin stream of colored people setting in the direction of old Hagar's cabin, and when I passed the house I saw that the ripening corn had been trampled down and that the loops of wild convolvulus with its pale blue stars had been swept under.

The sun sank at last.

"Come and take a walk with me, Jock, while Effie is putting the babies to bed," I said that night when supper was over.

We walked down the path and out of the grounds. The night was sweet and fair. There was a faint breath of wind from the vanilla-scented darkness and a thin line of cloud was rising in the north. I shuddered as there came to my nostrils the scent of burning syringa branches. The flickering light of the moon cast eerie shadows on the thick grass.

I felt Jock's glance rest upon me a little suspiciously.

"Is there something wrong, Allen?" he asked me suddenly. "You seem out of sorts."

For a moment I did not speak. I noticed with a pang that he seemed a little troubled. His cigar had gone out.

"I *am* out of sorts," I said quietly.

"Why? Do you mind telling me all about it, old man?"

I hesitated.

"We are good friends, Jock," I said gently. "You will not resent what I am going to say. And Jock, something —no matter what—has set me to worrying about Effie."

"*About Effie!*"

He looked at me sharply in the faint starlight.

"About Effie—yes. Have you ever thought, Jock, about what Effie's condition would be in case of—in case anything happened to you? You see she is not very strong and there are two babies to care for—to feed and clothe and educate.

"How many avenues would be open to her do you suppose should she be left alone to-morrow? Widowed—broken in health and spirits—encumbered with her little ones——"

"She has her brother."

"She will not have her brother long." I tried to speak calmly. "It's no use, old fellow. My death-sentence has been passed and we are both too sensible, you and I, to hope for a reprieve."

I suppose Jock understood. His hand met mine, and we drew very near together there in the vanilla-scented darkness.

"Tell me the truth, Allen," said Jock presently, when we had walked on for a while in silence. "Is there anything—— Have you seen anything to indicate that I am not in the most robust health?"

"So far as your looks would indicate I should say that your chances were good to live to be a hundred years old," I said honestly. "It is not that, Jock. It would be no use for me to lie to you, you know.

"If you accede to my wishes and take out a heavy insurance policy, you will be obliged to pass the most rigid, merciless medical examination possible. If there were the least thing wrong with you, they would detect it far sooner than I."

He drew a long breath of relief.

"What do you want me to do, Allen?" he asked. "I need not tell you how dear Effie's future is to me."

There was a little break in his voice.

"Do I not know it?" I asked simply.

I dare say I said the words all the more roughly because the strain was telling on me, too, and amid the multitudinous other odors of the Southern night I still caught the faint, intangible fragrance of burning syringa branches.

"Do you suppose I would ever have mentioned the matter to you, Jock, had I not known that your solicitude for Effie was greater than my own? What I want you to do is just this. Have your life insured for, say—twenty thousand dollars. That will protect Effie and her boys from want in case anything happens to you. I would have done this myself, had the state of my health permitted."

I hesitated. "The insurance companies may be a little suspicious," I added then. "They would be doubly so should anything happen—say within a year. Still——"

"Still, nothing is going to happen, you know," he said, though a little nervously. "I don't understand this sudden solicitude, Allen."

"I went to town the first of the week," I said slowly, and to save my life I could not keep the childish break out of my voice. "And I had a talk with Dr. Dunne—the great lung-specialist, you know."

I waited a moment to regain command of my voice.

"My disease has many phases, Jock," I continued in a low voice, "especially at this stage. You won't tell Effie?"

Again he wrung my hand and then—Jock is very tender-hearted and the bond between us one of long-standing—he slipped away in the darkness while I went blindly to my own room to worry all night long.

CHAPTER III.

ONLY SIX MORE DAYS.

We went to town early the next morning. "I have some patients to visit," I said to Jock, "and we will go to the insurance agent together."

Looking at Jock's magnificent physique and healthful color in the light of the morning sunshine, I could well afford to laugh at last night's fears. Still——

"Glad to see you," said Graham Stanley, who represented the "Rosston Mutual." I was pleased to see that the doctor whom I had hoped to meet was in the office. "A wise resolve, Mr. Ellison, and one which commends itself to every thoughtful man who has a family dependent upon him. Rather a sudden decision, however, is it not?"

He looked at me rather suspiciously and then at Jock.

"It *is* rather sudden," I said quietly. "Yes. To be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Stanley, neither of us had ever given the matter any thought until very recently." I hesitated.

"My sister, Mrs. Ellison, is not very strong," I said in a low voice. "Indeed, the state of her health renders her entirely unfit to cope with the practical things of life. I had most carefully shielded her from every hardship until she met my friend here." I laid my hand affectionately upon Jock's shoulder.

"I must say that, speaking professionally, I regard him as the safest risk ever presented to an insurance company. But—I am a physician myself, Mr. Stanley, and I have learned much. Among other things, how slight a hold even the strongest of us have upon life. In addition to this——"

Jock turned sharply and, walking to the window, stood staring outside.

"Besides," I said more quietly, "my own health has long been a source of anxiety to me. A specialist lately has confirmed my opinion that I have not many months to live. Hence my anxiety to see my sister put in a position where her comfort will not depend upon the life of any man, no matter how strong he is or how bright his chances are for a long life."

The agent looked at the doctor a little slyly.

"So your sister is not strong," he began. "Is her health——"

"My own illness was brought about by exposure two years ago," I said simply. "My sister's trouble is connected with a spinal affection which she has suffered from since infancy. I should be very glad to have Dr. Reyburn visit her at his leisure. He might be able to suggest something that would slightly alleviate her sufferings."

I saw a slight look of relief pass over the doctor's face as he turned to Ellison.

The doctor tested Jock's lungs and heart, and asked innumerable questions, propounding what seemed to his subject the most senseless inquiries. There was never an examination for insurance so rigid before.

At its close Reyburn looked at Jock, then at Stanley.

"You must allow me to congratulate the 'Rosston Mutual,' Mr. Stanley," he said. "I have been working for the company for nearly twenty years and I have never before examined so splendid a risk."

Jock, who was possessed of all the average animal's dread of sickness and death, drew a long breath of relief.

I did not go back to the office that day nor for several succeeding days. There was little illness on the Terre Rouge that season, for a wonder, and I had plenty of time to indulge my own sick fancies. I brooded over them in a way that was not very good for me either mentally or physically.

After a little time I began to watch Jock in a fear which filled my own soul with such horror that it seemed as though he must detect it in my face. Several times during this period I had Reyburn in the house. Once he came to see Effie, who was very poorly with one of her old attacks, and twice he came to see little Allen, who had croup. He and Jock came to be great friends, as I was glad to note.

Meantime the days were passing swiftly—far too swiftly for me. The winter was almost at an end. The rotten leaves lay sodden thick in the paths. The low murmur of the Terre Rouge swelled with its rising flood from a whisper to a hoarse song.

For the first time a terrible thought came to me, one that chilled my veins like ice.

Was the end that was coming to my unsuspicious brother-in-law a bloody one? Was he to meet the death so confidently predicted by the dying negress at the hands of an assassin?

It was early morning when this thought first came to me, and I was in my own room. I was very glad to be alone, for my sudden terror made me sick and faint.

I tried to consider the matter calmly. On the morning of the third of September I had been called in to see old Hagar, and it was now the morning of the twenty-fourth of February. She had told me that she had discovered the "footprints of Death" on the lawn of The Syringas the day before.

I had wondered more than once why she had been so sure that it was my brother-in-law's life that was doomed, since there were others in the family, but she had seemed certain, and I had not thought to ask her then, when I might so easily have done so. Now it was too late.

Assuming as she had said that it was his life that was threatened, if I put any faith whatever in her predictions, there were only six days now between Jock and sudden death—between my much-loved sister and widowhood.

It was the Sabbath day. I sent word down-stairs that I was perfectly well, but that I did not care for any breakfast. As this was not unusual on my part, I knew that I could count on an hour or more of absolute quiet.

Six days! Can you conceive the feeling of sick, utter helplessness which held me tightly in its tentacles that quiet Sabbath morning, waiting for the blow which I alone knew was so soon to fall upon the happy little family beneath that quiet roof?

I tried to reason calmly as I had been able to do in my healthier, saner days, but my brain refused to act. Slowly, however, this mental numbness disappeared.

Was it possible for me to keep my brother-in-law within the house for the next few days? Was there a way of escaping the blow? I debated this question seriously, but abandoned the hope when I thought of the verse which ended:

> But the house which was founded upon a rock,
> Was swallowed up in the earthquake's shock.

No, I could not fight against Fate or play a hideous game of "hide and seek" with Death. So I gave it up at last and went down-stairs to sit with the others and hide my secret as best I might. My sister, seated between her two little boys, started back at sight of my ghastly face.

"Are you ill, Allen?" she asked me. I only shook my head.

"I had a headache," I said lamely. "It is quite gone now, but you know how it affects me, Effie. That is all."

She sat down in her chair again, but she still watched me a little oddly, and her face was still colorless.

"Where is Jock?" I asked.

"Still asleep."

She tried to answer me calmly, but my face had frightened her badly. Her voice trembled a little still. "He was ill last night and I would not call him when the breakfast bell rang."

"Ill!"

My heart went cold with dread.

"Oh, it is nothing serious. What a goose you are, Allen. One would think that Jock was still in leading-strings."

I did not answer her. My heart was beating over and over to the same old tune. "Six more days!" it seemed to be saying over and over. *"Six more days!!"*

"Have you sent for Dr. Reyburn?" I asked.

"Why, Allen—what can possibly ail you, dear? It is only a headache—the only kind of illness, as you know, from which Jock ever suffers. He is all right, you foolish boy, or at least he will be soon."

I muttered something under my breath.

"I think that I will go up and see him," I said shortly, and then at the thought of Effie and her helpless little ones and the sorrow that would be so hard to bear, my heart smote me.

"I am nervous and unstrung, dear," I said more gently. "I slept badly last night. I think that the Terre Rouge gets on to my nerves, now that it is rising and we can hear it so plainly at night."

My sister still looked at me gravely.

"Hadn't you better go away, Allen?" she said after a little. "Indeed you are not yourself, dear, and have not been for weeks. You are growing morbid. Even Jock notices it, and he is usually so slow to notice such things. There is so much malaria about, and you seem to absorb it like a sponge. Hadn't you better go away for a little while?"

"Possibly I will—later on," I said dully.

I was wondering stupidly if it would not be best after a time, when she had partly recovered from the shock of poor Ellison's death, for me to take my sister out West.

"We might lock up the house for a month and go to Wallaceburg," I said, still following out the old train of thought awakened by her words. "It would be a very good thing for the children."

My sister laughed, a tender little cheerful laugh which hurt me worse (knowing what I knew) than tears could have done.

"Why, Allen, you moon-struck boy, you are madder than ever now! One moment you are frightened to death yourself and are doing your best to frighten me about Jock, and the next you are talking calmly about a separation from him for an indefinite period. A separation—when I have never been away from Jock for a whole day since we were married!"

Some sound startled me and I turned sharply to find Reyburn standing in the open door and staring at me in an odd, puzzled fashion. Conscious of the unpardonable blunder which I had made, I would have given the world to have been able to keep the consciousness of it out of my face.

"Come in, doctor," I said, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "My sister here has been trying to convince me that I have been talking at random this morning."

He came inside the room, still staring at me curiously. "What is the matter with Jock, Mrs. Ellison?" he asked, but at that moment my brother-in-law entered the room.

"Nothing in the world but laziness," he answered for himself genially. "Who says that there is?"

"I told Allen that you had a headache," said Effie, who had lost interest in the subject and was trying to persuade her elder born to forego an attempt to swallow a particularly tempting bit of potato at one gulp. "He chose to consider the matter of very grave importance, though I cannot see why."

The color mounted to my face.

"What can possibly ail you, Effie?" I said vexedly. "I fancied that Jock might be going to be ill—that is all. There is so much malaria in the country now that——"

My voice trailed into silence. How could I have been so careless as to call Reyburn's attention to my solicitude about Jock, now of all times.

"There must be no more such blunders," I said to myself as the little party broke up, and the doctor mounted his horse to return to Rosston.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLOW FALLS.

ANOTHER day passed, another, and yet another, and there came a time when I dreaded to allow Jock to leave my sight even for a moment.

There were other times (I think that I must have been well-nigh mad then) when I would have been willing to have almost anything happen to end the suspense.

At last came the day when, rising from a sleepless couch, I said to myself, "It has come." Can you—you who read this—picture *my* misery?

"When the sun sets to-night," I said to myself dully, "the friend for whom I have cared so much—the brother whom I have loved—the one man whose life has for years been bound up with my own will be dead."

I could no longer disguise from myself, moreover, that Jock would have to meet his death by violence. It was already fast nearing night-fall, and no sign of disease had appeared. Death, if he came at all now, must come with bloody hands.

"Supper is ready, old chap."

Jock had come into the sitting-room, while I brooded over my unread book.

"I am as hungry as a hunter," he went on. "Come on, old fellow, and stop your mooning. Effie and the children are waiting."

"In a moment," I said in a choking voice, my emotion and the strain of the burden which I had borne silently for six months almost overwhelming me. "Don't wait for me, Jock. I will follow you presently."

He left the room. After trying in vain for several minutes to steady my trembling lips before facing Effie and the children, I walked out on the veranda.

A cloud was rising black and heavy, and the roar of the swollen Terre Rouge sounded ominously loud. Across the sodden fields where the corn had grown six months ago I saw the gleam of a light which I knew must be burning in the little cabin where old Hagar had died. The wind was blowing in spiteful little gusts, and I heard the rattle of falling nuts on the roof from the branches of the hickory trees that overhung the house.

The light in the old cabin flickered feebly, then went out; and I shivered as I heard the melancholy hooting of an owl from the clump of syringas in the front yard. A paralyzing fear gripped me for a moment, then passed, leaving me weak as a child. I closed the door between me and the horror and unknown perils and darkness outside, and went back through the sitting-room, with its cheerful lights and glowing fire, to the dining-room.

My sister looked up impatiently.

"Where is Jock?" she asked.

I faced her stupidly.

"He came back into the dining-room," I answered.

She paused a moment to hush the child in a high chair by her side who was clamoring for his supper.

"Do be quiet, dear," she said coaxingly. "Mama cannot hear a word when you chatter so. I sent Jock to call you," she continued, turning to me. "The coffee was getting cold."

"He came into the sitting-room just now," I repeated, while little Allen cheerfully punctuated my remarks by banging impatiently on the table with his spoon, "and told me that supper was ready. I told him that I would be in directly and that you were not to wait."

As a precautionary measure she removed the spoon forcibly from Allen's hand.

"I don't see where he can have gone," she said, a little startled. "He must have gone out on the veranda. And yet you say you have not seen him——"

"I certainly thought that he came back into the dining-room, Effie," I repeated; "but, of course, he may have stepped outside."

"Probably he went around to the kitchen to speak to Judson."

She moved the coffee-urn a little impatiently and said something about the coffee growing cold, and that she had better call Martha and have her take it back to the kitchen, if we meant to wait for Jock. And still we waited while the minutes went by, and still he did not come. Effie tapped the bell.

"Tell Mr. Ellison that we are waiting for him and that the coffee has grown quite cold," she said to the woman who answered it. "Isn't he in the kitchen?"

Martha shook her head.

"I haven't seen Marse Jock since dinner."

Effie looked at me again, vaguely disturbed.

"Where can he have gone?" she asked nervously, and we both rose from the table.

She placed Allen, now almost asleep, in the old woman's arms, and walked

with me through the passageway, stopping to glance into the sitting-room, and out on the veranda.

"Jock! Oh, Jock!" she called aloud in her fresh, shrill young voice.

There was no answer. The rain was dripping from the eaves. The wind whipped the stiff branches of the hickories and they seemed to whisper horrible secrets to each other. Ghostly fingers loosened the withered leaves on the trees and sent them shivering to join their dead kindred rotting on the sodden ground. There were odd little pattering sounds like running footsteps under the dripping syringas.

"Jock! Oh, Jock!" called Effie again.

A faint gleam of lightning flared out of the shadows, dimly outlining her face against the darkness and rain. It had whitened a little.

"There can be nothing wrong!" she whispered, more to herself than to me. "It is strange that he does not answer though and stranger still that I should be so terrified by I scarcely know what.

"Put the child down!" she commanded the woman behind her, "and send Judson out to look for your master. He may have fallen and hurt himself in some way. Quick!"

The woman hurried away, and Allen, half-awake, cried fretfully. And still the rain fell drearily, and although Effie called and called again there was still no answer.

With the necessity for instant action my superstitions vanished and I was my old self again.

"Telephone for Reyburn, Effie," I said hurriedly, "and have him bring help out from town. Something is horribly wrong, dear, and do for God's sake—for Jock's sake—keep up! Have the horses saddled and have Judson put the pony to the light cart. We may need it. I will search the grounds. Get Reyburn as soon as possible."

Forgetting my illness, forgetting everything, I plunged bare-headed into the dripping shrubbery, hearing behind me in the house Allen's fretful crying and the frantic ringing of the telephone bell. Some one stirred in the darkness at my elbow and old Judson called out nervously, "Is that you, Marse Jock?"

"No—it is I," I answered sharply. "No sign of your master yet, Judson? Then don't waste further time looking for him. Saddle Rollo and Dandy and put the pony to the cart. Do you hear?"

He gave me some sort of answer, but I was too far away from him to hear it. I stumbled about through the wet undergrowth, calling Jock's name at intervals and straining my ears to catch the answer which never came.

Within the house lights were flashing everywhere and I could hear my sister crying hysterically. It was not very long before I caught the sound of galloping hoof-beats and knew that help was already coming from the town.

Why I did not turn then, since I had finished my investigation of the grounds, and go back to my sister and to the others, who, by this time, would be organizing for a systematic search, only God knows. Had I done so, my feet would not have taken the next step—the irrevocable one—upon that mysterious, gruesome road which I first entered the morning of old Hagar's death and this story might never have been written.

But I had strayed farther than I knew and was now quite outside the grounds. I could still see the faint gleam of light from the house away to the right, but a moment later, either from the fact that the light had been shaded by the drawing of the curtain or had been obscured in some other way, it vanished utterly and I found myself for the moment completely lost.

It was the blackest, dreariest night I ever saw. The rain still fell, a little harder now, and there were no more flashes of lightning. I listened for the sound of the river, but could no longer hear its sullen roar, which had been so audible at the house. I judged by this that I had drifted quite round to the back of The Syringas without knowing when I did so.

Thoroughly, hopelessly bewildered, I turned again—this time sharply to the left. As I did so a little light flared up suddenly quite a distance from me and squarely in front. Fancying that I had at last located the house again, I made a hurried step forward and plunged into water beyond my depth.

It was not the river into which I had

stumbled. I was sure of that even before I detected the lack of current. But it was very deep and cold, and thick with mud and drifting leaves.

So I knew that it must be one of the "sloughs" that the Terre Rouge leaves when it occasionally changes its channel. I groped my way cautiously among the cypress knees and coarse reeds and grasses, and, catching hold of a worn willow branch that trailed in the water, I drew myself cautiously back upon the shore.

I caught sight of the light again and saw that it had slightly changed its position. I no longer felt sure that it was the light from the house. It flickered too much—was too bright at times, and then it would vanish altogether.

A little later I felt quite sure that it was in the open air, for it flared like a torch in spite of the beating rain. Later it rose again, bigger—much bigger—than any torch, and I saw that it was a burning house. The fire had just broken through the roof, and the inmates ought to be warned.

How wide the slough was I had no means of telling. It might be an arm of the river—it might be merely a deep hole or bayou. It might take an hour to reach the burning house—it might take four.

Meantime the fire was gaining rapidly. It suddenly broke fully through the roof. I judged that it must have been burning within for some time before I saw it.

All this time I had been hurrying as fast as I could in the darkness along the sluggish stream, trying to discover a way to get round the slough or to find some landmark that would lead me safely home.

In a few minutes I came to a tree which had been felled, and which extended from the shore out into the blackness. From the grotesque shape of its trunk I knew that it was one which Jock himself had cut down the week before, to ensure him safe passage across the bayou in his walks about the plantation, and remembered now that I had only to cross it to find myself in the high-road and within five minutes walk of The Syringas.

Delighted to find myself out of an awkward position, I ran across the log more hurriedly than was prudent. I did not fall, but just as I sprang from the trunk to the shore I gave myself a severe twist. That, with the excitement, the drenching, and the exertion, did the business for me. There was a gush of something sickish in my mouth and I stumbled forward to my knees. What I had so long dreaded had at last come to pass. I was having my first hemorrhage.

When I recovered—the flow of blood ceased after a bit—and looked up, I saw the house which I had watched from across the slough crumble together suddenly. Just then came a sudden deluge of rain that sent me cowering closer among the branches of the tree for protection and extinguished the fire in a moment.

I knew now that the burning house was the house of Hagar, and I remembered with relief that it was empty. Effie had told me the day before that Frances and Alec had moved away. Frances was her laundress. So I dismissed the whole matter from my mind.

Five minutes later I staggered inside the door of The Syringas, ghastly, drenched with rain, shivering from head to foot, and almost unable to drag myself across the threshold.

The sitting-room was full of people. In the one moment before my entrance was noted I caught sight of Reyburn bending over my sister, who seemed to be just recovering from a swoon. Little Allen was crying quite as if he had never left off, and a little group of men at the lower end of the room were talking together earnestly.

"Allen!"

My sister's cry called the attention of every one in the room to me.

"It is nothing," I said hurriedly. "I lost my way and was hindered in getting back—that is all. Have you found Jock?"

Dr. Reyburn was about to answer—had opened his lips to speak, when my sister uttered a cry that filled me with horror.

"Oh, the blood!" she shrieked.

"Poor Jock has been murdered and Allen has found his body!"

(To be continued.)

DUVAL.

By Arthur Colton.

A CASE of high finance in low life, wherein the investors look forward to big things.

"EIGHT months to a year," said the young doctor, "since you want me to be candid."

Duval left the doctor's office and came down the street slowly, feeling a bit numb, though there was no shadow of depression on his rugged face. His tobacco-stand on Market Square was a mile from Joe Coe's house, where he lived, and he could not keep the stand open much longer. Even now a small exertion was apt to fill his vision with purple spots. He sat behind his show-case that morning, examining the appearance of another humorist than himself, an even more somber joker. Yet Duval was no trifling practitioner, no man of superficial quips. It is a poor jester with whom

> A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it.

Not so Duval. Not so your true humorist, whose art runs deeper than laughter and speech, with whom a jest's prosperity lies in the heart of him that makes it.

He had had his ups and downs in life, Duval. For ten years he had kept the cigar-stand in Market Square. It was an active stand, though a mere cubby-hole with a glass front.

Doubtless his bank account would have been better, if it were not for his habit of smoking his own five-cent cigars, and loading others with gunpowder, whereby they exploded sooner or later in the face of the smoker.

But he was popular with the market-men in this way, because his cigars were interesting, and because, if you took back a stub that showed marks of eruption, he would silently give you another cigar.

In such lines and directions lay his taciturn pleasures, the large, gray, grim and square-framed man, with the rocky, smooth-shaven face and broad eye-brows.

"He's a tough one," said the market-men, "Old Duval."

But the main reason for the smallness of his bank account was Joe Coe, Joe Coe's wife, and their various and all ungainly ways of cheating him, the contemplation of which was meat and drink to his soul. It warmed and cheered him like an open fire on the domestic hearth.

Joe Coe was born to thrive on other people's labors, by means of a certain club-footed deceitfulness, patent, crude, and entertaining, a certain mournful friendliness and appeal. He had lived largely at Duval's expense these several years, and Duval's bank account had struggled but feebly with that adverse circumstance.

There were but sixty dollars standing to it in the Market Square bank, which, with the stock of the stand, worth twenty, would not serve Joe Coe and his wife for any eight months, to say nothing of a year, nor oil the wheels of Duval's existence to run equably till they ran down. So thought Duval.

He sat behind his show-case that morning, conversing with destiny, with stratagem, with the problem, how, if a man die, shall he die on good terms with both life and death?

If destiny hit him spitefully below the belt, how shall he recover his wind and reply: "Nevertheless I am a philosopher"?

If misery is a waste of time, and contentment great gain, how can a man employ his last eight months with the sun and moon to most profit and economy?

At eleven o'clock he closed the stand, went into the bank, and drew fifty dollars. At three in the afternoon he re-deposited it. Both transactions were recorded in his bank-book by the proper officials.

For the following two weeks he repeated the process daily, drawing in the morning and depositing in the afternoon various sums, within the limits of his sixty dollars. At the end of that time his credit stood $612.00, his debit $601.53.

Then he carefully took out the debit leaves from the bank-book with his jackknife.

That day he sold out the stock of the cigar-stand and the show-case to the barber shop on the corner, and went home to Joe Coe's by way of the young doctor's office, walking slowly in order to avoid purple spots.

"Would you write down that opinion you've got of me?" he said to the young doctor.

"All right."

"You'd sign it?"

"Sure!"

"Stating you considered me a man whose heart was rotted and his natur' unpleasant?"

"Something like that."

"And any hospital that bought my remains now would get the same delivered per contract in one year or less?"

"Buying an annuity?" said the young doctor, writing.

"I'm obliged to ye," said Duval, and came away, and came home to Joe Coe's house.

Joe Coe was a tallow-faced man with a bald head. From behind he looked elderly and benevolent; in front he looked burly; but this again was contradicted by his voice, which was high toned, feeble, and plaintive.

And yet it was more the spiritual and mental than the physical Joe Coe that was to Duval a flowing fountain of contentment, and entered most largely into Joe Coe's value to Duval.

"Joe Coe," said Duval, "as a friend, you'll read that there paper."

Joe Coe read it.

"Why! Dum it?" he said, with rising inflection, plaintively interrogative.

"That's me, Joe Coe. But you ain't the kind that deserts a friend in trouble, not you."

The next day he said: "It's a comforting thing to an old man, is a horspitable friend, Joe Coe."

Joe Coe and his gimlet-eyed wife discussed it uneasily while Duval sat in his chair in the next room and heard the murmur of their voices. Everett Emanuel Coe, son of Joe Coe, and in age ten years, sat beside him, conversing.

The third day Duval said: "You're thinking it over, Joe Coe, and this is what you comes to. You says: 'Old Duval's run out of money, but what's that to me?' say you. 'Joe Coe's friend is the same as his family,' says you, for that's your natur'."

"Hrumph!" cried Mrs. Coe suddenly, red-eyed and furious. "I'd like to see him! Hrumph!"—and Joe Coe cried out complaining:

"There you go, Duval! Rilin' Her! I asks, is that friendly, rilin' Her?"

Mrs. Coe stormed on:

"Are we rich? Who are you, you Duval? Has we got to keep slathers of paupers?"

"Has we, Duval? I asks you friendly," Joe Coe complained.

"Hrumph! I'd like to see him!"

"It ain't friendly, rilin' Her, and a burden on friends that always meant well by you, now, Duval?"

"Hrumph! Why didn't you save your money then? Hrumph!"

"You ought ter done that, Duval. It ain't friendly."

"What's horspitals for? Hrumph!"

"Ah! There's where you'd be comfortable, Duval. In a horspital, Duval! Without rilin' Her!"

"Hrumph!"

"Joe Coe," said Duval slowly, "you're right, Joe Coe. For here's your point. 'I sticks by a friend,' says you, 'but first I want to know if he *is* a friend. Let him prove it,' says you, 'and then I gives him affection,' you says, and you're right, Joe Coe."

He handed Joe Coe the bank-book of omitted debits, and went on:

"Now, I says to myself, same as you, I says, 'What friend have I got but Joe Coe? Who'd I leave what I got to but Joe Coe?' It ain't much, but it's friendly, ain't it, Joe Coe?"

And Joe Coe said, "Why, dum it!" plaintively, and Mrs. Coe, "Hrumph!"

Everett Emanuel, son of Joe Coe, was thick-set, bullet-headed, spikey-haired,

and full of valor. He and Duval had tastes in common, among which was an admiration for the literature of virtue and valor.

At Duval's instance and expense, then and for eight months following, daily or semi-weekly, Everett Emanuel went into the market-place and bought fiction with unerring judgment, novels costing five cents apiece, on whose covers red Indians pranced, booted cowboys gesticulated with revolvers, bearded pirates swore in nautical terms, flowing-haired maidens fled from different kinds of persons, and young detectives made remarks while capturing desperadoes.

It was wild life they lived together those eight months, Duval and Everett Emanuel. Joe and Mrs. Coe mildly surrendered their claims to the services of Everett Emanuel. A mad life, a heady course, a fierce and fast career, closely packed with experience.

Everett Emanuel read aloud slowly, with labor and deep reward, and Duval listened and made comments. Joe Coe and his wife commonly sat in the next room. In the murmur of their talk Duval heard the words "612," and then again "612."

Duval was sinking slowly. He knew the day was near, and probably the hour, when his heart, that clogged engine, would give its last protesting beat.

Joe Coe and his wife sat in the next room discussing "612," in some one of its many phases—"612." Duval could hear the murmur of their voices like the low rumbling of a drum.

Everett Emanuel sat by the bed, spelling his way stolidly, syllable by syllable, without punctuation, emphasis, or inflection.

"The In-di-an—rose—with—an—awful — yell — His — knife — was—in—the — air — 'Red — man—you're — a dead — man' — said — Daunt-less — for — his — wit — never — failed — him— It — was — a — fright-ful — mo—ment——"

Duval said: "This one's a snorter, Everett Emanuel."

Everett Emanuel continued:

"The — savage — fell — pierced — by — the — deadly — bullet — The — sun — set — on — the — prair-ies — Where — ah — where — was — Ju-an-i-ta?"

"It's a snorter," said Duval.

"Dauntless Dick of San Joaquin" was valorous and wore fringes on his trousers, and "Juanita" was the beautiful daughter of a rich Mexican, Alvarez, and had already been rescued several times from death. Yet Señor Alvarez was not yet convinced that valor and virtue have a right to beauty and riches.

Everett Emanuel had come to a low opinion of Alvarez.

It was not a novel to leave carelessly. Many died in the course of it on account of Dauntless' precision of aim, and the situations which made their destruction advisable.

One felt that they must have died with great regret, when so much was yet to come in the story.

Duval lay watching the purple spots, which were all around him now, and seemed to be spreading out. There was more purple than anything else now.

When it was all become purple, he thought, he would be dead; or else, when he was dead, it would be all purple. He could still hear Joe Coe and his wife in the next room talking about "612"—so it sounded to him; "612," and over and over again "612." He could hear Everett Emanuel reading:

"The — victims — of — Dauntless' — — un-er-ring — aim — lay — a-bout — a — ho-lo-caust — of — death — But — Daunt-less' — last — cartridge — was — now — gone — A — half-mile — down — that — fat-al — valley — lay — Two — Dogs — with — — his — ri-fle — wait-ing — for — the — youth — to — pass."

But he thought both sounds were growing fainter.

Everett Emanuel paused with the end of the chapter, and breathed heavily.

"Everett Emanuel, go on."

"Next one's about girls an' stuff!" growled Everett Emanuel. "Ju-an-i-ta gets fits. Say, le's skip it. Say, Two Dogs was that one-eyed Injun, an' Dauntless— gee! he soaked him onc't a'ready."

"Read about Ju-anita."

"Aw, what's the use? It's just stuff!"

"Read about Ju-anita," Duval whis-

pered. Everett Emanuel grumbled and obeyed, bending his round, spikey head and reddish, freckled face over the woes of Juanita.

Duval contemplated him dimly, but with satisfaction.

Everett Emanuel's voice now seemed to him to be receding slowly into the distance, as he read sullenly with deep disgust:

"Beau-te-ous — Ju-an-i-ta — thy — sor-rows — shall — be — comforted — Thy — lover — cometh — he — whose — eye — is — like — the — ea-gle's — Sweet — flow-er — dry — those dewy — lids — Pas-sion-ate — maid — weep — no — more."

Duval tried to say, "Never mind it, Everett Emanuel; skip to Two Dogs." But his throat would make no sound, and he lay still on his pillow and thought "I'll never know about Two Dogs now."

He seemed to be looking out only through narrow slits from the depths into which he was sinking slowly. He could not hear Joe Coe and his wife now at all, and Everett Emanuel only like the low mutter of a drum.

"Beau-te-ous—Ju-an-i-ta——"

"Everett Emanuel," he thought, "I wish you and me were going West pretty soon looking for trouble. Your hair is spikey, which'd have to smooth out to be captivating with ladies, and you're slow, but you're ambitious, if not equal to Dauntless as regards Ju-anita, which is a snorter, Everett Emanuel.

"Everett Emanuel, you'll recollect my stating the opinion that somebody ought to put a charge of bird-shot in Alvarez, which I think would be the best thing to irrigate his ideas.

"Everett Emanuel, I can't hear you any more, reading like a man on two wooden legs, sort of stumpy. I wish I knew how Dauntless got away with that one-eyed Injun named Two Dogs, Everett Emanuel.

"We had a good time, Everett Emanuel, and Joe Coe and Mrs. Coe. We four's been living inexpensive and happy.

"I wish I knew about that one-eyed Injun, Everett Emanuel."

Everett Emanuel bent his head and pushed on with labor to the meeting of Dauntless and Two Dogs.

"612," said Joe Coe.

Duval's face on the pillow was like a face cut in gray granite.

"So — fell — Two — Dogs — and — well — de-served — his — fate."

"612."

But Duval did not hear what became of Two Dogs.

THE TRUTH-TRAILERS.

By Edgar Franklin.

One way to satiate the universal thirst for thrilling adventure.

CHAPTER I.

OVER THE COFFEE.

IT was just after the waiter at Ranley's had brought the coffee and the little cups, and had placed the finger-bowls on the serving table and filled them, and Forbes had settled down to a recital of one of his ponderous stories, most of which have been traced by historians to a period antedating Marathon —it was just then that Mayne yawned prodigiously.

Now, if there is one thing calculated to nettle Forbes, it is to have a yawn appear during a story of his relating. Thurley, at his left, smiled covertly. Forbes ignored the smile and straightened up again and faced Mayne across the table.

"Sleepy?" he demanded snappishly.

Mayne noted the tone and clicked his

teeth together suddenly, half sheepishly, half impatiently.

"Weather, I guess," he murmured. "I'm always this way in early spring."

"Or maybe it was the yarn," Thurley suggested.

"Or perhaps it was the every-dayness of every-day life," Mayne pursued, somewhat evasively.

He clipped the end from his cigar and Forbes followed suit, a not altogether gracious expression on his pudgy, youthful features.

"What the dickens does that mean?" he queried.

"Well, the nothing-doingness of things in general outside the office."

"That's still more definite," Forbes remarked. "Well, where was I? Oh, yes——"

"I know just about what Mayne means," Thurley broke in hurriedly. He had a vague impression of having come up from earliest childhood, hand in hand with that particular narrative of Forbes'.

"Well, what then?" rasped the raconteur.

"Why, the deadly dulness of the lives we three—and three million more like us—lead here in the city under present conditions."

Forbes raised his eyebrows, expelled a puff of smoke, and opened his lips again. Mayne took the cue and went on, stolidly and resistlessly:

"That is it precisely, Thurley. We get up in the morning, go to work and spend the day at it, come up-town in the evening and eat here or somewhere else, go to the theater, or something of that sort, and back to bed, to do the same thing over again next day. It's all monotony and no excitement."

"Who the deuce wants excitement?"

"I could stand a week of it and come out feeling as if I'd had a cold bath and an alcohol rub."

Forbes himself yawned; his tale had been neatly tucked away on the shelf, apparently.

"What you want, Mayne, is to run away to sea or be a war correspondent, or something of that sort."

"It wouldn't be such a bad scheme, if we didn't happen to be well placed in business," Thurley observed. "I believe I'll try it in vacation this year, if I can fix up a two-weeks' war or write some kind of a two-weeks' contract as a stowaway."

"Bosh!"

"It's not bosh—it's what we all need, small doses of real excitement or real adventure, with a little element of danger. Heaven knows, you don't get much of any of them dictating letters or answering the telephone."

"We don't want 'em."

"But we do!" Mayne protested. "Think of the choice collection of thrills we could glean from some real old-fashioned adventure!"

"Meaning the Captain Kidd-Dick Turpin variety?"

"Something of the sort—yes."

"My dear boy"—Forbes rested his elbows on the table and regarded them cynically—"that sort of thing is dead—deader than the original door-nail! We read about it in magazines and yellow newspapers occasionally, about hold-ups, and mysterious murders, and——"

"But that's altogether too sordid," Thurley interrupted. "If a thug holds you up on a dark street, he's doing it simply because he needs the money."

"Precisely—that's exactly what I'm talking about. Take Mr. Kidd or Mr. Turpin. Inasmuch as automobiles and private yachts and things didn't exist in those days, and as we're bound to presume that the gentlemen piled up a decent little bit of coin in the course of their careers, they must have kept at it for the sheer enjoyable devilishness of the business. *That's* the sort of adventure—the real article—which has been squeezed out of modern humanity by high rents, the strenuous life, and too much rich food!"

"But——"

"The Spanish Main," Forbes concluded, "is now infested by boomed winter resorts and sixteen different lines of steamships; the two horse-pistol brand of adventure, introduced on our highways, would result in a six-by-nine cell, an indictment from the Grand Jury, and an additional fine for carrying concealed weapons. Your romantic adventure, I tell you, watched its poor little soul float skyward many, many years before either of you saw the light!"

He settled back with a satisfied nod.

The subject was disposed of. Across the table, however, Mayne's face was assuming a thoughtful expression. He played with his cigar for a little; then he looked up.

"Do you know," he said, "I'm inclined to believe that that's all wrong."

"Eh?"

"Captain Kidd may be dead, and Dick Turpin, and all that sort, but the same old spirit of adventure that kept them moving still exists somewhere in the human make-up. I imagine that if it was roused, the change might benefit men who lead such a life of grinding and money-making as ours."

"And you propose to arouse it? How?"

Mayne looked at the table and laughed.

"That's easy. It could be done in a dozen ways."

"Well, for one?"

"Oh, we might adjourn some evening to a secluded spot outside the city and hold up people to our hearts' content. I'll guarantee that that would furnish more galvanizing thrills in one hour than fifty melodramas on the stage."

He smiled whimsically; the smile was reflected on Forbes' countenance.

"That," he remarked, "is one of the most excellent schemes I've ever heard offered, Mayne. It shows good, keen judgment, appreciation of proportions, respect for law and conventions, and everything else."

"And you're too much of a Philistine even to think about it."

"You bet I am! Consider the following morning—old Felter, down at your place, picking up the morning paper to find that his sterling, high-priced private secretary, Mr. Mayne, had been taken red-handed on a country road last evening, while in the act of detaching a stick of candy from a child—or possibly sandbagging a belated plumber for his kit of tools!"

"I think I'll shoot a little higher when I try the Dick Turpin act," Mayne murmured.

A little chuckle ran around the table, and the smoke took to curling again. Forbes yawned and grunted, in unconscious confirmation of Mayne's remarks. He, like the rest of them, had had a hard day down-town; he felt vaguely a dull spiritlessness, but his present desire was mainly for bed.

On the other two, however, the train of thought was producing other effects. Mayne pursed his lips and smiled to himself; Thurley's eyes sparkled. He was the one whose freer early life made the present routine come hardest, and he was the one who broke the short silence with:

"Say, it would be the deuce of a lark, wouldn't it?"

"What?" Mayne looked up again.

"Why, to skip a little way out of town some night and try our hand at a hold-up or two."

"It would unquestionably be amusing," Mayne agreed. "I believe I could take Felter's letters in better shape for a week afterward."

"Except for the fact that you'd probably be in jail for several months afterward," Forbes suggested.

"Oh, we wouldn't admit any such possibilities," Thurley said. "This thing would be done up in proper shape, escape and all."

"Rot!"

The idea seemed to be taking deeper root in Mayne with each passing minute. He looked at Thurley.

"And consider the million bran-new sensations, too!" he went on. "You've selected your spot and you're waiting for your man. Presently, along he comes. You leap out and command him to halt. Perhaps he has a gun, and perhaps he hasn't. Perhaps he'll take to shaking and beg for mercy, and perhaps he'll draw back and deftly punch one side of your head. Perhaps he'll be quiet and perhaps he'll raise a hullabaloo!"

"And unless you held up a congenital idiot, it would probably be the latter!" Forbes grinned, some faint interest in the proposition springing up despite himself.

"And then when you'd finished with him!" Mayne continued. "Suppose he raised an alarm the minute he was out of sight, and people came running and spotted you and came after you! Just think of the sensation of galloping along a pitch-black road with a mob behind you! Think of finding a patch of trees or a hole in the hedge or something of that sort, and sneaking in and waiting

until the excitement had passed along—and think of the fun of getting out of town unseen afterward!"

"It's something to make the charms of mahogany office furniture fade away!" Thurley agreed.

Forbes burst out laughing.

"Also think of the morning after!" he said. "Think of traveling around the various pawnshops with a cartload of watches and diamond rings, and going off into odd corners occasionally to roll up the bills you'd accumulated on the previous evening. That part would beat the stock-market!"

"Well, I hadn't thought of that," Mayne smiled. "I hardly think I'd care to go into the business for material gain. The adventures would be enough."

"And what kind of an opinion would the victims have of a highwayman who held them up for mere amusement?"

The laugh went round again.

"That's right, Mayne," Thurley agreed. "To be consistent, you'll have to hold them up for something or other."

"Make it a match," Forbes suggested.

Mayne's eyes twinkled. He had entered into the spirit of his own idea rather vigorously now; he would carry it to the end.

For a little space he smoked in silence, while the others sipped their coffee and smiled. Then his head came up.

"I've got it!"

"Well?"

"What's about the hardest thing on earth to get?"

"I give it up," Forbes said. "Money?"

"No."

"Peace?" Thurley muttered.

"Wrong. Try again."

"A seat in an L train?"

"Bosh!" Mayne planted an emphatic forefinger on the table and stared intently at it. "The hardest thing in this world to get, particularly when you want it, is—truth!"

"Eh?"

"Yes, plain, unvarnished truth!"

"Well—I don't know that that's so very far from actual fact," Thurley laughed. "What's the connection?"

Mayne's hand waved mysteriously.

"What's the easiest way to get at the truth?"

"Hypnotize the fellow who has it locked in his bosom. It's the only way that science has ever been able to brand a sure thing in that line."

"There's another way."

"Your own discovery, eh? What is it?"

"Scare the man!"

Thurley looked a little puzzled. Forbes scratched his head and grinned.

"Well, I can remember having been decently scared several times, but I'm hanged if I recall any overpowering desire at the time to lay all business and pleasure aside and begin an eloquent recital of cold, indisputable facts, heretofore concealed from a panting and expectant public."

"Well, perhaps I should have said startled, rather than scared. Do you see the idea? Get at a man suddenly and unexpectedly enough—and you'll get the truth."

"I'm beginning to see it," Forbes replied. "You mean, in connection with your road-agent operations, to point a gun at a man's head and yell: 'Tell the truth or die!'"

"Something of the kind, but not exactly in that way. What I mean is this: that since the victim would have to be held up for something, to make the proceeding consistent, the best thing would be to hold him up for an account of himself—make him tell who and what he was and where he was going and why. I'll bet something you'd get more plain truths that way than his wife or employer would ever gather when he turned up late. Yes, that's going to be the object of my hold-up campaign—truth unadorned."

"All of which opens up an entertaining train of thought," Forbes commented. "Why not organize a Truth-Securing Society—get subscribers at twenty dollars a year—hire a corps of skilled highwaymen—have the subject spotted and halted when necessary and the truth ascertained. That's a good scheme, Mayne—it beats the towel-supply and the box-lunch supply people all hollow for up-to-dateness and efficiency!"

"Make fun of it if you like. It's fact, all the same. Some day I'll wait around the corner and try it on you, Forbes."

Mayne finished his coffee. Forbes picked up his newspaper and began reading the article he had started as he hung to the strap on the up-town trip.

The waiter, hovering about expectantly, came forward with finger-bowls and check, and, when the charges had been settled, waited beside their coats. Mayne loitered thoughtfully; Forbes still read —when suddenly Thurley leaned forward across the table.

"See here—you two!"

His voice was low, holding a somewhat puzzling quality. The others looked at him with some little astonishment.

"I suppose you never intend carrying out your hold-up scheme, Mayne?"

"Well, I hadn't fixed a date," the other smiled. "I'm hanged if I don't believe I'll try it some time, though, when the grind has made me desperate enough!"

"And you don't feel quite desperate enough this evening?"

"I—I don't know. Why?"

"Because I feel the need of some excitement just now about as badly as mortal man, even of the Dick Turpin variety, ever felt it. I'm simply on edge for something that'll quicken the blood and blow some of the cobwebs of convention out of my wits."

"Ugh!" Forbes grunted.

"More than that, I know the ideal spot, within forty minutes' ride by train from here—the very ideal spot to carry out your little scheme." He paused, and his voice dropped even lower. "In short, my friends, as soon as I can wiggle into that overcoat, I'm going into the business of a highwayman!"

CHAPTER II.

BEYOND THE CITY.

THEY looked at Forbes, did Mayne and Thurley. They looked at him even longer and more intently than the occasion might have seemed to demand, for there was something convincing in his voice and the lurking smile and the little line between his eyebrows.

"Do you—do you *mean* that?" Forbes inquired curiously.

"I'll swear it, if you want me to."

"I don't know that that's necessary, but—oh, pshaw! There's been gibbering enough around this table for one evening." Forbes stretched his legs, preparatory to rising. "What are you two going to do this evening—theater?"

"*I'm* going to turn highway robber!" Thurley said quietly.

"Oh, drop it! I thought——"

"I mean it as seriously as ever I meant anything since I've been able to talk."

"Then you're going alone!"

"I don't know." He turned to Mayne. "How about you—do you want to join me?"

Mayne stared hard at him again, and took a thoughtful pull at his cigar.

"You don't actually mean to adopt that suggestion of mine?"

"I mean to adopt it entire—particularly to the extent of digging out truth from a victim or two. There's something about that that appeals peculiarly to me. Coming?"

A slow smile overspread Mayne's face.

"I—I can't quite believe that you mean it, even now," he muttered. "If you do—I'm your man!"

"Good!" Thurley laughed, softly and rather excitedly. "I felt pretty sure you would."

"And where's your ideal spot?"

"Just outside the city. It's a little suburb of perhaps three or four hundred houses just now. Farther out, there are ten or a dozen pretty fine residences, belonging to people who can afford to own big grounds."

"And the name?"

"Tell you when we get there," Thurley chuckled. "Well, Forbes, are you going to join the Dick Turpin, Junior, expedition?"

"Me? Go out and hold up pedestrians?"

"Precisely."

Forbes frowned.

"I am almost led to believe, from pretty constant association with you two during the past few years, that neither one of you is crazy. On the other hand, so far as memory will carry me back, I can't recall that either of you ever tried to play a practical joke on me. Therefore, may I ask the *why* of this asininity?"

"The reason's this: we *do* need ex-

citement—even you'll admit that. We're continually on the same old monotonous old grind. A bit of adventure, with a drop or two of danger, will be the best nerve-tonic and general bracer on earth!"

"A drop or two! A hogshead or two! Suppose your initial victim elects to perforate you with half a dozen little leaden pellets?"

"Therein lies the charming uncertainty."

"Or suppose you're both taken into custody? The joke'll fade away pretty rapidly then."

"It's not altogether a joke, anyway," said Thurley. "It's a psychological experiment—and if we're caught at it and locked up, we'll proclaim it as such and sell interviews to the newspapers!"

"And, to pursue the same train of thought and put it baldly, suppose this little escapade should cost you your jobs?"

"Oh, then we'll hire out to a dime museum and show ourselves as the only legitimate psychological highwaymen in captivity!" Mayne said impatiently. "That isn't the question. We want to put ordinary, conventional things behind us for one night; therefore—are you going?"

"Because there'll be a train leaving for my particular spot inside of twenty minutes, and it's a good ten minutes' walk to the station," Thurley added.

Forbes played with his fob and scowled.

"Oh—I don't know. It's too crazy."

"Yes, and the three of us are altogether too sane. That's one of the reasons for it. Are you going?"

"I—don't know."

"Got anything else on for this evening?"

Forbes hesitated for a second or two.

"Um—er—well, I did have."

"Can't get out of it?"

"Oh, all things considered, I don't suppose that it matters a great deal, one way or the other."

"Come along, then."

"Yes, don't be a quitter," Mayne put in sharply. "Come along and be jailed with us like a little man."

That "quitter" was one of the few words which Forbes would resent to the point of fighting — a little fact, by the way, which happened to be within the scope of Mayne's knowledge. The doubtful one looked up suddenly and met the semi-sneering eyes of his friend, and the scowl deepened.

"Do you two poor, cheap, imbecile, imitation desperadoes fancy that I'm *afraid?*" he inquired.

"You're taking long enough to make up your mind."

Forbes pushed back his chair with a hair-raising creak and stood erect. He walked straight toward his coat and thrust an arm into a sleeve. He jerked on the rest of the garment and planted his hat in place with a bang.

"It's made up now, then!" he announced. "I know I'm being egged into it, and that I'm almost as big an idiot as either of you, but—I go! By thunder! I believe I'll take charge of the band! I'll be the Turpinest bandit that ever bandited!"

He faced them, still scowling, but defiantly now. Mayne and Thurley glanced at one another and smiled. Forbes buttoned his coat with an extremely businesslike air.

"Where are you going to get pistols?"

"We'll dispense with them."

"What! Hold up a man without a gun?"

"Certainly, we're not in the business for murder. This is wholly a psychological affair."

"Then I hope the hold-upee will have a psychological pair of fists!" Forbes muttered. "Come along."

The others, more deliberately, were assisted into their outer garments. The trio walked to the door; and in the outer air Forbes paused a moment and stared thoughtfully upward at what stars were visible among the small, hurrying patches of cloud.

"Good-by, old stars," he murmured. "Good-by, proud world and all the rest. This time to-morrow evening I expect to be reposing on a straw cot with a five-cent loaf of bread and a jug of unfiltered water and the sublime consciousness of being the highest grade of made-to-order fool extant—but I shall never be a quitter! Lead the way, D. Thurley Turpin!"

Thurley buttoned his coat against the brisk spring breeze and struck off for the depot. He walked springingly; he was conscious of a most welcome thrill at the prospect.

Mayne seemed scarcely less animated; he, too, contemplated with pure delight the first real release from ten years of convention and plodding; and however absurd it all might be, he meant to enjoy it to the full.

Only Forbes seemed dubious. He plodded silently beside them, his chin set doggedly and his more solid build making the quick pace a bit of an exertion. But he was in the game now, and to stick. If his companions wished to essay the holding up of anything from a coach-dog to a transcontinental express, he would be there to do his part and do it in a fashion to discount any dime-novel ever conceived by the mind of man!

The walk to the station was accomplished almost in absolute silence.

In the waiting-room, a few rather sleepy people sat about—belated suburbanites, long distance travelers, fussy and impatient, commercial men, lethargically awaiting the comparative calm of a sleeping-car berth. The trio of highwaymen-to-be were as little noticed as they would have been in Ranley's.

Thurley took them aside and pointed to seats.

"One dollar each, please, and wait here."

"But what's the objective point of this tour?" Forbes inquired. "I have a sister farther up-town who might like to take a last look at the remains to-morrow morning."

"Well, we'll notify her, if it should be necessary," Thurley said. "Just for the present you're to remain ignorant."

The collection made, he departed quickly for one of the ticket windows, and a moment or two later was at their side again.

Forbes arose resolutely, Mayne eagerly, and in Thurley's wake they made their way down the long narrow platform and climbed into the not too inviting atmosphere of a suburban smoker.

The few men already seated paid no attention. The trio settled themselves in seats near the back end of the car, and the train started slowly.

The ride was uneventful. The choky little engine rattled and rolled the three stuffy, flimsy cars beyond the city limits and through the suburban blackness. They stopped at "crests" and "hursts" and "woods" variously prefixed; one by one and two by two, the dwellers descended. The trio were finally almost alone in the smoker, and still the journey seemed no nearer the end.

Forbes, indeed, was upon the point of expostulating against a trip to the West, or Canada, or wherever else their destination might be, when the outfit slowed down again and the brakeman shouted:

"Haven Terrace!"

"This is it!"

Thurley leaped from his seat. His companions followed, out of the car and to a narrow platform, poorly lighted. Some two or three other passengers descended with them and struck off into the uncompromising inkiness that lay at every hand. The train rattled out again; the red lights disappeared around a curve—and they were alone with Nature and their scheme.

"I may be a little off," Thurley said briskly. "I haven't been here for a year or two, but I believe the Romley Road is the place for us. It's this way."

"And the particular spot you have in mind——" Forbes began.

"Is about a quarter mile beyond the town proper."

"Well, can't we get a hack or something to take us out there?"

Thurley snorted. Mayne took the least enthusiastic of their party by the shoulders and whirled him about.

"March!"

Forbes groaned resignedly and got into step with a—

"Then ho for the Romley Road, the merry——"

"Shut up!" Mayne growled. "Do you want some infernal constable to gather you in as a drunk and disorderly before we've even begun?"

Forbes fell silent; the march was resumed.

The town itself was not particularly conducive to gaiety. Strings of "speculation" houses formed streets; here and there, a frame store was joining its fellows in preparing for all-night darkness; now and then a light appeared in a

lower window and the highwaymen had glimpses of little family gatherings, reading around tables or playing cards.

Late wanderers in this region seemed few and far between. Once or twice they encountered love-lorn couples, loitering and murmuring inaudible nothings; again they came upon a suburbanite, smoking his last cigar in the open air and calming his spirit for slumber.

Then the houses became farther and farther apart, and finally disappeared altogether. A turn, and Thurley remarked with some satisfaction:

"I was right. This is the Romley Road—leads over to Colchester, and it's lonelier than the dickens!"

"It's lonely enough in all conscience," Forbes agreed. "We might just as well do the thing right in such a spot and butcher a man or two and——" he stopped, struck by a sudden thought. "Say!"

"Well?"

"This is Haven Terrace!"

"Just discover it?"

"No, but isn't this the place where the seventy-seventh original 'gentleman burglar' has been doing business lately?"

"Why—I believe it is, come to think of it. Why?"

"Forbes is afraid we may strike him!" Mayne remarked.

"It's not that, but doesn't it spoil the location for us?"

"Why should it?"

"Because people are probably more or less on edge when anything of that sort's going on. You know you always read about them carrying guns and letting their watch-dogs loose and organizing citizens' committees for the capture of the rascal and all that sort of thing."

"Oh, I don't know."

"But suppose we were to collide with one of these vigilance committees? I, at least, look like a gentleman."

"Well, it's too late to change now, anyway," Mayne said. "I don't believe there's much to be afraid of on that score."

The remark was slightly ambiguous; Forbes subsided once more.

The tramp continued; the road grew lonelier. The moon, which until now had been sufficiently obliging in the matter of light, retired behind a cloud-bank. The trio fairly felt their way.

Thurley seemed familiar enough with the road, and he traveled swiftly. Mayne and Forbes clung close to him, the former whistling softly, the latter cursing—less softly—as occasionally he diverted himself by tripping over a stray stone or wandering into an inviting dry ditch at the roadside.

But he held doggedly to his task, and presently he was rewarded. They seemed to have crossed a road which came diagonally to a junction with their own course, when Thurley stopped.

"Here's the place!"

"Well, it's ideal for our purposes!" Mayne muttered.

"It's that all right!" Forbes agreed heartily. "No native'll ever wander along here afoot at this hour of the night."

"There's the fence," Thurley pursued. "The bushes are pretty thick on this side, and when we've crossed we'll be well out of sight. Then, there behind the field is a patch of woods. If we *should* have to run, we can skip through there. It isn't more than a couple of hundred feet to the other road, and somewhere a mile or so along that we can hit the trolley line."

"The mere fact that the cars probably never run after midnight making no difference at all!" Forbes commented.

"Well, we don't have to take the trolley, anyway. The main thing is to have a clear path at our rear for retreat. Come along."

He listened. The place was as silent as the grave. He lighted a match and shaded it, and by its flickering light they scrambled across the shallow ditch and reached the fence.

Thurley vaulted over and Mayne followed suit. Forbes, not to be outdone, took a firm grip and leaped. They were ready!

"Now what do we do?" Forbes inquired.

"Sit still. Put out that cigar!"

"Can't a bandit smoke?" the particular bandit demanded. "Who the dickens are you to give commands, anyway?"

"As the father of this idea, I am chief of this band," Mayne replied.

"All right, chief!" The cigar

dropped. "Go on with your instructions. What do I do—choke the luckless wayfarer till he falls lifeless at my feet, or what? The big blade of my penknife's decently sharp and——"

"Oh, dry up!" Thurley laughed. "Forbes, this is a purely psychological experiment; levity has no place here. The first man that passes in either direction will be confronted and——"

"Psst!" came from Mayne, nearer to the fence and the road.

"Good Lord! What is it?" gasped Forbes.

"Ssssh!" Mayne's whisper hardly reached them. "*The first man's coming!*"

CHAPTER III.

DICK TURPIN DUPLICATED.

A LITTLE groan came from Forbes. Thurley drew a sharp breath and stepped noiselessly to Mayne's side. The trio listened as they had never listened before.

Mayne's ears had not deceived him. In the very direction from which they had come, some unconscious pedestrian was making his way toward them through the darkness.

He seemed lonely, too. He whistled, rather discordantly, but with great enthusiasm, about "Tammany," and the shrill notes became momentarily more clear and loud.

Then the light scuffing of his feet in the dry sand of the road became audible to the trio. They crouched behind the fence and waited, and the seconds seemed to have lengthened into days.

"Is he *ever* coming?" Forbes muttered.

"Shut up!" whispered the chief of the expedition.

"I can't. I've got stage fright!" croaked Forbes. "I've got to say something, or I'll get up and shriek at him and scare him away before we have a chance to throttle him!"

"Quiet!"

"Anyway, it's a beastly criminal thing to make a man do—tell the truth! Why not stab him to the heart with my trusty penknife, or take his money, and let him keep the truth to himself! I never conceived such an outrageous——"

Thurley's hand closed over his mouth.

The steps were painfully near now. They had crossed the junction of the road and they were coming straight toward the ambush. Mayne half wished they wouldn't—just why he could not understand. Something palpitated in his throat and his bent knees wobbled queerly and he had an insane impulse to giggle foolishly. He wondered how Thurley was feeling, and whether the intended victim carried weapons—and the man came into view, half discernible in the faintest of lights from the hidden moon.

He was walking quickly. Also, he was rather small, and certainly not a formidable foe to three able-bodied men, all under thirty. Furthermore, he seemed to be wearing an opera hat and what looked astonishingly like an Inverness coat; it was not difficult to imagine an evening suit somewhere concealed beneath that outer garb.

He was not twenty feet away now—now not ten—and Thurley was over the fence and the others after him!

"Halt!" bellowed Mayne.

"Don't yell so like blazes!" Forbes cautioned. "You'll have the whole population out!"

"Put up your hands!" Thurley, for the moment the calmest, commanded.

An inarticulate gurgle came from the dark figure—a gurgle that was partly a squeal of amazement and fright.

Into the air his hands shot. Something big and light rolled out of his arms and tumbled into the ditch. His hat tilted dangerously for a minute or two and followed in its wake. After a tense pause of some five seconds, from his lips came:

"What—what the devil——"

"You're held up!" Thurley announced superfluously.

"Yes, sir," Forbes supplemented quickly, "you are in the process of being highway-robbed by three of the most gentlemanly and obliging bandits at present doing business in this section of the country. Our methods are thorough, efficient, and wholly satisfactory in every particular. We defy capture and competition! Kindly obey orders implicitly, on penalty of instant death. The chief will now speak."

If a glance can be felt, even when unseen, it is probable that Forbes felt a glance of unbounded astonishment directed upon him. The chief, by this time rather recovered of breath, spoke:

"Turn to your left. Climb that fence."

"But——"

"Obey!"

Thurley laid a hand on the captive's arm. He obeyed. He turned willingly and stepped across the ditch. He felt for the fence and, gathering up the skirts of his coat, went over somewhat laboriously, and the three were with him.

"I say——" he began.

Mayne's hand went up for silence. In the gloom the opposing sides took account of each other.

The victim appeared to be about twenty-five years of age. He was well-favored and of the regular type of semi-society youth. He was arrayed in evening dress—and he was extremely startled.

Mayne drew a long breath.

"Sir," he said solemnly, "you are in the hands of the Turpin Trio!"

"The—the what?"

"The Turpin Trio, the three legitimate successors of the immortal Dick Turpin. Give instant obedience and you shall come to no harm."

"But—oh, see here——"

"Don't interrupt the chief!" Forbes cautioned gently. "He is the baddest thing that ever got into human shape, and he learned to shoot in Wyoming."

A little gulp was the only answer.

"You have been brought here——" Mayne continued.

Far off a church clock tolled ten. The captive's hands dropped with indiscreet suddenness, and he burst out:

"Here! My money's in this pocket, and here's my watch. Take them and let me go at once."

"We want no money."

"We have so much money now, from former victims, that we are only in the business for the love of it!" Forbes explained.

"But I tell you——"

"You have been brought here," Mayne began again, "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!"

"Well—all right—but"—the victim appeared in something very like a frenzy—"but take the money and let the truth go to thunder! I can't wait here!"

"You will be forced to."

"Then——"

"Please lower your voice," Thurley remarked. "It would be most unpleasant if we were compelled to lower it for you."

"And perhaps forever!" Forbes sighed.

A suppressed groan escaped the man in evening clothes. His hands dropped.

"What—what—what is it?" he cried.

"First of all, remember that you are in the presence of the Turpin Trio, who stop at nothing. Remember that the slightest deviation from absolute veracity may mean that you have walked yonder road for the last time. Stranger, speak truly: who are you?"

"Me? Why—why—why——"

"Psychology's all off!" Forbes remarked to Thurley. "Man's even forgotten his own name."

"My name is Thomason!" the captive said.

"Where do you come from? Where is your home?"

"Oh—down—back there in the Terrace, of course!"

"And your errand at this hour of the night?"

"Here—I say!"

"Well?"

"Why in thunder should I——"

"Tell us? Because it is our will!"

"Well, it's not mine by a long shot!" the victim said angrily. "If you're crazy, I suppose you're not accountable. If this thing's a joke, it's gone too far already. Let me go, or there'll be trouble!"

"Here is the sacrificial knife, chief!" came from behind.

"Tell us the truth!" Mayne commanded mournfully.

The stranger rested his weight on one foot and then on the other. He snapped his fingers and he snorted impatiently; he grunted and he snarled—and the trio waited.

Then, quite suddenly, he spoke again:

"See here, if I do tell you the truth—do give an account of myself—what then? Am I to be held here all night?"

"You will be released immediately."

"All right, then!" He drew breath. "In the first place, I'm Dr. Thomason—Dr. Thomason, of Haven Terrace—you know the house, second block from the station, fourth house on the right."

"Ah, yes," came vaguely from Mayne.

"Well, I—I'm going to a case. Now let me go."

"In those togs?" Thurley asked.

"Certainly!" the captive cried in exasperation. "You see, I've been down to the city—meant to go to the opera, but the friend who had the tickets disappointed me. Therefore, I had dinner and waited for my train and came home as quickly as possible. Just as I arrived in the house, the telephone bell rang, and I rushed off as rapidly as possible—and naturally didn't take time to change my clothes. The motor of my machine is smashed—therefore I walked. Now, kindly get out of the way and let me go! There'll—there'll be a death on your heads if you keep me here any longer!"

Forbes and Mayne retreated a step or two. There was something about interrupting a physician on a hurry call that made their whole adventure seem rather more than absurd. Thurley, however, checked the mad dive of the victim for a moment:

"We want the whole truth," he said. "You haven't told us what sort of a case it is."

"It's measles!" snarled the captive.

"A hurry call on a measles case?"

"Oh, it's complicated in this instance with stomach trouble, earache, and a broken leg. The pain yesterday was bringing on an—an anachronism of the cardiac muscles, and by to-night—where's my hat? Where's that box? Let me go!" sputtered the doctor.

"Let him go," said Mayne.

"Yes, and let's help him find his hat and his box," Forbes suggested, after a struggle against unhighwaymanlike better impulses.

He led the way over the fence, and the physician, Mayne, and Thurley vaulted across almost simultaneously.

Into the ditch they scurried, and felt up and down for the missing articles. Thurley's voice, after a moment, grew peculiarly faint. The others hardly noted it, the doctor least of all.

He was searching frantically, with the aid of countless matches which the playful wind blew out systematically, for his hat and his box. And presently a crash announced that something had befallen him.

"Find it?" Mayne inquired.

"Yes, I found it, drat you!"

"Which—the box?"

"No, the hat! I fell on the blasted thing and smashed it flat. Hold a match here, one of you—you—confounded——"

He broke off breathlessly. Forbes kindled another match, and as he shielded it more skilfully, the unfortunate, generously covered with dry bits of turf and dust, strove wildly to punch back into shape an opera hat. The spring had broken and made its way through the silk; it dangled merrily as the panting man jammed the limp mass on his head and cried:

"That box!"

"I've found it!" Thurley announced. "Here it is."

"Broken?"

"No, it's all right."

"Give it here, then!"

He snatched the thing out of Thurley's arms, felt over it for an instant and took a firm grip. Without a word, he regained the roadside, unhindered. Another pause of extreme brevity, and a match flickered over his watch. The highwaymen heard:

"Good Lord! Ten minutes after!"

Whereupon, quick steps suddenly beat upon Romley Road. The moon appeared once more for a minute or two—and there, some hundreds of feet away already, a cloud of dry dust was traveling away from the Terrace, and toward parts unknown.

The Turpin Trio watched it silently for a while, until a sigh from Mayne broke the spell. With one impulse they turned and retraced their steps, and once more in the shelter of the fence, they remarked in chorus:

"Well?"

"The first hold-up in the interest of science is now history," Mayne said. "How did you feel?"

"As if I wanted to kiss him good-by for not hauling me off to a lunatic asylum!" Forbes said.

"And I felt, for a minute or two, as if I'd like to turn and run like sin!" Mayne confessed. "How about you, Thurley?"

The third member evaded the question with another.

"Say, what's a fizzle?"

"Something that should have been and wasn't," Forbes informed him.

"Then that's what this is!"

"Why?"

"It's a psychological fizzle. The man lied faster than a horse can trot!"

"I'd been thinking something the same thing," Mayne admitted. "He seemed—well, rattled."

"He certainly did, but that doesn't brand him a liar. It's these things! While you two were helping him find his hat, I chanced to stumble over his big pasteboard box, and I made a quiet little investigation of the contents. Strike a match and look."

The light was forthcoming, and the desperate three put their heads together. In Thurley's hands were three magnificent American Beauty roses.

"And those things cost about a dollar apiece this time of year!" Forbes gasped. "How many did he have?"

"There were three dozen in that box, if there was one. I thought it might be well to have a souvenir of the occasion—in fact, it would be a good thing in each case—so I extracted these. Have one, each of you."

"And still," said Mayne, "I decline to believe that I ever shaped a faulty theory. We will consider that he told the truth, even if only for the sake of my feelings. He was taking these to his patient."

"The person with the anachronism of the cardiac muscles? Nay, friend, he lied."

"Hold on!" Forbes interjected. "There's still 'Exhibit B' to go in as evidence."

"What?"

"I picked it up after he did that spectacular fall on his hat. Strike another of those matches, Mayne. I don't know whether this is going to prove the case for the prosecution or the defendant, but—ah! Cards!"

The flickering illumination had revealed a card-case of black leather, a common enough variety of pocket article. Forbes shook it, and a dozen or so slips of pasteboard slid into his hand. He turned them over curiously.

"Haynes — Thomas Haynes — Thomas Haynes—Thomas Haynes—Thomas Haynes—they're all Thomas Haynes, every blessed one of 'em!"

"And they must have been his."

"They were his!" Forbes replied. "They were his, and he's no M. D., for it would be a physical impossibility for a man of that age to own the degree and not have it printed everywhere from his linen to his dress-suit case. That Thomas, also, is where he got the 'Thomason.' Mayne, Thurley is vindicated. Your psychological experiment's no good. You held up the man—you scared his wits out, apparently—and still he lied. When it came to baring his soul, you never touched him, Mayne."

The other chuckled a little.

"I'll admit it, then," he said. "We had the fun of the hold-up, anyway, and we'll be able to manage better next time—and I'll guarantee we have better luck!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE VIGOROUS VICTIM.

"And now?" said Forbes.

"Well, what now?"

"We're not going to camp here all night?"

"Barring accidents, we're going to stick it out until we've held up five people at least."

"Exactly—barring accidents. But may I suggest that if ever three gentlemen were located in the likeliest part of the accident belt, we are the three."

"Why so?"

"Because the first human being that mendacious youth comes across is going to hear the news—that three insane highwaymen are waiting here with bared steel and bated breath."

"I believe he's in too much of a hurry to waste any time giving an alarm."

"Well, I don't. I move that we fold our tents like the Arabs and take a speedy toddle for other fields."

"We'll never find as good a spot as this," Thurley objected. "I remember walking by here one night three years

ago and thinking at the time what a perfect place for a hold-up it was."

"That's all right, too—for one hold-up. But if you're going to nail out a sign to the effect that we've permanently established here in the highwayman business, there's bound to be something doing in the very immediate future. They must have police somewhere within a hundred miles; if we wait long enough we're bound to have 'em after us."

"Well, suppose we are?"

"Thurley," said Forbes, "I know you've lived in a hall-room, but did you ever go the last limit and try existing in a dank and moldy dungeon cell?"

"Never."

"Neither have I, and I don't propose to try it now. Let's propel ourselves hence!"

"But can't you see," Mayne protested, "that just the beauty of this location lies in the fact that we've got that patch of woods to skip into, if we have to—and a clear road beyond that?"

Forbes shook his head slowly.

"All right, then," he murmured. "Have it your own way. I don't deny the advantages of the locality, but I have a feeling in my bones that we've no business occupying it too long."

"Therefore, if you're done arguing in that fish-peddler's voice," Thurley concluded tartly, "I think we'll cut out conversation. We might about as well have brought a band and burned red fire, so far as any concealment is concerned."

Calm settled upon the scene.

The uncertain moon slipped behind a patch of semi-translucent cloud and shed a pale, faint light upon them and upon the stretch of sandy road; and the stillness became almost unearthly.

Mayne took his station by the fence again and peered up and down the road. Minutes passed, and more minutes. Fifteen of them had dragged by without the sign of a pedestrian, and Forbes was yawning audibly, when a sudden whisper came from the lookout:

"Stick a handkerchief in his infernal mouth, Thurley!"

"What?" Forbes' teeth shut with a snap.

"Here he comes!"

"Eh?" The pair scrambled to his side. "Who is it?"

"Well, being without a blue book of Haven Terrace, I can only tell you that it's a man. He's just in the shadow of those bushes—there, across the junction. You'll see him in a minute."

Six eyes were focused upon the edge of the bushes. In the stillness came: "thump—thump—thump—thump!"

It was a footfall, and a footfall of character. Its absolutely positive and resolute collision with the earth, solid, forceful, and emphatic, bespoke certain qualities in the maker which, in the circumstances, were not altogether pleasant to contemplate. The sound was the tramp of a strong, heavy man, walking determinedly and with a definite purpose.

"Umum!" Thurley observed, under his breath. "That's no mere child, is it, Mayne?"

"Chief!" Forbes observed tremulously.

"Be quiet! What?"

"If a member of this band wants to resign on short notice, does he have to put it in writing?"

There was no reply. The newcomer approached swiftly and steadily, and with each new step his footfalls became heavier and more ominous.

"Because, chief," Forbes whispered mournfully, "if we're going to stick up that individual, and his fists are in proportion to his feet, I want to tender my farewell speech and my resignation, the same to take effect within fifteen seconds!"

"What's the matter—scared?"

"Me? Never!" Forbes swelled his chest. "Go ahead, chief. Better death than your contempt!"

The man had crossed the junction now; his course was held straight for their lair. And as he neared, he seemed to the trio to increase in bulk. Forbes licked his lips and sighed; Thurley drew a deep breath.

Then he was almost opposite them—and they were over their fence once more!

"Throw up your hands!" Mayne shouted.

There was a tense pause of perhaps two seconds. Then a ham-like fist shot out in Mayne's direction!

The chief of the psychological bandits

ducked with more speed than he would have supposed possible. Indeed, he ducked almost to the ground, and received as a reward a staggering blow on the back!

Now the fighting animal has a way of popping up in the best controlled bosoms. It was so in Mayne's case. In a twinkling, he had abandoned a suddenly conceived plan of fleeing. He meant to finish the hold-up now in proper style; and to that end his arms went suddenly around the figure.

Nor were the other two far behind in going into action. Forbes, dodging the fists, which were fairly whizzing about, launched his solid bulk bodily at the fighter. The result, if not graceful, was wholly satisfactory. Down in a heap, rolling about with the stranger underneath, went all four.

They wallowed there in the sand for a little, but superior numbers won the battle. The stranger, pinned to the ground and cursing with painful fluency, subsided.

"There, sir!" said Mayne. "Are you convinced now that you're held up?"

"I'm convinced that—lemme go!"

"Pleading is useless," said Forbes placidly. "Our chief is as adamant."

"D'ye know who I am?" roared the victim.

"Certainly. We always investigate a man before holding him up."

"I'm a sheriff!"

"What!" escaped from Thurley.

"I'm a deputy sheriff—I'm the law!" thundered the prostrate man. "I'll see that you pay up for this!"

"You are mistaken in one particular," said Thurley. "In this particular spot *we* are the law. And, anyway, a deputy sheriff isn't as bad as a real sheriff," he added as an afterthought.

"Will you step over that fence?" Mayne inquired.

"When I get on my feet, I'll step all over you!"

Forbes whistled gently and seated himself upon the victim.

"Cross-examine him here, or give me time to run," he remarked.

For a moment or two, there was no sound other than the panting of the late combatants.

Then, from afar, came the single stroke of the clock they had heard before.

Faint as was the sound, its effect upon the person on the road was rather remarkable. Instantly, every muscle had relaxed and a gasp came from his lips.

"Was that *half past ten?*" he cried.

"Yes."

The stranger gulped.

"You'll find the cash in my vest pocket. Thank heaven there's only three or four dollars of it. The watch is silver, and you won't be able to get a dollar for it from a fence."

"But——"

"Take 'em! Take 'em! Take 'em!" the sheriff cried breathlessly. "Get 'em quick and let me go!"

"But we——"

"No, I won't even give an alarm!" the man went on hurriedly. "Only get what you want and let me go. I'm in a hurry!"

"My dear sir," Mayne persisted. "We're not after money!"

"You're not—what?"

"No, sir, we are not that kind of highwaymen. You are in the presence of the Turpin Trio."

"Who? I never heard of you. Have you ever done time?"

"Not yet," said Forbes. "We're preparing for it now."

"And we have held you up to learn the truth," Mayne finished.

"The truth about what?"

"Things in general and yourself in particular. We are simply after facts. Give us those, and you are safe. Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth?"

"Say, are the three of you drunk or crazy?" the sheriff roared.

"Neither. Do you swear?"

The sheriff breathed hard for the next minute or two. Perhaps he was trying to analyze the situation. At all events, the thought apparently uppermost in his mind found expression first of all:

"Swear be hanged! Ask questions if you want to, and I'll answer 'em, if I can. But get it over and *let me go!*"

"Very well." Mayne glanced up and down the road. The moon was out again now, and no one seemed to be in sight. Nevertheless, cross-examination under such conditions might better be hurried.

"In your case," he said, "I believe that we will limit matters to a full and true account of the errand which brings you here at this hour of the night, and——"

There was a queer little pause. Then, quite explosively, burst from the sheriff:

"By jiminy! I see it all now!"

"Eh?"

"I thought it was queer!" he went on with increasing fury. "I thought it was queer that three evidently raw amateurs should put up such a fight for just what you might happen to find on a man, but I see it all now, and I can tell you three fools that there's a penalty for interfering with an officer in discharge of his duty, and that you'll pay it!"

"You see what?" Thurley asked.

"That you three are in league with——"

He stopped short, with very much the appearance of a man who feels that he has spoken too freely. Thurley and Mayne were listening attentively for further enlightenment, when Forbes broke in with:

"Sir, I assure you that we are allied with no other concern in our line of business. We are the anti-trust, free and independent freebooters, in the great cause of gathering truths!"

"You lie! You——"

"Hush!" Mayne interposed. "Let the narrative proceed. You may explain just where you are going so hurriedly, why you are going there, and what you are going to do when you get there."

The sheriff took another moment for meditation. His sharp eyes, shifting quickly from one to another, passed Forbes and settled upon Mayne; they left Mayne and dwelt even longer on Thurley. And, when the silent inspection was over, an indefinable, mysterious something in their faces appeared to give him a little satisfaction.

"All right," he said abruptly. "I'll tell the whole truth and tell it quick—and go!"

"Good!"

"In the first place," he continued hurriedly, "I'm on a mighty important errand. Are you acquainted with Black Meyer?"

"Never heard of the gentleman," Thurley confessed.

"I am," Forbes remarked. "A second cousin of his, Red Mike, used to live in a dime novel I owned when I was a kid, and he——"

The sheriff passed the interruption.

"You may make his acquaintance if you remain in your present line," he said, dryly. "He's one of the nastiest all-around criminals in the country at present. The police and the Pinkertons have been after him in the West for months. They cornered him, six or eight weeks ago, in Milwaukee, and he shot three and got away. Then, in Joliet, last month, they actually jailed him, and he murdered his guard and skipped again."

"Did he wade in gore and scale the prison wall by the light of a property moon?" Forbes inquired.

"Then he disappeared altogether until last night! Last night, he blew open the bank vaults in Colchester!"

"Phew!"

"The watchman found him there, just a minute or two after the blast—and received two bullets through his head for his pains. Before any one else came, alarmed by the shots, Meyer had cleaned out the vault and fled!"

"Splendid! At last we've heard something exciting," Thurley commented. "What's all this to do with to-night?"

"I know where the man is hiding, in the Terrace!" the sheriff whispered. "I'm on my way now to take him before he can leave on the midnight train, as I've pretty accurate information that he means to do. That's all. Now, for heaven's sake, let me go!"

There was another short silence, broken by Mayne with:

"Well?"

"Let him go," said Thurley.

"And before you do it, have him hand out a souvenir of the occasion," Forbes added.

"Let me up!"

"Not until you've given us some little remembrance of this pleasant occasion, my dear sir."

The sheriff breathed heard. Forbes settled more solidly on him and the others renewed their grips.

"Then take my watch—take my hat!" the victim cried. "Take anything you like, only let me get out of this!"

"Watch is too much like robbery—

and I'm afraid you'd catch cold without your hat. What else have you?"

"Nothing, I tell you! Let me——"

Forbes reached forward gently and felt about his pockets. From an inner one came several papers and envelopes; from the sheriff came a stifled roar. Forbes, however, sorted them over placidly, and at last he held up an envelope, received at some past time by mail and opened—and containing he knew not what.

"Suppose you leave this with us," he suggested. "Almost anything'll do."

The sheriff squinted at it in the moonlight and grunted.

"Well, it's an expired fire-insurance policy. Take it if you want it, only *let me up!*"

Forbes pocketed the envelope and arose. The others released their holds. The deputy sheriff was upon his feet with one bound. With another he had located his hat, donned it, and was brushing his clothes.

With a third, and forbearing so much as a word of adieu or of abuse, his long legs suddenly took the road.

Into the darkness, up the road, and raising just such a dust-cloud as had their initial victim, went the deputy sheriff, in pursuit of the desperate "Black Meyer!"

CHAPTER V.

DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY.

"He was in a hurry!" Mayne asserted needlessly.

"So was the fake doctor. Maybe he was the original and terrible 'Black Meyer.'" Thurley laughed.

"Perhaps he was, but I doubt it. This road looks as if there'd been a dog fight taking place."

"All of which is true," said Forbes, "but contains no reason why we shouldn't do our world-famous disappearing act behind that fence again. There's no telling when our genial sheriff may come upon some one headed in this direction."

They looked about for a little. They found no evidence of human approach. They retired to their original lair and squatted out of sight.

"Do you suppose *he* was telling the truth?" Thurley inquired.

"Well — there are discrepancies," Mayne admitted.

"Yes, and more positive lies," Forbes added, with a trace of weariness. "You'll never get up a book on the success of hold-ups as a means of truth-extraction, Mayne—never!"

"Oh, he may not have been lying. For one thing, he seemed to think that we were in league with—well, he didn't mention the name."

"But presumably his criminal? Don't believe it. He spotted us for amateurs, you know. It might be as well hereafter, to ask proposed victims whether they've ever been held up before, and if they have, let 'em go. I hate like sin to look green and foolish."

"Well, this is only our second trial, you know," Thurley said. "We're gathering points slowly."

"I'm gathering them in bunches," Forbes sighed. "I'll know enough next time, when a man's that size to take to the woods. He landed a whack on me that'll keep my chest black and blue for a week."

"Never mind your confounded chest. This is an experiment. If you have to suffer, suffer and be quiet." Thurley surreptitiously rubbed one or two rather painful parts of his own anatomy. "He was a bit forceful, though."

Mayne, with his back against the fence and a secret craving for tobacco, cleared his throat.

"Do you know," he began, "all things considered, I'm inclined to the disheartening belief that that fellow didn't stick altogether to the truth. It seems to me that if he had been after a criminal with a trail of corpses strung out from Maine to California in his wake, he'd have carried a gun."

"Which he evidently didn't have," said Forbes, "or some of us would at present be engaged in weaving pretty little wreaths for what was mortal of some others of us. If a man of his caliber had had a gun——"

"He wouldn't have bothered knocking us about—exactly. That has occurred to me, after a strenuous mental effort, Forbes."

"And there's still another point,

which you may or may not have noticed. His criminal, according to the recital, was secreted in the Terrace. Like the good Dr. Thomason, who was neither a doctor nor surnamed Thomason, he started in the opposite direction."

"Well——" Mayne scratched his head.

"Maybe the excitement turned their wits around a bit," Thurley put in, doubtfully.

"Maybe it did, but neither of them hesitated much about the direction he took."

Forbes yawned again, and the others fell silent.

"Suppose," said the former, "that we cut it out?"

"What?"

"The whole blamed thing, Mayne."

"No, sir! We've elected to hold up at least five people; they're going to be held up."

"There's time to get a late train back and have a nice warm little supper at Ranley's or at one of the hotels," Forbes went on drearily. "It's cool here, too—something like three below zero, I should imagine—and we've got thin overcoats. Then it's getting late, and we have to work to-morrow, if we happen to be at liberty still——"

"Drop it!"

"And still further, you two seem so infatuated with this particular spot that it's pretty plain that we're going to stay right here until the patrol comes along and gathers us in."

"Say, will you let up on that theme, or go and find a better spot?"

"I don't know the locality; Thurley's our expert on that matter. I do know, though, that it's against all sense and reason to run a highway robbery business as you would a grocery store. Good Lord! You fellows seem afraid of losing customers!"

"Has that all got to be gone through with again?" Thurley snapped impatiently. "Is it necessary for you to have a scale map, blue-printed, with all lines of escape indicated and——"

"Psst!"

"What?"

"Did you hear it?"

"No. What?"

"As sure as we are standing in the shadow of the gallows—or whatever it is highwaymen get," said Forbes, solemnly, "I heard a door slam!"

"A *door!*" ejaculated Thurley. "Why, there isn't a house within gunshot of here!"

"That may be, and it may have been a spook door—but I heard a mighty substantial door shut with a mighty forceful slam!"

"Nonsense! Why, I picked this spot——"

"Hush! Listen!"

"Because there are no houses about," Thurley went on doggedly. "There isn't a safer spot for us within fifty miles of the city. No, sir! For safety——"

At which point, his words were bitten off quite suddenly.

Behind them, through the apparent patch of wood and not fifty feet distant, a sudden glare of light burst forth!

It was a steady, strong, yellow light, too, bearing every hallmark of electric illumination. It was followed, also, by another beam, and a third, until the whole little patch of ground, but a moment before wrapped in mysterious darkness, was bathed in radiance.

Gasping, they leaped to their feet, their eyes glued to the phenomenon. Quickly they realized that they were staring at the illuminated windows of a house, and that house not a score of paces distant.

"It's—it's——" Thurley cried, his voice incautiously high.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" squealed Forbes. "Look at that!"

Silhouetted in the glare, the fence behind the house stood out clearly. Now, with a suddenness little less than appalling, a second shape appeared. A rattle of a chain was heard for an instant; then, rising bodily, they made out the sinister figure of a huge bulldog!

His purpose and the reason of his excitement were in as little doubt as the location of the moon overhead.

He, the watch-dog of the unsuspected dwelling, had seen them! He was now proceeding to discharge his duty!

Into the air he came, and fell back. He had not quite accomplished the leap that time. But, evidently while gathering himself for another spring, he essayed the giving of an alarm. A low

growl at first, his voice swelled to a series of stentorian barks that sent a chill through the petrified Turpin Trio.

Once more the rattle—once more he rose—hovered in the air for an instant—and was over the fence!

The spell broke. With a single impulse, the three whirled about and dashed frantically at the fence, Forbes breathing disjointed, ghastly little lamentations and promises of a better life as he went.

They eschewed the use of hands in the vaulting process this time. Like a neck-and-neck hurdle race, they flew across the barrier. They landed, on hands and kness, in the ditch. They bounced up like so many rubber balls and attained the road.

They fairly tore up the ground in the start-getting process. Then, with the din of that awful throat almost in their ears, they sped pell-mell, headlong, up the road!

(To be continued.)

THE GARDEN OF GRAFT.

By George Allan England.

THIS is a brief description of an ingenious pair who decided to gather certain ripe fruit.

CHAPTER I.

SOWING THE SEED.

POD SLATTERY reclined in somewhat ungraceful fashion upon a bench in Union Square, puffed with loose lips at a half-cigar he had just sniped from the asphalt, and stared moodily at the fountain. His lack of grace proceeded from the rather unusual proportions of his waist, which despite certain years in Trenton "Pen" had of recent been steadily gaining on him; while his moodiness arose from the plain fact that he was "busted."

Rubbing his chin, which bristled like the fretful porcupine, he surveyed his bulging shoes and frazzled trousers, then gazed resentfully at the well-dressed throng, and felt the anarchist stirring within him. Familiar platitudes anent the inequalities of this world's benefits welled up in his soul; ungentle words escaped his lips along with the smoke of the sniped cigar.

"Four forty-eight!" murmured a voice at his side.

No live wire could have galvanized Pod more instantaneously. The cigar dropped from his flaccid hand, his head turned with a jerk, and the short hair on his neck bristled like a bulldog's.

"Four forty-eight," repeated to himself the tall and well-dressed individual at his right, casually folding back his newspaper. "Mark-down sale at Trenton—regular slaughter. Six dollar shoes at four forty——"

"Hush-sh-sh-shhh! Cut that!" muttered Slattery to the individual, glancing furtively about. "I reckon I know my number without havin' Pittsburgh Bender sprout out o' the earth side o' me to remind me of it! *Where* the deuce did *you* blow in from, an' how's the dance proceedin' with you? You jumped me out o' steen years' growth!"

"Just what you need, Slatsey, old boy!" retorted the tall fellow, carefully adjusting a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles. "You're not growing emaciated to any extent, I can see *that* in spite of my failing eyesight. Astonishing how suddenly myopia has tackled me; absolutely have to wear these now—couldn't get along without 'em.

"Curious part of it is that they should help me so, being just plain window-glass; but there! this world is full of marvelous things, chock-a-block full! Where've I been? Oh, touring the West; I'll give you full details later, after you tell me how long you've been out, *et cet.* I had the pleasure of leaving first, you remember—via that uncovered manhole in the yard. Say, but you *were* slow to finish your time, when——"

"Shh-sh-shh! Not so loud! You seem to ferget my diameter's about eleven sizes bigger'n yours, wherefore I tarried. I been out six weeks. Riley got eight months off for me. Remember Riley?"

"*Do* I? You must have softening of the cogs. Why——" . . .

"Oh, yes, now I *do* recall—he got you appointed his trusty an' shifted you to the East Wing. I heard later you got religion hard; broke out all over with it, same's measles. Was that a fact?"

"Stack your whole pile it was!" answered "Bender," dropping into the subterranean tongue of crooks as easily as a duckling slides into a barn-yard pool. "I certainly went the entire limit; it don't pay to halve things. Got grace all over; can quote you chapter, verse, and line like the *padre* himself. You just ought to hear me do the pious! But say, what's didding? Anything with legal tender at the other end of it? You look raw-ther impecunious, for a fact."

"That's right, I *am*," Slats assented, holding up one ragged sleeve for Bender's scrutiny. "All to the bad; not a samoleon in reach. Not a bite, either, except the wood-yard (ugh!) or them ladified soup-kitchens where they hand you out grub with one hand an' gospel with the other. No duds, an' winter comin' on fast; no, by thunder, not even a smoke! Hades! I sometimes wish I was back in 448 again, tappin' shoes, with you nex' door in 449, ditto. No worry there 'bout meal-tickets an' a bunk, anyway—everythin' free an' strictly sixteenth-class.

"But," continued he, gazing with frank admiration at Bender's perfectly correct attire, "*you* seem to be goin' among 'em some, these days. What kind of a deal you ribbin' up, anyway? Bill-collectin' with a string to it, soft-shoe work or the glad palm? Just put me wise, an' perhaps life may blush up a trifle for Poddie!"

"I don't quite like the look o' this man next to me," growled Bender cautiously. "We'd better ambulate around some. Stroll over to the north side of the square. I'll follow in half a mo."

Pod rose carelessly, yawned, stretched and shuffled off. Bender once more became near-sightedly absorbed in his paper. Such of the passers-by as noticed the tall, carefully dressed reader, very probably "sized him up" as a successful, middle-aged professional man. Jail-bird characteristics he had none, except possibly a curious pallor which contrasted sharply with his straight black hair.

"How d'you work it?" was Pod's first question when Bender had rejoined him ten minutes later on a quiet bench at the north end of the square. "Why, you look like a reg'lar top-notcher, and that's no pipe. Put me next! Collections for charities, or how?"

"Oh, several ways," answered the ex-trusty, handing Pod a twenty-five-cent cigar and lighting one himself. "Collections are all right, too—good, easy graft; but there's no big hauls in that line, besides which you've got to flit on pretty often. I've got something to knock that cold. It's a hard game to dally with, but if you're long on sand it's a winner. Pulled one bout off in Chicago last spring, at the expense of the Grangers' National, and haven't done a stroke since—best hotels nowadays for mine; everything's velvet, with a gilt-topped bot. every time I'm dry. It takes an understudy, though, and a good one, which is a tough proposition to find. The one I had in Chi. got mixed up with a kid game and landed in limbo first crack out of the box. If he'd stuck to the legitimate he'd have been O. K., but he was naturally low and had to take a flier at lifting, which put the kibosh on him. He was only a dope, anyway."

"How so?"

"Oh, had no natural gumption. Annexed what he thought was a bar of lead off the rear end of a truck on Dodge Street, and sold it to a fence for a two-spot. *Think* of a man taking chances for two bones! Well, he found out afterward it was a bar of silver, went back, and made a holler for the extra coin. Mr. Fence handed out an ice-wagon line of conversation; my understudy did the injured innocent, and threatened to have the place pulled. He made good, too—*did* get it rounded up, and himself in the bargain also. Seven years and six months.

"Yes—just as a reward of honesty, trying to keep the fence from making unearned increments. Honesty, yes—

it's the best policy every time; but policies just now are strictly on the swine. Wherefore I sidestep that brand henceforth, and——"

"Same here!" Slats interrupted. "Just think o' *my* four years because I helped a lad in Watertown drop a brand on to that bunch of R. R. pay-checks, an' then owned up. The judge he told me I'd get clear by squealin', but he soaked it to me just the same, and said I was lucky not to get ten, same's the other feller done.

"No, sir—I'm nix on the best-policy racket here an' hereafter. If you've got a good jiu-jitsu, though," he continued, leaning ponderously toward Bender, "with no policy whatsoever wired on to it, except to annex the coin and then skiddoo, why, produce same. As understudy I can't be beat, besides which"—his voice lowered to an earnest appeal—"I'm bangin' on the reefs; have been for some time, like I said. I'll fall for 'most anythin', these days, Bender, pervided it furnishes the mazooma an' is honest, *strickly* honest!" And Slats winked fatly.

"Here, my che-ild," answered Bender, passing him a five-spot. "Here, take this gold and buy bread, same as in 'The Orphan's Friend.' For heaven's sake, get a shave, too, and a bath, and sleep in a real bed again. Then 'meet me at the fountain' to-morrow, at two G. M. If you're still anxious to go up against a brand-new, center-fire, forty-four-caliber game, I'll tell you how the puzzle works out, and coach you liberal. You fall?"

"I do!" ejaculated Slats with considerable emphasis.

"Then so long, and mum it is!" With which affectionate farewell the tall man, after a casual glance around, nonchalantly folded his paper, rose, and without so much as another look at Slats, strolled indifferently away in the direction of Sixth Avenue.

CHAPTER II.

NURSING THE FLOWER.

SOME days thereafter three passengers sat in a smoking-compartment of the one o'clock limited, Boston-bound. A curious trio they were, three ill-assorted elements from the big human hive. One, a commercial traveler, courted his brier and read "The Janitor's Revenge"; the second, a stout gentleman, dressed in expensive though rather erratic fashion, drew luxuriously at a black cigar, stared out the window at the whirling landscape, and rubbed his freshly shaven chin with evident satisfaction; while the third, a tall clergyman of reserved bearing, occupied himself steadfastly by looking up references in his pocket concordance and making copious notes in a portfolio.

Now and again the clergyman passed some remark anent his pastoral duties or a forthcoming sermon, to which the stout gentleman replied by monosyllables, seemingly ill at ease in the presence of his spiritual adviser.

At Providence the commercial traveler left the compartment, and no one took his place. In some curious manner he carried away with him the air of sanctity which permeated the atmosphere.

"Say, you petrified jelly-roll," remarked the clergyman as the train bowled out of the station, "toss us out a smoke, can't you? It gives me the wee-waws to play sky-pilot more than half an hour at a time. But tell me, on the level, how does she go?"

"Like salve on a sore toe," answered the fat gentleman. "Only don't spread it too thick or some one may slip an' *tumble,* see? What sort of a gazebo is this old Goodrich, anyway? Bug-eyed an' suspicious, or how?"

"One of the great and glorious tribe of Easy Marx," answered the clergyman, striking a match by deftly snipping it with his finger-nail. "Easiest ever! He'll fall for anything. I put the trimming-tools to him myself, six years ago, but didn't score hard. That's why I'm so keen to come again and gather the ripe harvest. As things are fixed now, he'll drop like a plum—he's only waiting to be shaken."

"Sounds good, but are you sure?"

"Just as sure as I am that these here Rosaritos cost a quarter, and that *you're* costing me like sixty. Sure? I should say yes! With our present lay we can get the jacks under his old Trust Company and elevate it before Goodrich ever

gets the idea soaked through his cranium that he's being did. Just you watch and —cheese it! The conductor's coming!"

"Tickets, please!" exclaimed that worthy, entering the compartment. Just as the door swung inward, the clergyman dropped his cigar and quietly set his foot on it.

"Here you are," said he, holding out two pasteboards. "My friend's and mine. Have you a time-table on the B. & M.? Yes, we're going through to Portland. You'll get me one? Ah, thank you, thank you. Yes, it *is* good weather for traveling!"

The conductor departed.

"How d'you do it?" inquired the stout gentleman admiringly. "I thought *I* could juggle 'em along some, but say, you've got me beaten to a syllable! It's worth a gold-mine to be understudy to an article like *you*. Here, let's christen!"

He snapped open his Gladstone bag and brought out a half-pint flask of very strong waters. Shortly thereafter the flask, eloquently empty, went spinning from a window of the express, which, clipping along in a simoon of dust, was every minute shortening by a mile the distance between our two friends and President Abner Goodrich of the Commercial Trust Company, Boston, Massachusetts.

That afternoon when President Goodrich came back from lunch, he found waiting for him in his inner office two strangers, one of whom, an austere clergyman, sat reading his breviary in short-sighted fashion, while the other, evidently an original, lolled back in his chair and gazed vacantly at the coffered ceiling.

Both rose to greet him; the clergyman fumbled through his pocketbook and finally produced a card, which, after minute inspection, he presented to Goodrich.

"Francis G. Benedict," read the president. "Rector of St. Agnes Church, Roxbury."

"At your service, sir," murmured the clergyman, bowing. "Permit me the pleasure of making you acquainted with Mr. Hogan—Michael J. Hogan—of my parish."

"Glad to know you!" exclaimed the gentleman in question, evidently much embarrassed, extending a fat and hirsute paw, which the president, seeing no escape, took reluctantly.

"Mr. Hogan is a ward of mine," pursued the clergyman, "or rather, of my church. He lacks the—the outward manifestations of culture, to some extent, but—er—his heart and soul amply make up the deficiency. A diamond, sir, a true diamond in the rough! Since he entered the parish, our poor have—have profited extraordinarily.

"His hobby—to use a cant expression—is what he terms an 'anti-poverty fund'; a most laudable one, I am sure. You see, to speak frankly, though to a certain extent—er—illiterate, Mr. Hogan has amassed a considerable fortune in the past two years, and now he has asked me to—to help him invest his money in a certain manner which I trust may prove advantageous to all concerned."

"Yes?" queried Goodrich impassively, divesting himself of his light overcoat and settling himself at his desk. "Be seated, gentlemen; pray don't stand."

"As I was remarking," continued the clergyman, drawing up a chair the while Mr. Hogan flopped down on a leather divan which occupied one side of the office, "my ward has placed his fortune in my hands and has asked me to—to help him start an account in your excellent company.

"I, personally, neither have nor desire worldly goods; but I quite understand his attitude toward safeguarding the fortune he has acquired, for the furtherance of his own comfort and the cause of charity in my parish. Mr. Hogan has, like—like many imperfectly educated men, the ability to *make* but not to *keep* money. Pardon me, but do you —er—follow the copper-market?"

"Well, to a certain extent," answered Goodrich, in a non-committal voice, yet with a certain note of interest. "Why do you ask?"

"Simply because my ward here, Mr. Hogan, has been for some time past one of those disturbing factors—let me say the *chief* factor which——"

"So?"

"Yes; he has (as he puts it, rather crudely) 'raked off' over a quarter of a million in the last six months, and ex-

pects to clear as much more before the market breaks. Now you understand, Mr. Goodrich, I am not at all in—in sympathy with certain of his methods; but still, since he is my ward and has contributed so liberally to missionary and other work, I have consented to act as a mediator for him in the delicate matter of arranging a rather unusual investment, and in negotiating for him if possible a—a life income in exchange for a certain large consideration to be paid you in cash. Do I state the case correctly, Mr. Hogan?"

"Dead right!" answered the copper-magnate, shuffling his feet in the thick carpet and twirling his thumbs. "You see, Mr. President, I ain't much on the talk—I can *make* the stuff all right enough, though; but what I want now is to find some way to *keep* it, see? Had snug on to a million four year ago an' went through it like a greased pig through a crowd. Now, *this* killin' I want to salt down.

"I hope you an' the dominie can fix it some way so's I can turn the whole bunch over to you, an' get so much a year as long as I hang out. I don't want no more worry or bother—just to draw the spon every three months, see? I'll leave the fixin's to you. It's two hundred an' fifty thou. clear in exchange for a good income, that's all." He ended his speech with a hearty use of a flamboyant silk handkerchief.

President Goodrich dissembled a certain glitter of the eye by leaning over his desk and carefully arranging a bundle of checks (during which operation the two visitors exchanged hideous grimaces), then answered judicially:

"To be outspoken, Mr. Benedict, your proposition is a curious one, somewhat in the nature of an annuity, I take it, and therefore, strictly speaking, rather more in the province of an insurance company than of the Commercial Trust; yet, under the circumstances—well—possibly we may consider it. Are you—er—prepared to discuss details at present and—and make a deposit to guarantee your ward's sincerity? In matters of this kind, you understand——"

"Certainly, I understand perfectly. I'm quite at your service. No time like the present, eh?"

"The old gudgeon's bolted the bait, hook an' all!" muttered Hogan to himself. "Now, one good jerk an' we land him!"

"Well, let's get to business!" said Goodrich briskly, glancing at the clock. "These are busy days with me!"

For half an hour the banker and the clergyman talked in quiet tones, Goodrich the while making extensive calculations which he expounded at great length, Benedict nodding assent or asking an occasional question, with here and there "I see," "I understand," "Exactly so," by way of encouragement.

Once or twice he put a keen question, which Goodrich skilfully met, or raised an objection, in the explanation of which the president betrayed his thinly veiled anxiety to close the deal. Between them they eventually drew up a paper detailing the proposed transaction, and made it ready to receive the "X" of Mr. Hogan.

This latter gentleman, the while, sat fumbling over certain papers and sorting them on his knee, which might have struck one as odd in view of the fact that he could neither read nor write. This task completed to his satisfaction, he replaced them in his big breast-pocket and wandered idly about the luxurious office, hands clasped behind him, gazing with blank eyes at the pictures or staring vacantly through the plate-glass windows into the street below.

His back looked stodgily phlegmatic; yet nevertheless his pulse was running well over a hundred, higher than it had gone since that unlucky day, five years before, when he had dallied with certain railroad pay-checks, to his lasting detriment.

Now his whole future lay at stake. Was he to continue as aforetime polishing park-benches, getting hand-outs and wearing bulgy shoes, or was he henceforth to ride in Pullmans, eat game-birds and smoke Rosaritos? The question, as he turned it in his mind, drew his brows into a black frown and set his fat fingers nervously clenching.

Finally, after what seemed at the very least a year, the Reverend Mr. Benedict arose, saying:

"Now, Mr. Hogan, if you please, the

matter is entirely arranged, quite satisfactorily, I trust. President Goodrich doesn't care to receive more than $200,000, but that sum, according to our plan, will yield ten thousand a year, payable semi-annually. It involves entire surrender of the principal, as in an annuity; but the income will be absolutely assured, and for life. Here is a paper for us to consider—you can sign it at your leisure. We are to come back to-morrow.

"Now," he added, turning to Goodrich, "we really should be taking our leave. I'm afraid we have taken far too much of your time already. Pardon me for just a moment, though, while I ask whether you will permit Mr. Hogan to deposit $25,000 as an independent account for personal needs? No objection to carrying it subject to check? Very good, very good—my ward has a certified check on the Baltimore Exchange Bank. You'd like to see it? With pleasure! Yes, part of the estate. An excellent bank—Mr. Hogan carries a considerable balance there. Your receiving teller is—last window on the right? Thank you. You'll mention the matter to him? Very well; good day, good day."

The Reverend Benedict bowed graciously; the copper-king murmured words of gratitude, and both took a grateful leave. While President Goodrich, left alone, rubbed his white hands with an extreme satisfaction, the astute clergyman deposited in Mr. Hogan's name a properly certified check on the Baltimore Exchange Bank for five-and-twenty thousand dollars.

CHAPTER III.

A WRECK IN THE GARDEN.

OUR friend Goodrich was sitting at his desk, next morning, looking over a defunct mortgage in semi-idle fashion, when a tag-end of Boston East Wind, eddying through a half-opened window, caught a little slip of paper which lay under the leather divan where Pod had sat and whirled it wantonly out on to the carpet.

The eye of Goodrich followed, for the slip was curious—seemingly a list of names with hieroglyphs annexed. An odd-looking slip. The president's curiosity was aroused; he got up heavily, bent, and picked it from the floor.

Odd indeed! What banker would not think odd a list of the richest Boston houses, marked by stars, triangles and circles, with cryptic words thereto? Odd indeed that the Commercial Trust Company, most dignified of institutions, should be underscored in red and designated as "Meat"!

"Meat?" ejaculated President Goodrich, sinking back with the grace of a hippopotamus into his leather chair. (He weighed 230 on the bath-mat.) "Meat! Well, well! Meat, indeed!" and he scratched his bald-spot vigorously, frowning the while.

The frown lasted only a moment, being chased away by an open-faced smile as the great white light broke into his mind. Reaching for his "Bankers' Register" he opened it at "Illinois" and thumbed it rapidly until "Chicago" lay under his gaze.

Shortly thereafter a peremptory *Buzz-z-z!* on the electric signal summoned Cashier Packard to the presidential desk.

The two men remained in heart-to-heart conference a pithy quarter of an hour. Toward the end of it two telephone messages went from the bank; one, a local, to Police Headquarters in Pemberton Square; the other, long-distance, to the Exchange Bank in Baltimore. Of which messages our clergyman and his illiterate ward were ignorant as babes unborn.

Because of this blissful ignorance Mr. Hogan and his spiritual guide presented themselves about 2 o'clock at the Trust Company, and, sitting at one of the little red cherry tables reserved for patrons, proceeded to make out a check calling for $12,000, which the Reverend Benedict signed and Mr. Hogan carefully "X'd," chewing the while on an unlighted cigar.

"Here's where Goodrich makes his contribution to that anti-poverty fund, eh?" remarked the clergyman in a low tone. "It's double-cinched and diamond-hitched, provided we can turn the trick before it percolates through his upper works. When I got next to this coin-mill in '98 I vowed I'd come back some

day for another bunch, and here I am! Here's what the wise ones call the psychological moment. See? Grab that moment, Slatsey, then side-step—that's my tactics. Here, take the check—now play it across the board, old boy, and—*st-t-t!* Here comes a brass-buttoned coon. *What* the *deuce?*"

"Beggin' yo' parding, gemmens," quoth he deferentially, bowing with Chesterfieldian grace, "but Pres'dent Goodrich say he'd like fo' to see yo' in his office a minute. He's waitin' now. Step right in, ef yo' please!"

"Say, see here," queried Hogan; "is he alone in there, or is there some one with him?"

"Well, sah, Ah'd sho'ly like fo' to oblige yo' wif inframmation, but Pres'dent Goodrich he say—he say——" The messenger's eyes rolled expressively and a sickly grin spread over his sable face.

"Here, my boy," spoke up the clergyman in a subdued tone, looking the negro full in the eye. "Here's a five-dollar gold-piece. Now *is* there or *isn't* there a gentleman named Ferrell—Inspector Ferrell—in there with him? My friend here and I are in the secret; you needn't be afraid to tell *us*—and besides, there's a fiver in it for you!"

"Oh, Lawdy, massa!" ejaculated the coon, his hands twitching for the gold-piece and his eyes bulging, "Ah sho'ly needs dat five, but—but—jes' wait a minute!"

And he pattered away down the marble floor.

Hogan's red jowls paled with sudden fear; the dominie glanced around with remarkable keenness for so near-sighted a man.

"The jig's up!" he whispered. "We've got to beat it—but *slow time* or we're cooked! Here, freeze on to some of these papers and then we'll—*skiddoo! The bulls!*"

The last words burst from him in an irrepressible panic as the street door opened sharply and a bluecoat somewhat officiously entered the bank.

Hogan sprang up, tipping over his chair and with a fistful of loose papers "beat it" for the rear exit, hard-pressed by the clergyman; but ere the worthy pair reached safety the president's door burst violently open and Mr. Goodrich, darting out with amazing agility, headed off Slats, who dodged a second too late, and floored him with a "facer." The stiff blow on his meaty muzzle sounded like a brick striking a quarter of beef.

At Slat's fall, which rattled the windows, the dominie backed up into a corner, whipped a venomous revolver from his coat-pocket and, with un-Biblical language, covered Goodrich; but before the ministerial trigger-finger had time to pull, the messenger hurled a brimming ink-well with such excellent aim as to strike the outstretched arm like an inky meteor; the gun barked deafeningly, and the deflected bullet splintered a gilded cornice, just as Inspector Ferrell popped out of the office.

Next instant Goodrich leaped in on the bespattered clergyman and the two went down rough-and-tumble in a tangle of fists and bad language.

Slats on the instant, wise as a serpent though not harmless as a dove, thrust the newly written check into his bleeding mouth, regardless of certain broken teeth, and essayed to swallow it; but Ferrell, prying open his jaws with deft, ungentle thumbs, dredged out the paper somewhat bedrabbled but still legible. Slats, thoroughly cowed, lay bellowing for mercy like a yearling bull.

"Explanation! Explanation for this outrage!" panted the dominie from underneath 230 pounds of president. "Assault on a clergyman! Explanation here and *now!* I *demand* it!"

"Steady! Steady!" growled Goodrich. "Here! Are you still too near-sighted to read *this,* or shall I lend you my glasses?"

And, still keeping a strangle-hold with one hand, he held in front of the dominie's eyes with the other a telegraph-blank with this cryptogramic message:

> Certified check 45322 forgery no funds in Baltimore Exchange make arrest alleged Benedict wanted connection Grangers' Bank Chicago last March.

"It's fifteen years apiece, all right, all right!" ejaculated Ferrell, elbowing his way through the turbulent crowd of

clerks and minions. "Fifteen years, over *and* above a right smart term for the Chicago break! Mr. Goodrich, allow me the pleasure of makin' you acquainted with the gent you're flattenin' out—he's Pittsburgh Bender, alias Red Ben, 'wanted' in the Windy City for touchin' the Grangers' National last spring to the tune of forty thousand dollars!"

FOR GOD AND THE KING.*

By Ethel Louise Cox.

A romantic love story of the time of Marie Antoinette and the French Revolution.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

ALMOST at the hour of his betrothal to Anne Wentworth, Valentin Saint-Leu leaves his newly adopted country, the young American republic, and answering the call of his queen, Marie Antoinette, returns with his friend, Montauran, to the defense of the royal family imprisoned in the Tuileries.

During their attempted escape, he is wounded, but Théot, a Breton peasant and his foster brother, at that time a popular idol, recognizes him and bears him to safety.

CHAPTER V.

THE PALAIS DES THERMES.

THROUGH the streets of Paris the undercurrent of city life was surging, and it would be long before it ebbed back to its origin in dark holes under the feet of the noble and the wealthy.

Théot confronted the peril of a Paris aroused. He looked attentively about him.

Behind him there was a confused struggle—cries, and a clashing of sabers; and through a cloud of smoke sinister forms were vaguely seen.

A single figure sprang from a group. A dozen pursuers closed in upon the fugitive. The figure redoubled its desperate speed. There was a crackle of muskets. The fugitive threw up his arms, turned half round, and rolled to the ground, and the drift of smoke sifted down once more.

Théot cast an anxious look behind him, and saw that he had been observed. The sinister group consulted together, and started toward him. The Marseillais had departed.

Théot quickened his pace.

A second glance showed him that the blood-seekers were coming after him with terrifying speed.

Before him lay the Pont Royal. It was held by a group of waiting, motionless figures, bloody sabers in hand. The most fearful was a woman.

They did not advance, but waited grimly for him to fall into their clutches.

A shout from behind warned him of rapidly nearing danger. The group in front had an air of expectancy. A savage figure seated on a cannon leveled a musket, and then let it fall.

Théot had drawn near the water's edge. He halted, wearied and breathless with the weight of Saint-Leu's inert body, and cast a despairing glance at the gleaming Seine, rippling, gold-flecked, in the sun.

A boatman brought his light craft close to him, with a stroke of dripping

*Began July All-Story Magazine. Single copies, 10 cents.

oars. Théot's dull glance fell upon the man's eager face, at once alert and timid.

The boatman made him a gesture of invitation.

This sudden relief in the midst of despair, like a flash of lightning across a murky sky, dazzled the Breton. He hesitated. The man made a gesture of impatience.

"Come," he said in a low tone.

He helped Théot to lift the unconscious form of Saint-Leu into the bottom of the boat. The Breton scrambled in, and the light craft shot out over the glittering water as their pursuers rushed down the slope.

An uproar of furious voices greeted their departure, and a shower of bullets fell about them and sank into the depths of the river.

The boatman rowed in silence, without remitting his keen watch upon the river and its banks. From time to time he cast an enigmatic glance at the Breton, who was gently endeavoring to revive Saint-Leu.

They approached the Pont Neuf. The boatman lifted his oars and let his boat drift a few feet from the bank. At last, he spoke.

"Give me what money you have about you, and what he has in his pockets," he said determinedly, with a nod toward the silent figure.

"He is an officer. He must have watches, rings, or crosses, eh? I was a tradesman. I have a family starving in the Rue Quincampoix.

"I tried to pick up something, a chain or a stray coin among the slain, but I was driven off. I did not dare to return, for they have sworn that he who steals shall hang. Then you came in my way. I have saved you and the aristocrat, and I am hungry."

The Breton silently emptied his pockets, and added Saint-Leu's purse of gold coin to the little heap in his palm.

The boatman's face brightened with relief as he clutched the coin eagerly.

"Good luck to you. You have a fair start of them," he said hurriedly, as he helped Théot lift Saint-Leu to shore.

He fastened his boat, casting anxious glances about him. When Théot turned to look back at him he had vanished, and the quay was deserted.

The Breton walked as rapidly as his burden would permit. The quarter was silent and tranquil at a first glance, with nothing stirring but the flickering shadows on its paving-stones, the flutter of a white curtain at an open window, and the flight of twittering birds from a green, sunny garden.

But soon this silence caused him an oppression of the heart. It was not the serene quiet of peace and leisurely daily life, but the lurking hush of fear. Doors were securely closed, and windows veiled like the windows of a house of death, and neither sound nor sight of life could be obtained.

The vision of unseen watchers following his blood-stained figure, of unseen listeners harkening to the fall of his footsteps in the solitary street haunted and unnerved him.

He scanned the blank windows, listening in vain for the sweet, familiar sound of a child's voice or a woman's laugh, and casting furtive glances about him as he drew near walls and would have been glad to efface his own shadow.

This breathless stillness, like the sultry hush before a summer storm, was suddenly broken by a distant sound.

He stopped and listened.

Nearer and nearer came the noise of hurried footfalls and of voices. There was a sudden lull. Then the calls of the unseen searchers resounded fearfully near.

Théot had entered a narrow lane of linden trees. He stood protected by the angle of a lofty garden wall, bare and blank and mysterious. It belonged to a secluded house, the plaything of some great noble, isolated from others of the quarter, and concealed by this solid mass of stone. This formidable barrier of stone and mortar must have some opening.

He skirted the mall cautiously till he found the great gate of iron with twisted heraldic devices. It was securely fastened, and resisted his efforts.

He had let the unconscious form of Saint-Leu slip to the ground.

A memory of boyish exploits, of a breach in a castle wall where an owl's nest had tempted youthful marauders, recurred to his thoughts.

Retracing his steps, he halted at a

point in the masonry where he had noticed that the branches of a great tree drooped over the wall. With the aid of these branches the Breton drew himself up to the top of the wall, dropped to the long grass inside, and, rushing to the gateway, unbarred the gate and drew Saint-Leu within.

Summer had run riot in this quiet enclosure—a fragrant idyl between stone walls. Luxuriant grass encroached in green tufts on the little paths. There were glowing flowers, tremulous butterflies.

Blue sky shone above, and the music of wings was heard among the leaves. A single moss-grown statue glimmered through the green screen with the grace of old beauty.

This refuge was inexpressibly beautiful to eyes and ears blinded and wearied with the sights and sounds of battle.

In the depths of the garden was a little arbor. Two steps of rosy marble led to it. Théot bore Saint-Leu to this shelter.

The uproar of voices came nearer and nearer, stilling the songs of the birds and filling the quiet streets with clamor. It swept past.

One or two red-capped figures leaped up at the iron gate, and shook it as Théot had shaken it. They peered within, faces thrust against the bars, and departed, grumbling. Red pike and musket vanished; silence settled down once more on the empty street.

Théot bent to lay a hand on Saint-Leu's heart, and to look sadly into the white face with its closed eyes. The heart still beat, but more feebly. He let an anxious half hour elapse, and then ventured out. His refuge was near.

A timid passer-by near St. Germain des Près recoiled from the sight of two phantoms, suddenly crossing his path—a blood-stained man staggering beneath an unconscious form. When curiosity, whetted by a glimpse of a mystery, prompted him to follow these figures, he could find no trace of them. They had disappeared in the vicinity of the church.

Théot had entered a ruined cloister. He raised a large, square grating, and descended a flight of steps into a gloomy well below the pavement. He found himself in a long, underground corridor, adorned with strange paintings of saints. Small lamps hung on the walls. This winding corridor, or subterranean chapel, connected the cloister with the church.

At one end of the corridor he descended four or five steps into a vault. A ray or two of light straggled through a grating above into this dismal chamber with its heap of gleaming bones.

Théot passed his hands over the whitened masonry till he found a secret spring. A door slid back, disclosing an opening. He passed his arm about Saint-Leu, and stepped through this aperture into another long corridor, damp, low, and straight. It had a fearful resemblance to the places of uneasy dreams. He descended with his burden into silence, night, and safety.

The corridor opened into what might have been a lofty hall or the cavern of a quarry. From the arches above his head came a soft rustling like wings, and now and then a puff of fresh air played over his forehead.

Leaving this vast apartment he passed through a second vaulted hall, and finally entered a small chamber, like a cell, in which there were lights, a couch covered with furs, and a fire in a rude fireplace.

To descend from the green earth to the damp chill and gloom of a tomb—from fire-flashes, storm of drums, clash of sabers, cries of wounded men to absolute, melancholy silence—such were the phantasmal changes that had overtaken Saint-Leu. To his enfeebled senses it appeared that he was buried, living, in the tomb whose walls swam before his dazzled eyes.

A faint light glowed at times and ghostly figures passed before him, and on his ear fell a far-away murmur which he dreamed was the ghosts talking together.

In a little seaport town there was an old, dreamy house, and at its window a girl was watching the sails of the passing ships. She who knew his footfall before he stood beside her did not hear his call through the shadows and perfumes of the old garden.

"Watch over her and befriend her! I leave her to your care."

The dream faded with returning strength, and Saint-Leu opened his eyes

on the walls of the cell to find Théot bending over him.

"Is it you, Théot? You saved my life," he murmured.

The Breton, radiant with joy, answered very simply, "Yes, monsieur."

Later Saint-Leu mustered his strength for the question:

"The queen?"

"The queen has been placed in safety, monsieur," Théot hastened to reply.

"And Montauran?" questioned Saint-Leu.

"Monsieur the marquis escaped from the Tuileries, monsieur," answered Théot.

He did not add that he had seen and spoken with him under the arch of a bridge, for he dreaded the influence of Montauran's dark yet splendid nature upon Saint-Leu.

Saint-Leu's glance wandered about his strange surroundings.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"You are in the subterranean palace that they call the Palais des Thermes, monsieur," said Théot. "It was built by the Roman ci-devants, and has been used for many years by the patriots for their secret meetings.

"This cell was fitted up for an escaped prisoner of the Bastile—Monsieur Lescure. He lived and died here, for he could not go up to daylight and Paris again."

"Buried alive!" murmured Saint-Leu.

"He was dead by kings' laws, monsieur," said Théot. "Paris is full of such underground lives. Sieur Michel now uses this cell, so that I am at home here, as you might say. Only one person knows that I have hidden you here, and I defy any search started for you."

He placed Saint-Leu's sword by his side and left him, and the young man fell asleep in the underground halls of forgotten emperors.

He woke conscious that the light was low and the cell was chill. A vague murmur that had vexed his ear in sleep filled the gloomy arches with a ghostly whisper.

He rose and dressed in the clothes Théot had procured for him, and, leaving the cell, entered the long, tortuous corridor outside. He followed the sound through the abrupt turns of the corridor, whose flagged floor and walls struck chill to the touch.

A great blaze of light drew him to the door of a vast hall. A rude platform, draped with the tricolor, had been erected in the center of the hall, and on it stood the president of a strange tribunal. Before him twelve men were stationed in a semicircle. They held torches whose light disclosed the motionless forms of the soldiers and patriots who filled the chamber.

"Representative of the people," said the president, addressing one of the twelve men, "what sentence do you now pronounce upon Louis?"

The man slowly extinguished his torch before he replied. As the last spark died out in the gloom, he answered:

"Death!"

The question was put to each in turn and received the same reply. The light faded, and the encroaching shadows crept nearer as torch after torch was extinguished until one solitary light sparkled amid the gloom.

"Death!" came the last reply, and hall and occupants were engulfed in darkness and silence from which stole a faint sigh.

A voice pierced the gloom, speaking with a solemn accent.

"The husband, the wife, and the child—so ends the house of the Tyrant."

A movement caused Saint-Leu to recoil from the door and seek to retrace his steps along the corridor. He advanced some distance without being able to find his cell.

After groping his way blindly from door to door, in the labyrinth of chambers, for the space of twenty minutes, a violent collision with a block of granite brought him to the conclusion that he had lost his way. He was ensnared in shadows.

As he hesitated, a low moan startled him.

He groped along the wall until he discovered what seemed to be a door. The sound issued almost beneath his hands.

"Is any one here?" he asked.

No answer from the wailing ghost.

"Is any one here?" he repeated in a louder tone that echoed in the vault.

"I am here. Help me."

The voice seemed that of a child.

"Are you a prisoner?"

"I have been imprisoned here since the twenty-ninth of July. For days I have been abandoned. I do not know how long I have been alone, nor how many days I have been here. Help me!"

"Stand from the door. I will try it," said Saint-Leu.

"You will not leave me?" begged the prisoner.

"Do not fear."

He made a vigorous dash against the door, and heard at the same time footfalls in the corridor. He burst the lock with the point of his sword, and thrust an arm into the darkness. A soft palm met his. The footsteps sounded nearer, and rescuer and rescued took refuge within the shadows of an arch.

A few paces away three figures were coming toward them. One bore a torch whose light flashed through the darkness of the corridor. The first gave a sudden hoarse cry of alarm as he caught a glimpse of Saint-Leu and his companion, who fled like ghosts.

"Do you see? A woman!" he cried.

The torch dropped from the hand of the second and was extinguished.

"I felt the cold wind from a vault," whispered the first in superstitious fear.

"They are the ghosts of the old ci-devants who built the palace," cried the second. "They have been seen here. Their souls flit on bat wings through the halls."

The group turned and fled, and the gloom again took possession of the corridor.

Saint-Leu murmured a few words of encouragement to his unseen companion, whose quivering hand still lay in his, and whose soft, perfumed locks brushed his cheek, and they began to grope their way forward.

The two young people who as yet had not seen each other's faces traversed blindly the dark, silent halls of this palace of night which held them prisoners in its mysterious mesh of cells and galleries.

The glimmer of an approaching torch, redly illumining the form of its bearer, again drove them to concealment. Saint-Leu uttered an exclamation of relief as he recognized Théot. His wanderings had led him back to the door of the cell which he had passed twice in the course of his search.

He turned to his companion. The light of the torch revealed a young girl.

She wore a traveling costume and mantle, and the tresses of her hair, which had fallen from their bands, framed a face of much loveliness.

"Enter, mademoiselle," said Saint-Leu respectfully, "you are in safety."

They entered the cell.

The girl examined the faces before her with scrutinizing looks that quickly grew trustful. She was pale and trembling, but there was no lack of courage in her beautiful eyes.

"I am Mademoiselle de Vernage," she said simply, in reply to their questions. "I was placed while very young in a convent at Caen, in our country of Normandy, where I was educated.

"I was introduced into the convent by my guardian, for I am an orphan. It was frequently urged upon me by my guardian to take the vows, and my own inclinations leaned the same way, for my life had not been like the lives of the other girls, who showed me glimpses of a fairy-land in their long talks of their homes.

"In June I celebrated my eighteenth birthday, and I opposed my guardian's will for the first time. I no longer wished to be a nun."

She paused, blushing, as if in fear that she had endangered her treasured secret, a young girl's dream of love. Her long lashes fluttered on her fair cheek, and then lifted bravely.

"It caused us both much unhappiness," she resumed. "Then my guardian suddenly ceased to urge me. He even told me that I was right, and that a convent no longer offered the safety he wished to secure for me.

"He went away. At the end of two months he returned. They called me in from the garden and my companions, and he told me abruptly that he intended to remove me at once to Paris.

"We set out almost immediately, with scarcely any preparation for the journey. We entered Paris on the twenty-ninth of July. We went to an inn whose walls

were hung with placards calling on the people to arm themselves.

"My guardian secured a private room for me and went away, promising to return in an hour. I felt alarmed at being left alone, for the journey had been strange, and I had not been allowed to bring a maid. Moreover the change in my guardian's manner surprised and grieved me, for he had always been gentle and kind.

"He had no sooner gone when I was startled by the admission of a stranger to the room. This man looked like a notary, and at first did not inspire me with fear."

She paused, shuddering.

"I shall never forget that face," she added in a low tone.

"He brought me a note from my guardian, bidding me confide myself to the bearer's care. A hackney-coach was in waiting, and he handed me into it.

"I did not know in what part of Paris I was, nor whither I was going. The streets of Paris are frightful. A sudden horror of the man who watched my every gesture seized me, and I stretched out an arm to lower one of the glasses.

"The man instantly forced me back, placing a pistol to my forehead, and I fainted.

"I came to life in a stone cell. I do not know how long I have been a prisoner, for I had no way of counting time and it was always night. Food was brought by a man in a red cap, to whom I was afraid to speak.

"One day I asked him a question, and he replied by signs. Some time ago, in that dreadful night, the man brought me sufficient food and lights to last several days, and left me alone. Before you came to me, monsieur, my stock of fuel and lights was exhausted.

"Oh, the horror of that gloom," she murmured.

"What is the name of your guardian, mademoiselle?" asked Saint-Leu.

"He is the Chevalier de Maubray," she replied.

Saint-Leu uttered a cry of amazement.

"My kinsman! Mademoiselle, I will stake my life that the chevalier is ignorant of your fate. You have suffered foul play. Such a deed would be impossible to a man of honor."

"Monsieur," she began timidly and reluctantly, continuing with growing courage, "I would not entertain bad thoughts of him willingly, for when I was a child I loved him. Here is a note from him that was brought to me."

Saint-Leu read:

MADEMOISELLE:

Since you defy my authority, stern measures must teach you that your future is in my hands. You will hear from me soon.

LOUIS D'ESTRADES,
Chevalier de Maubray.

Saint-Leu's head sank to his breast.

"We must march, monsieur," said Théot, abruptly breaking the silence. "The chevalier has much secret authority here."

"What—among Jacobins?"

"The chevalier is a Jacobin."

"That is impossible. The chevalier is a Royalist."

"You are right, monsieur. It pleases monsieur the chevalier to be also a Royalist," said Théot, respectfully and circumspectly.

"He is a scoundrel," said Saint-Leu impetuously. "Mademoiselle, since you have suffered so much wrong from my kinsman, I devote my life and honor to your service. The younger branch shall atone for the dishonor the family has incurred through the elder. You shall not be placed at the chevalier's mercy again."

He paused before adding:

"We have to baffle a subtle and terrible intelligence. The boldest measures are often the safest. We will go to Brittany, to my aunt, Madame de Casteran, who will succor you. He will never look for you so near home. I have sufficient influence to secure our passports."

"That shall be my task, monsieur," cried Théot joyfully. "You will have them by morning. But you must not remain here. The man who served as mademoiselle's jailer was the Republican Nicholas, the mute, a pupil of the Abbé Sicard.

"Probably he was killed in the storming of the Tuileries. That would account for mademoiselle's abandonment. He must have made his daily report to the chevalier, as his agent. The chevalier will be stirring soon. Let us go."

He added half aloud:

"There is the church."

"What do you say?"

"I say that you must trust to me, monsieur, and I will place you in safety. Come quickly."

They left the cell, and began the journey that Théot had undertaken when he carried Saint-Leu, wounded, to the underground palace. The young girl followed.

When they reached the subterranean chapel of the monks beneath the cloister Théot turned to the left. This branch of the corridor ended in a rude flight of stone steps. Théot pressed aside a panel behind a movable shrine, and they entered the church.

A flood of silvery moonlight fell through the high windows, and disclosed the interior to their eyes. It had been used by the revolutionaries as a storehouse, and bales of hay and heavy casks were strewn about.

Saint-Leu persuaded the girl to lie down on the hay. He covered her with his cloak, and then swung himself up to one of the broken windows to keep watch while she slept.

Toward morning a flash of torchlight and storm of voices denoted the passing of the patrol in the street outside. Saint-Leu glanced toward his companion. She did not stir. He resumed his watch.

Théot had left them. Before he went he managed an aside to Saint-Leu.

"When you have placed the demoiselle in madame's care, monsieur, it remains with yourself whether she shall lack a protector in the future," he said.

"Be silent," said Saint-Leu, half amused and half angry. "I am betrothed."

The Breton's face lengthened dismally.

"To an American, monsieur?" he inquired.

"Yes."

Théot shook his head. He did not allow himself the liberty of speech, but he looked from the young girl to Saint-Leu in silent wonder.

"The fair lass!" he murmured to himself.

He had too sincere a respect for the young noble's character to reflect that a living woman is worth a dozen memories more or less fragrant.

"No matter," he muttered to himself. "Praise be to—the Supreme Being, she takes him back to Brittany! Then let him return to his *belle sauvage.*"

With daylight Théot returned. The passports, for Citizen de Casteran and the citizeness his sister, were in order, and by the diligence that day the two young people set out for Brittany.

The girl turned her face, shuddering, from the sinister, blood-stained streets of Paris toward the unknown, and the mysteries and perils of the journey.

In her eagerness she failed to recognize a bystander who suddenly rushed toward the diligence. He uttered the cry of one who sees his happiness vanish before his eyes.

"Diane!"

At this cry Théot, through whose thoughts memories and landscapes were passing in silent beauty, came back to Paris and reality with the shock of an awakening. The diligence had vanished. He looked at this unknown sorrow.

"Ah, ah!" he said.

He hesitated.

"It is no affair of mine," he reasoned.

He took a few steps forward and stopped. The young man had not stirred. He seemed stupefied.

Théot approached him.

"Monsieur," he began, "the young lady——"

The young man turned impetuously.

"Does she send you to me?" he asked.

"No, monsieur."

"Do you bring a message from her?"

"No, monsieur."

"Will you tell me whom she has with her?"

"No, monsieur."

"Can you tell me why she disappeared? Will you explain this mystery?"

"No, monsieur."

"Blockhead!" cried the young man furiously.

"Monsieur, do you know the town of Fougères in Brittany?"

"What do you say?"

"Do you know the town of Fougères in Brittany?"

"Come, if it is necessary that I should answer your question before you will tell me anything further, I do know of such a town in Brittany.

"Now, go on. You know her, and you know why she is leaving Paris. Who is this man on whom she has conferred the honor of protecting her?

"Speak. Do you know that I have lived from day to day on the mere hope of finding her? And just now when we were brought face to face she did not know me! I was heart-sick with the search, and did not expect to see her shining before me.

"What has happened? She seemed frightened, as if fleeing from something or some one. You can tell me."

He fixed expectant eyes upon the Breton.

Théot hesitated.

"Monsieur," he said finally, "I do not know you, nor has the lady spoken of any one interested in her fate."

A spasm of jealous fear contracted the young man's features.

"She should have known that I would follow her to Paris," he said half aloud.

Théot cast a glance of pity and irresolution at him.

"I can tell you nothing, monsieur," he said decisively.

He added:

"But the road is free to all, and there is a town called Fougères in Brittany. I advise you to go to look at it."

"I shall find her there, shall I not?" asked the young man eagerly.

But the Breton had turned from him already, and was walking rapidly away.

The young man made a quick gesture of decision.

"Courage!" he said half aloud. "I have gone a long way without hope, and now I have a plain clue. I will follow to Brittany. Where would I not follow her!"

He hunted out a private traveling carriage, and gave Bridaine notice of what had occurred, with directions to wait in Paris for further orders. His imperious energy took him out of Paris in a few hours.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR GOD AND THE KING.

MEANWHILE the diligence was rolling rapidly toward Brittany, and the ancient Château de Casteran, in which the travelers were to take refuge.

The landscape took on a more and more familiar aspect to Saint-Leu. He was surprised to find how dear and necessary such scenes that he had thought forgotten seemed to him. The soldier and sailor vanished, giving way to the young Breton.

Youth sympathizes with youth in its devotions and its enthusiasm. Mademoiselle de Vernage, relieved from her fear, displayed a cheerful temper. They laughed together like two lads, although the delicate influence of the demoiselle made itself felt in their converse.

Their fellow passengers comprised one or two quiet citizens and their wives, honest people of the provinces.

On the day following the morning on which they set out, a short, stout man, dressed in black, and wearing a hat with a wide, flapping brim, got in at a small town. He retreated silently to a corner of the coach, where, with his arms crossed and his hat pulled down over his eyes, he passed the tedium of the journey in profound slumber. Apparently he took no notice of his fellow travelers.

The wind and sun and free, clear air of the road were so many keen pleasures to the travelers after the streets of Paris. The tranquillity of the solitudes about them, of the quiet villages with their bell-towers, and the golden stretches of sky held an indescribable hope and charm.

The young girl, her charming face as pensive in repose as it was bright in the April mirth of its smile, confessed to an unusual feeling of security and hopefulness.

Her life, orphaned from childhood, had been repressed, cold and sad. A foreboding of overpowering tragedy had frightened and compressed her heart.

She now grew gently pensive after her laughter, as if disturbed by her own freedom from care. She looked at the quiet landscape bathed in light, and at the blue sky in which a lark was singing, and said impulsively:

"It is very beautiful."

As she spoke, bullets suddenly whistled over their heads from the depths of the wood through which they were passing.

A long, melancholy cry, thrilling and unknown, like the hoot of an owl, echoed

from one side of the road to the other. The horses burst into a mad, plunging gallop over the rocky road, and the coach bounded and swayed.

Diane threw herself upon Saint-Leu's shoulder with a gasp of fear. He caught a glimpse, through the window, of indistinct figures darting swiftly past.

Then there was a crash, and the coach came down on the roadway, amid a shiver of glass and shrieks of the women, while a broken wheel spun out to one side.

Saint-Leu disengaged himself from the confusion. He wrenched open the door, and pulled out his companion.

When the other passengers were extricated they found the driver standing idle. The horses that had drawn the coach had vanished. There was no living creature to be seen on the long stretch of road before them.

"What has happened? Where are your horses?" Saint-Leu asked in bewilderment, looking about him for the vague savage figures he had seen.

The driver seated himself by the roadside, with the gesture of one who does not consider himself called upon to interfere.

"They have taken them," he said.

"Who have taken them?"

"The gentlemen."

"Who?"

"The Royalists," said a passenger, drawing near and casting a glance of anxiety and distrust at the driver. "Lord help us if we have fallen into their hands."

"But they have decamped."

"They are not far off," said the driver mysteriously, with a glance into the woods.

"I suspect that they have taken this means to prevent our escape until they can return in greater numbers," said the passenger. Then, turning on the driver in a fury, he exclaimed:

"You are in this, Guerinec!"

The driver shrugged his shoulders with a glance of ironic amusement.

"Fight you, my brave, if you will. You will not have long to wait," he said somberly.

At his words a woman among the passengers burst out weeping and wailing in excitement. The lonely road, the silence that hung over it, the wrecked coach, and the prospect of the unexpected return of the makers of the ambuscade caused her panic to be reflected in the faces of the passengers.

The quiet woods seemed empty. Was it possible that the wreckers of the coach still lingered there?

As they asked themselves this question it was unexpectedly answered. The mysterious passenger, who had drawn apart from the others in their huddle of fear, suddenly took to his heels and ran down the road in the direction of the town.

At once a shower of bullets poured about him from the broom bushes. He rose and fell in fantastic fear at each discharge, but plunged on with the recklessness of a man who has nothing to hope.

The owl hoot sounded once more from the woods, and wild faces appeared. The Royalists came leaping down upon the shuddering group of men and women with the hunting pounce of a hawk.

Saint-Leu flung himself in front of the girl. The frightened passengers, faint-hearted and helpless, fled wildly hither and thither, with shrieks and lamentations.

One of the attacking men put out an arm toward Diane. Saint-Leu struck him to the ground with his pistol-butt. A comrade of the fallen man took aim at Saint-Leu. As he was about to pull the trigger the driver unexpectedly struck down his weapon.

"No murder, Bauduin," he cried.

The man brushed him aside with a snarl of rage. Another weapon was leveled at Saint-Leu from the skirts of the throng.

A voice suddenly arrested them.

"Hold there, Chant-Bien," it said.

Saint-Leu, looking up, saw a young man of noble figure and proud bearing, standing at the edge of the wood. A white scarf crossed his breast. He was accompanied by a slender youth of sixteen who, with a gesture, directed his companion's attention to Diane. The leader descended to the road.

A simultaneous cry broke from the two young men as they faced each other.

"De Créquy."

"Saint-Leu."

Saint-Leu recognized in this outlaw chief one of the gayest of the brilliant train of Marie Antoinette.

"A Breton noble is welcome," said the Royalist. "Will you give your arm for God and the king?"

Saint-Leu's eyes wandered involuntarily to the scene about him.

"These are bourgeois, enemies both to peasant and noble," said the young man indifferently, interpreting his look.

His young companion added in silvery tones. "Their ransom will buy back the death-warrant of a Royalist, monsieur."

The leader of the ambuscade had seated himself on a fallen log, and was putting the prisoners through a cross-examination, and arranging terms of ransom.

"Gilles Ramponneau are you? And a notary? You will pay fifty crowns."

"Jean Cournard, your ransom will be fifteen crowns."

The passenger addressed replied in a voice quivering with anger.

"I will not pay it," he said firmly.

"You will pay it unless you wish to dance among the hot coals, my lad," was the grim reply that caused a shudder to run through the group of captives.

"You villain!" cried the other, white and shaking with rage. "But you will be brought to account for this!"

As he spoke a sound rolled out of the distance that caused both the Royalists and their prisoners to raise their heads to listen.

It was the beat of a drum.

"It is the Republicans who are quartered at Mayenne. They have been warned," said De Créquy. "Get ready, men."

The leader of the ambuscade looked at De Créquy doubtfully.

"You will give battle, monsieur?" he asked.

De Créquy assented. A smoldering fire burned in his eyes.

The disordered group broke up. The prisoners were hurried into the forest.

De Créquy invited Saint-Leu with a gesture to attend him.

"But mademoiselle?" he said, looking toward Diane.

"Madame here will escort her to a place of safety," answered De Créquy quietly, indicating his youthful companion.

The drum-beat of the advancing soldiers grew louder.

"They have a Parisian for officer, a Captain Brissot," said De Créquy to Saint-Leu. "He shot my brother. Some day I hope to stand sword to sword with him. He must kill me or I him."

They fell back into ambush, and awaited the arrival of the soldiers in silence.

Between the shadows of the encroaching forest appeared a flash of color, and marching figures that might have been transplanted from the heart of Paris. The silence of the woods seemed to indicate that the Royalists had decamped, with their prisoners. The depths of beech offered no vista to the gaze.

De Créquy shook his head as he surveyed the enemy.

"Too many in the trap," he said.

He slipped away from Saint-Leu's side; and the next instant musket shots rang out and the ambuscade gave tongue.

The Republicans, taken between two fires, dropped heavily on the gloomy road.

De Créquy and his men, springing out of ambush, started up before them, and they met together, man to man, in a haze of dust and a torrent of fierce cries, under the soft rustling of forest leaves.

Saint-Leu, following De Créquy in his dash through the foremost rank, found himself confronting their officer, a type of the soldier of the Republic, with a rugged, sunburned face, black brows, and piercing dark eyes.

Then a hand thrust him aside, and a hoarse, "Stand back!" was muttered in his ear. De Créquy and the officer closed together like iron and magnet.

The bayonets of the Republicans went home with deadly aim.

Out of the green distance came the roll of a second drum.

De Créquy, with a gesture of baffled rage and despair, broke free and gave the signal for retreat. The Bretons fell back. They had lost heavily in the encounter. They were swallowed up in the woods, disappearing like a flight of birds.

De Créquy pushed along through the forest in sullen silence. Saint-Leu

guessed that he had abandoned duty for personal vengeance in his encounter with the Republicans. He spoke to himself in murmurs between his clenched teeth.

"Responsible to the princes—I should not have attacked them. *Mon Dieu!* I will go to find him alone one of these days."

"What? The demoiselle?" he said, half-bewildered, in reply to Saint-Leu's questions. "She is near. You will not join us?"

"I am not free," Saint-Leu replied.

His companion, with a swift change of mood, nodded and broke into a little Italian love-chant, in a suppressed tone.

He shook his head.

"You will find that you will have to join the game, Saint-Leu."

He preceded Saint-Leu through an opening in the trees, into a clearing of the forest, where busy groups of figures trod the fine grass. Saint-Leu found Diane seated on a slab of granite near a tiny spring. The youth whom De Créquy had addressed as "Madame" sat near her.

De Créquy mingled with the groups of Bretons, and returned to them, followed by a wild-looking peasant.

"He will be your guide to the town," he said. "Adieu. If you find yourselves in difficulties, return to us."

The streets of Mayenne were thronged with the townsfolk when Saint-Leu and Diane entered, and a bell was booming over their heads. A proclamation of the Committee was being read and placarded in the market-place.

Saint-Leu hurried his companion into a small inn, with the sign of a golden bough.

The room which they entered was already occupied by seven or eight travelers who were eating and drinking together, and who turned to survey the strangers with curious and suspicious glances. Saint-Leu quietly crossed to the innkeeper and asked to be shown to a private room.

As he did so, a young man who had just entered stepped toward him with a slight exclamation. Saint-Leu confronted a stranger.

"One word, monsieur," said the young man eagerly.

Saint-Leu bowed with a reserved air.

The stranger went impulsively to the point.

"Monsieur, I observed you at the stage office in Paris when you were about to depart for Brittany. You had a lady with you. Pardon me, but my happiness depends on your answer. Where is she?"

"Monsieur," said Saint-Leu haughtily, turning away.

De Marsan made an instinctive movement as if Saint-Leu's manner inspired him with distrust and passionate anxiety.

"I will not leave you until you give me an answer, monsieur," he said resolutely, as he followed Saint-Leu. "There is some mystery here. I implore you to explain it. If you cannot——"

"Well, monsieur, and if I will not?"

"She may be in your power," said De Marsan, with flashing eyes, "unhappy——"

Saint-Leu saw that all eyes were on them, and that their words would be overheard. The young man's pertinacity angered him.

"The lady is under my protection, monsieur," he said. "Rest assured that I will shield her from all impertinence."

A burst of rage crimsoned De Marsan's face, and he ground his teeth.

"Monsieur, you are in fault," he said, with an accent of bitter irony. "A demoiselle of a great house cannot disappear without inconvenient questions being asked. You refuse to reply?"

"I refuse."

"Then you will give me satisfaction, monsieur," said De Marsan, his hand going to his side.

"I am ready to give you every satisfaction you wish, monsieur," answered Saint-Leu, whose blue eyes had become cold and proud.

"Messieurs, messieurs," cried the innkeeper, interposing, in an agony of vexation and fear. "We are not brigands of Royalists here, I hope."

De Marsan, turning, suddenly stood enchanted. He saw before him, in the low, dark room of the inn, the radiance that had vanished from his life; the star that had shone above sinister Paris.

It was she. She was a little paler than he remembered her, but fair and happy, and floating in dazzling light. He had not known before that the sun was shining.

"Monsieur," she said, with a cry of reproach.

Then, in her sweet, touching voice she told him—he was not very sure of what she told him in his dream of ecstasy, but it satisfied him completely!

He turned with an apology to Saint-Leu, whose youth met his youth and frankness half-way. Saint-Leu quietly left them together.

With their long glances of happiness, and their eloquent silence, they seemed separated by a golden cloud from the witnesses of their meeting.

A desire for solitude induced them to leave the inn, to walk back along the road they had just traversed.

The loiterers grouped about the inn door stared after the handsome pair, and one of them began to whistle a Breton ballad of love and spring, as tunable as a robin's song after rain.

The lovers walked in silence at first, lost in their dream. Gradually the words and thoughts of their long separation came to their lips.

"Do you know," she said to him, "that when they told me that I was to go away I wrote to you? I meant to place the letter in the hollow of the old tree, in the moss, where I found your first letter to me, but I could not find a pretext to slip away.

"At last they left me alone, and I caught up my garden hat and fled from my room. But I was called back to enter the coach. You know that I would not have gone without a word, do you not? They would not permit me to say farewell even to our dear garden."

"I was there that morning," he answered. "I stood by the wall and saw you pass. You did not see me. You looked back, and your eyes were full of tears.

"That night I climbed the wall and went to the old stone bench. You had left a flower there that you had worn, dear. I looked at it, and felt tranquil. I thought, 'What folly to believe that they can part us!'"

"How did you know my name?" Diane asked.

"You never guessed that Mademoiselle d'Aumont is my cousin. I learned from her your charming name.

"I learned from her that you were a little sad; that you were the loveliest of all in your convent dress; that you intended to take the veil. You had not asked my permission for that, mademoiselle.

"When I first wrote to you I fancied that you might be frightened or angry. I had loved you weeks before I broke silence. Were you frightened? Were you angry?"

"No," she answered, blushing. "You were timid at first, monsieur. You offered me your heart. You did not ask for mine in return. I could not work or sing that day. Wherever I looked I found you at my feet."

"The convent wall stood between our hearts, and yet your silence was a gloomier barrier. When our thoughts met we were together."

"I was silent; but your letter lay on my heart."

They forgot their sufferings and fears; and no shadow darkened the splendor of their destiny; nor did their present smiling joy amaze them. They told each other all the important things that they had forgotten to say.

"I was so gay this morning that I seemed strange to myself," she said. "I felt you near me."

It seemed to him that love lit a new splendor in her eyes and on her white brow.

"Speak again," he murmured. "It is the voice I have longed for."

She answered in a tone as low and musical as a broken harp note.

"Love me."

He timidly touched her hand.

A bird flew to a bush near-by and perched, twittering, on a spray. The sky was turned to gold, and it seemed to him as if she had a rosy cloud about her head.

He murmured, "Let me hear it from your lips, and in your voice. You love me?"

She looked into his eyes, and saw there gentleness and candor, hope and love.

"I adore you," she replied.

Her head drooped to his breast with this soft whisper, and they exchanged the first kiss.

He spoke.

"I may follow you?"

She answered.

"Always."

Diane found Saint-Leu anxiously awaiting her at the inn. At the sight of his face, thoughts of the perils surrounding them rushed back to her mind.

"Come, mademoiselle," Saint-Leu said gravely. "We must go at once."

Saint-Leu, left alone, had endeavored to make preparations for their departure. The town of Mayenne was thronged with citizens and soldiers, and they might be recognized at any moment.

He summoned the host, and asked for a traveling carriage and horses. The host declared himself unable to assist. On being pressed he began to express himself with much insolence.

A small mirror hung near. Saint-Leu glancing toward it, caught a glimpse of a man at the door of the next apartment, earnestly watching him. Saint-Leu recognized the silent passenger who had escaped the Royalists. When he faced about the man had disappeared.

"Let us look over your stables," Saint-Leu said, instantly rising. The host followed him, protesting.

In the stables they found three horses which the host was forced to acknowledge could be placed at the travelers' service.

"Now, my friend, you will produce a coach to accompany these horses," Saint-Leu said firmly.

In fifteen minutes the carriage was waiting for him.

Saint-Leu started with surprise as he looked at the coach, with its battered sides, ornamented by faded garlands of flowers and cupids, intertwisted with gilded ciphers.

The ruined elegance and beauty of this vehicle revived old memories.

"Am I dreaming?" he said aloud. "Where have I seen it before? Whence has it been sent, and who is awaiting me at my journey's end?"

The girl, now standing by his side, shrank a little in irresolution before the phantasmal vehicle that so evidently had startled her friend. Saint-Leu shook off his dreaminess with a smile, and turned to hand her into the vehicle.

"It is the coach of some emigrant noble that has been enlisted in the service of the inn," he said, "but for the moment it produced a strange effect upon me."

They entered the carriage and the silent postilion started his horses. A crowd of curious bystanders watched them drive away.

CHAPTER VII.

OUT OF THE SHADOW.

NIGHT descended on the road to Fougères. The travelers journeyed through a warm, perfumed dusk, from which the faint sound of the horses' hoofs on the road came to them in monotonous cadence. At intervals, points of light flashed by in the dim landscape which held their eyes in anticipation.

The château appeared abruptly before them. The carriage, after rolling along a sandy highway between dim lines of rustling, dewy trees, shortly turned aside to a rough road through the thicket.

At the end of this overgrown avenue, above which the branches of trees met and shut out the sky, Saint-Leu caught a glimpse of the ancient castle, bathed in moonlight. The carriage rolled through a ruined gateway, and entered the courtyard.

"There is the château, monsieur," said the postilion briefly.

He cast an uneasy glance about him.

Saint-Leu looked in amazement at the ghostly tower, set in fir trees, in which desolation seemed to have taken up its dwelling.

The vague feeling of alarm and distrust that had seized upon him at the inn returned.

This desolate tower, faintly illumined, this home that now seemed a tomb, the spectral shapes of trees, and the dark background of night, all suggested the thought of tragedy past and gone, but leaving a stain upon the brooding walls.

"What has happened here?" he cried involuntarily.

The postilion was making rapid preparations for departure, and did not reply. When Saint-Leu made an unsuccessful attempt to delay him the man urged his horses forward.

"You wished to enter the château, monsieur. Very good. Do not hinder other people, who wish to escape from it," he said.

His words were half drowned in the thunder of wheels, as he fled.

They were left alone in the courtyard, and the gloom of this welcome home, the doubt of Madame de Casteran's fate, with the thought of the shelter and safety he had promised his young charge, compressed Saint-Leu's heart. He turned, feeling his arm suddenly grasped by Diane.

The girl's courage had given away with the tremors and excitement of the day. She drew him a step away.

"Do not enter," she pleaded earnestly. "Let us take refuge in the woods. It would be better to pass the night in a hollow tree, than to enter that house."

She yielded finally to Saint-Leu's gentle entreaty, and to the trembling and fatigue that made further effort impossible for her. They passed the swinging doors, and entered the château.

In the wind-swept hall, where dead leaves and withered grass rustled underfoot, Saint-Leu found some torches of resin that had been flung aside by the last visitants.

He struck a light by means of a tinder box, and they explored the dim corridors and antechambers, passing by dark staircases to the bare chambers above.

Silence and desolation reigned throughout the castle. A pervasive melancholy seemed to emanate from the walls. The lofty halls answered their steps with sounds suggestive of sighs and mysteries.

Saint-Leu finally led the way up a little turret staircase to a paneled chamber hung with ancient tapestries that pictured the exploits of the great Duke of Brittany.

This had been Madame de Casteran's room, and still preserved signs of occupancy. He pushed the logs on the cold hearth together, and kindled a fire. The room took on a reassuring brightness and cheerfulness from the leaping flame.

The two young people forgot the sadness and desolation of the echoing château in renewed hope and tranquillity. They shared some fragments of chocolate, the last of their supplies.

Saint-Leu left the girl alone with the stiff, tapestried figures.

"You need feel no alarm," he assured her, "for I shall sleep across your door."

A flood of light, streaming at dawn through the great window of stained glass, softly awakened Diane, and made her smile at her terrors of the past night.

She threw a gay good morning to the grim, tapestried watchers. The paneled room filled with sunlight that gilded her loosened curls as she leaned from the window amid the flickering leaf shadows.

Diane opened her door, and not finding Saint-Leu, descended the spiral turret stair.

A neglected garden, once tended and loved by fair, dead ladies of the château, still preserved a few blooms by the gray walls, and its wild beauty attracted the young girl as it had drawn to it, already, a vagrant swarm of white butterflies.

She entered its winding, mossy walks, and began absently plucking flowers. When her hands were full of leaves and dewy petals, she twined a wreath for her head.

A ruined sun-dial marked the fugitive hour. She leaned her white hand on it, and stood dreaming.

A tremor that shook the leaves softly stirred her, and she turned to meet eyes that reflected her dreams.

De Marsan crossed the sunny sward to her side. She turned to him in silent greeting, as a flower turns to the sunshine. He took her hand in his, and both quivered at the warm clasp of palms.

Hand in hand, they entered their innocent Paradise while happiness shone like a star in their eyes. He fell into soft revery, watching the flight of butterflies about her. Their smiling glances mingled in happiness.

The golden moment was sufficient for them, yet their thoughts turned to the future, and the dream of undivided companionship.

He began to plan their future life. She listened with downcast lashes; and her hidden eyes held him even more than her tender, tremulous gaze. Smiling hopes took the place of memories.

"With you——" the luminous thought and secret hope of love trembled on their lips. It was the sunlight, the song of the birds, the fragrance and language of the enchanted flowers, the blue of the sky over her head, the mysterious splendor of her eyes as they met his own.

This happiness was sufficient for the maiden, but the lover was eager to tempt destiny. De Marsan's energetic nature, inspired by hope and love, led him to a rapid consideration of expedients and means. This recalled Saint-Leu to Diane's mind, and she sent the one young man to the other.

She followed De Marsan's figure with her eyes until it was lost, with a final wave of the hand, in the gloomy portal of the château. She moved in a revery, with eyes following the aery dance of the butterflies above her head, and her hands full of the glowing flowers.

As she passed from the bright sunlight to the gloom of the château, a man stepped forward from the shadow across her path.

She raised her eyes, with a shudder.

Face to face with her stood the Chevalier de Maubray.

(To be continued.)

JOSÉ MARIA PAYS A DEBT.

By Charles Francis Bourke.

BEHOLD our hero winning the very applause of his enemies who would have his life.

AS José Maria headed his big bay mare along the rugged defiles that threaded the sheer descents of the Andalusian hills, the sun sank in a glare of red glory behind the mountains.

Careless and daring as he was, with the practise of long habit the bandit avoided the main roads leading into the city, which all day had been crowded with conveyances, carrying spectators to il combat di toros—the great bull-fight to be given on the morrow in honor of Don Miguel, the new governor.

It was evident that the coming event was to be one of great importance. A hundred proclamations on wayside walls and taverns promised that the national sport of Spain would be presented in a manner unparalleled. The famous Pepe Illo, the matador whose double-edged sword had slaughtered eight bulls in one afternoon, had been brought from Madrid. Francisco Sevilla, the celebrated picador, who had broken a hundred lances in the ring and had lost scores of horses in the sport, would take part in the fighting of the black bulls—the most savage in Andalusia. Also, it was courteously proclaimed that any grandee who would venture to prove his skill with steed and lance might engage as picador. Plainly the fête was to be magnificent—and it had a peculiar interest of its own to José Maria, the Spanish bandit.

He drew rein sharply at a wayside shrine, marked by an immense wooden cross glimmering white in the falling dusk. Here the outlaw was joined by another horseman, who had evidently been anxiously waiting and who was mounted on a powerful black which he immediately spurred into the road.

"Ah, capitan!" he cried; "you are almost late, for the first time!"

"On my faith, then, it was because we had pressing business on hand to-day. Eh, Chiquita?"

The bandit slapped the neck of the big bay as he again swung her head city-ward. The mare whinnied, responsive to his touch. To all Spain he was the outlawed El Tempranito—Robber of the Morning.

"But you, Manuel?" he cried. "Have you learned what was needful, in the city?"

"All, capitan," the black-browed lieutenant responded. "Mother of Heaven!"—he gave a shudder that the lengthening shadows did not conceal. "You, capitan, may feel in safety there, but I

feel the rope around my neck all the time I am within the walls, though to-day the place was full of strangers."

"Bah! Are you afraid of those stupid aguazils—those donkeys!" José Maria laughed scornfully.

"Nevertheless, I have the whole plan of the Plaza di Toros in my head!" the robber cried, cut to the heart by his chief's raillery. "I know every seat—every passage—every entrance to the bull-ring. By special order a gate has been cut through the ramparts against which the Plaza is built, leading into the field where the bulls are kept overnight. Also, I know where the money will be stored during the fighting."

"Now you become interesting, good Manuel!" the bandit said approvingly.

"Inside the gate a passageway runs by the bull-pens to the wide corridor where the picadors gather with the horses. Just past the pens a stairway leads up to the treasurer's office. Hola! There will be the prizes and the money from ten thousand spectators—of whom I shall be one, I hope."

"How many guards?" demanded José Maria.

"Two, who will take turns to view the fight. All would be easy, for the bulls will be taken into the pens in the morning, and the gateway will be clear. But——" Manuel paused and then cried savagely, "That abandoned gateway is barred on the inside as well as on the outside!"

José Maria laughed carelessly.

"Gates have been opened before," he observed.

Manuel grinned with triumph.

"True, but, capitan, none but the officers and the picadors are permitted within the enclosure. One cannot overpower guards with a wall between."

El Tempranito did not reply immediately. They had emerged from the hill road to the plain. The evening lights of the city were beginning to appear through the gloom of gathering night. A brilliant illumination at the governor's palace turned the bandit's thoughts to one he had first spoken with two months before, when he held up the governor's coach on the great mail road—the beautiful Doña Sol, to whom the governor himself had paid court.

He shook off the revery quickly. He had important business on hand; work that required attention, and it was not the way of El Tempranito to neglect business for pleasure, or even for pleasant thoughts.

"Listen, Manuel," he said, reining Chiquita down to a walk. "*I* shall be in that corridor during the fighting of the bulls. You will await me in the field of bulls, outside that convenient gateway, with your horse at hand, for after we secure the treasure we will be pressed for time. That outside bar will give us a good start; they cannot follow immediately."

"Then I shall miss the bull-fight," objected the robber.

"You shall help spend the money instead."

Then, urging the bay forward again, he cried: "Hasten, Manuel! To-night I have business with Francisco Sevilla, the great picador and my very good friend. Faith of my soul, he has reason to be! You and the horses will await me at Pedro's inn to-night."

While still a considerable distance from the main road, José Maria turned Chiquita's head toward the courtyard of a little tavern situated at the side of the road they had been traversing. A crowd caroused on the vine-covered veranda.

Suddenly the bandit reined in Chiquita and hissed a warning to his companion. A clattering of hoofs reached them from the mail road—a company of men galloping toward the hills.

"The guard going to the mountains!" Manuel whispered, drawing a long breath as the noise died away. "The coach you held up at dawn—it got in to-day. They will scour the country!"

"Poor Manuel! I told you we were safe in the city," José said. "Forward, old robber! At least you have nothing to fear here at Pedro's. He was a poor brigand, but he makes a good innkeeper, he and little Pepita."

They crossed the cobbles of the courtyard, past the vine-clad inn and dismounted beside a little row of stables.

Thrusting his holster pistols into his sash, José Maria unstrapped his cloak from the saddle and threw it over his shoulders. He patted the mare's neck.

"Let the comrades know they will be

informed if we need their assistance to-morrow," he said to the downcast Manuel. "Bed Chiquita well. She, at least, will have work to do. And now, adios, beloved of my heart!"

Pulling his sombrero over his eyes, he rapidly crossed the yard. The bay mare whickered after him, jerking impatiently at the reins which the black-browed robber held mechanically.

The lieutenant, too, was disconsolate. "And I had promised myself to witness the great bull-fight," he said mournfully. "Come, children, we will forget our troubles in sleep. Alas! it is a hard life we lead!"

Still murmuring against fate, the robber led the horses into the stable.

José Maria boldly joined the throng moving cityward. His objective was the great cathedral near the governor's palace. His immunity from capture was largely due to his policy of frequenting the very places where he would be least expected and least sought for; a daring which almost insured his safety in a region where he had no enemies but the government and the rich.

Sheltered by the falling night, he boldly crossed the plaza toward the governor's palace. As he approached the gardens of the palace, two women issued from the gates. One, whose slender figure and grace of motion he could not mistake, he had seen before. Both were swathed in mantillas, but the second figure he knew was the duenna.

"The saints are with me to-night," he murmured, after the first movement of surprise. "They are going to the church."

He pulled his sombrero over his eyes and followed. The two women turned the corner of the gardens, and, after traversing the square, entered the great door of the cathedral.

He followed them into the cool dusk of the nave, with its great rounded dome, from whence a slender thread of light filtered from the sanctuary lamp.

Here, at a sign from the younger woman, the duenna paused. Doña Sol disappeared into the gloom and glided swiftly down the long aisle. José Maria still followed. The girl turned into a little niche and flung herself upon her knees before a tiny altar.

"Oh, Gracious Mother," she murmured, "help me in my need. Save us from danger. Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis!"

Protected by the shadowing row of columns, José Maria lingered, half catching the words of the murmured prayer, watching the dim outline of her profile, enthralled by the soft music of her voice, longing in his heart to aid and soothe her.

As the last golden bead of her rosary slipped through her slender fingers, the tiny flame upon the altar flared suddenly. The girl turned and its quivering ray lighted for an instant the dim recess where José Maria waited.

Across Doña Sol's mind flashed the memory of the night on the highway when she had seen that pale face by a light as dim, but surrounded by the brigands of whom he himself was leader and chief, and she remembered she had assisted him to save the life of one of his followers by giving him Don Miguel's ring, which the governor had, on an impulse, confided to her on the journey.

"Mother of Heaven! It is he," she cried. "El Tempranito, the Robber of the Morning!"

"Señorita!" José Maria murmured, cut to the heart when she shrank back a little. "It was only by chance I came. You seem in trouble. My life is at your service."

Doña Sol glanced about her. They were alone and unseen in the shadowy vastness. His words roused a fear in her heart, a fear tempered by an admiration she could not withhold from the daring robber.

"But you—*your* life is in danger here," she whispered in fear. "You are not safe——"

José Maria's white teeth gleamed in a smile.

"As in the mountains," he replied calmly.

Then he seized the little hand that went out impulsively to his and bent his head over it.

"Señorita, once you aided me," he said eagerly, "when there was great need. Every day I await the time when I may show my gratitude. Tell me how I may help you now."

The girl clasped her hands and was

about to speak, but hesitated and finally shook her head.

"No," she said. "There is nothing now. But I will remember if the time comes."

"This remember, too," the bandit replied; "remember that I live but to serve you. Here in sanctuary I consecrate my life——"

"Hush!" she murmured. "They will hear us. Go—for heaven's sake, go! And do not come to the city again—unless—unless"—her voice sank so low that he barely caught the whispered words—"you are sure the soldiers will not see you!"

"Ah, señorita!" the bandit cried joyfully. He sprang forward to seize the little hand again, but with a warning motion she slipped past him and was gone.

José Maria's first thought was to curse himself, his calling, his comrades, and his present daring undertaking that robbed him of her presence, and of the esteem he longed to win from her. His eyes followed her until he saw her slender form pass through the doors of the cathedral. Then he emerged from the church into the open plaza, which had grown shadowy and dark with the falling of the night.

Here, in the city, alone, in the very hot-bed of his mortal enemies, his customary spirit of bravado came back to him.

He had dared fate so often that the sense of danger sang in the blood in his veins. Besides, his heart was light with the thought of what Doña Sol had said before she left him, and he was in fitting mood to dare chance to the utmost—to hurl defiance to the government and all its myrmidons. Everywhere he was surrounded by gleaming lights, glittering jewels and joyous laughter.

"Of one thing I am sure," he murmured. "The returning coaches will be filled with fat dons and their family diamonds. We shall make it our duty to appraise their value!"

Suddenly the object of his mission to the city came back to him and he remembered that he had certain arrangements to make with Francisco Sevilla, the picador.

He mingled boldly with the merry-makers and, elbowing his way through the crowd, crossed the plaza.

The bandit had no fear of recognition. He had perused so many government descriptions of himself that he despised the acumen of the officials as much as he trusted to the devotion of his multitude of friends.

Loitering beside a mass of foliage and vines, out of the full glare of the lights, he heard the voice of Francisco Sevilla from within a house known as the Casa Real.

Muffled in his long cloak and wearing his sombrero low, he passed through the roistering crowd and seated himself at a table in an obscure corner.

"A bottle of ammontillado," he said to the waiter.

"Is it your custom to rob people in the morning and call on them in the evening, capitan?" a voice that he knew murmured in his ear. "I, Francisco Sevilla, will weep when they hang you!"

A boisterous voice called out from a near-by table before the bandit could speak:

"Sevilla! you spoke to the robber of the coach this morning, 'tis said. Was it José Maria, the Robber of the Morning, who relieved our stout court chamberlain of his purse and jewels?"

"I was half-asleep," the picador laughed. "It was done in the gray dawn. Hola! the coach stops—the traces are cut—bristling carbines appear and we empty our valuables into a tall robber's hat. There was one on horseback—a—a short, stout fellow."

"Then 'twas not José Maria," the cabellero returned. "He is said to be tall and slender and graceful as a willow. But he went to Portugal after robbing the governor's coach, I remember."

"You see!" the picador whispered. "I'll weep for you yet! That is, if I survive the fight of the black bulls tomorrow."

"'Twas that I had in mind," the bandit said eagerly. "Listen! I wish to see those black bulls close at hand tomorrow. Know then, and answer quickly, for it is not safe for me to stay here, Sevilla, my friend, that Chiquita and I, with your assistance, shall become picadors. You shall place us with your reserves."

"You!" the picador cried incredulously. "And yet—my faith! There could not be a safer disguise! But what is the real purpose, my friend?"

"A whim!" the bandit shrugged his shoulders. "You will not refuse, for the sake of the old smuggling days at Gibraltar?"

"Refuse!" the picador cried. "I will do as you wish and ask no more questions. Come to the plaza at dawn to-morrow. You shall have one of my costumes and I will give Chiquita the very best trappings that can be had. Look out for those drunkards. They are coming again!"

With a sign he rose, nodded casually to José Maria and joined the revelers, who were calling for the famous picador. Seizing the moment, the bandit slipped from the casa and hastened toward Pedro's inn, where Manuel and Chiquita awaited him.

* * * * *

All that morning a steady stream of people poured into the plaza di toros.

Before the noon sun was high over the arena, the great auditorium was crowded with an immense throng of spectators, eager to secure points of vantage before the entire city should empty itself into the plaza.

After sunrise the bulls had been brought from the arroya (the field outside the wall), where they had been kept all night. And now the field was empty, except for a tall, swarthy man, who some time after noon entered the field and gazed mournfully around at the high wall which separated the field from the bull-fighting arena.

Inside the wall, the bulls bellowed and stamped in their pens, mad with hunger and thirst, for they had been kept without water and food, to increase their ferocity when turned into the ring.

In the high-walled corridor leading from the barred gate of the arroya to the earth-banked barrier of the ring, the bull-fighters awaited the coming of the governor. Picadors and chulos—horsemen and footmen—compared horses and trappings, and over the barrier in the arena others practised with blindfolded horses.

Francisco Sevilla, in his costume of scarlet, black, and white, with heavy leggings of leather and iron, chatted with José Maria, in similar costume, standing beside Chiquita, whose glossy coat was nearly concealed by gay trappings.

"My faith, since I have dressed up this picador of mine I think he is as safe here as in a church," Sevilla whispered. "In payment you should let me ride Chiquita in the fight with the big black bull."

"I prefer Chiquita alive to Chiquita dead," José Maria returned, smiling through the false tan on his face. "When does the black bull come on?" he asked carelessly. "That will be the great fight of the day?"

"He will be the last to enter the ring. Ah! he will give them excitement enough! That is when the great fight will come. A fight worth seeing!"

"I shall stay here and watch you when you fight him," said the bandit. "Good luck, my friend!"

A fanfare of trumpets rang out. The governor had arrived.

"Then, my friend," Sevilla said, "let me at least ride Chiquita in the parade which is about to begin? Stay you here—chance nothing."

José Maria quickly assented. As the picadors prepared to mount, the bandit pressed eagerly forward. In the governor's box he saw the pale face of Doña Sol, who had taken her place beside the governor and the stout court chamberlain.

A black-garbed notary read the proclamation of order and withdrew quickly from the arena, followed by the jeers of the spectators. The band struck up the national anthem, and the bull-fighters, horse and foot, poured over the barrier into the ring.

Left alone, José Maria strolled back to the barred gate at the end of the corridor. Up the stairway a guard paced back and forth before the offices of the administration.

"One," he murmured. "I shall not require Manuel's help!"

The gate was fastened with a bar and iron latch. He quickly removed the bar and set it upright by the gate. Three times he struck gently with his boot, and then twice. A low whistle came from without.

"Good Manuel! Doubtless he is wild with curiosity," he murmured. "Never mind! He will be repaid by the administration!"

Passing the stairway again he saw the notary loitering at the top talking with the guard. The bull-fighters swarmed back from the ring and a great shout went up. The first bull had plunged bellowing into the arena.

The chulos, attaching their banderilleros to the bull, scattered for the palisade, while the maddened brute, tortured by the darts, pursued a picador around the ring. Francisco Sevilla urged his horse from the center of the ring and plunged his lance into the bull. Quickly he swerved to one side and the furious animal pursued the other picador who attempted to thrust. Twice around they fled. Then the bull, exhausted, lowered his nose to the ground and stopped, snorting and pawing. A cry went up:

"The sword, the sword! Pepe Illo!"

It was the signal for the matador. In scarlet and silk, Pepe Illo came forward and bowed to the governor. With his mantle, or muleta, over his arm, he advanced to the bull, drawing his long, bright double-edged sword. The gaudy muleta fluttered before the bull's red eyes —he lunged—the long sword descended and the stricken brute dropped, pierced through the neck to the heart.

"Viva, Pepe Illo! Viva! Viva!"

The audience yelled itself hoarse while the three mules, harnessed abreast, dragged out the dead bull. Instantly, a second animal was let loose and tortured and killed in even less time than the first.

The notary again entered the ring, while silence fell on the auditorium. The notary held a sealed parchment in his hand.

"It is announced," he shouted, raising the proclamation in the air; "it is announced, by favor of the governor and permission of el presidente! Any amateur of noble birth may enter the lists in the next combat, to engage with lance and on horseback, as a picador, to fight the bull which is now about to be turned into the arena! Let the trumpets sound, and let those who desire announce their acceptance!"

An uproar followed. Half a dozen cabelleros were waving their mantles and arms, crying out to the presidente. In the governor's box, Don Sebastian (Doña Sol's brother) sprang up:

"I accept the challenge!" he shouted. "I claim the right to meet the bull!"

"And I! And I! And I!" a dozen others yelled.

For an instant, José Maria glanced back to the barred gate. Manuel's swarthy face was looking in. He motioned to José Maria and then to the treasurer's office.

But in the governor's box, the bandit saw Doña Sol spring up, catching her young brother by the arm. She was trying to dissuade him from the combat! The treasure—or the girl?

Ignoring Manuel's frantic motions, José Maria sprang on Chiquita, in all her gaudy trappings, and put her over the barrier at a spring. Two bounds brought him fair in view of the president. "The treasure must wait!" he murmured to himself.

"Señor Presidente!" he cried. "I am the first to accept the challenge. I will meet the bull!"

"It is I who accept!" Don Sebastian cried. "I claim the first right!"

Doña Sol made a motion of appeal to the bandit that he could not mistake. He bent in his saddle, to the governor's box.

"Perhaps the señor did not hear me?" he said. "'Twas I who first cried out, and the right is mine."

"Caramba, they all want to get killed first, these hot-heads!" Pepe Illo cried out, laughing, from where he sat among the professional bull-fighters.

Don Sebastian scrambled into the ring and seized a picador's horse. "A lance!" he cried. "Let the bull be turned in!"

"It is well," the great matador laughed to his companions, "that the next bull is gentle as a cow. Hola! Let both of them fight her!"

A roar followed the remark.

Ignoring the sarcasm, the bandit again addressed the president.

"Señor Presidente!" he cried, his strong, clear voice reaching above the clamor of the plaza, "it rests with your excellency, but it is beyond doubt that

I was the first to answer to the proclamation of the notary. I am assured that your excellency will decide in my favor!"

There was a ring of threat in the bandit's voice that made the court chamberlain look more closely at the daring brigand, sitting there on his magnificent bay in an attitude that seemed to defy the whole assemblage.

"By the memory of my father, it seems to me that voice is familiar!" he muttered to the governor. "Where can I have met this bull-fighter who is so bold?"

"Señors," the president said, "lest I decide unfairly, I shall call upon the assemblage to declare who spoke first. Come! We will leave it to the ladies here present, who are more discriminating than the gentlemen. Decide then, señoritas, and we will abide by the decision!"

A moment's silence followed. Don Sebastian, awkwardly fumbling his lance, looked appealingly around the ring. José Maria, sitting like a statue of daring on the big bay mare, held his eyes fixed upon the face of Doña Sol, who leaned forward, her hands pressed upon her heart. Then the shout went up shrilly, with a chorus of bravas:

"The bay cabellero! The cabellero on the big bay! Viva! Viva!"

A hundred handkerchiefs, gloves, and bouquets fluttered from the auditorium. Don Sebastian was hustled from the arena and a dozen lances were offered to the bandit. Then the voice of Pepe Illo, the matador, again blared out:

"Good! We will see a little bull-tossing now to give us an appetite for our own fight—the combat with the big black bull. Hurry, Señor Cabellero on the bay; that we may get at the real fighting!"

The brutal remark, coming even from the great matador, was followed by silence and a few hisses. José Maria grew pale, but answered with composure, addressing the president:

"Señor Presidente, the bull for the contest was not designated. I claim the right to fight the big black bull—the one reserved for the sword of Señor Pepe Illo!"

A roar went up from the crowd, through which Pepe Illo's voice could be heard crying:

"What! On horseback, that you may show your heels, Señor Picador? A brave fight that, for my fine black bull! No, no! The bull of Andalusia shall feel my sword—I need neither horse nor lance!"

In an instant the bandit sprang from the back of the big bay. He whispered to her and she trotted toward the barrier, where she stood, with her head turned toward him, waiting.

"And now!" the bandit cried. "Are you satisfied, Señor Illo? A sword! a sword! I will fight the black bull, on foot and with sword alone. You want a real fight? I will show you one!"

Like a spark set to tinder, the fire of combat ran through the plaza. A thousand mantles and scarfs fluttered in the air. A thousand voices roared: "A matador! a matador! He will fight the black bull alone. Viva! Viva!"

Pepe Illo himself caught the infection of excitement. He sprang up with his comrades, the bull-fighters.

"A sword!" he roared. "Here, take mine! 'Tis the best blade ever forged in Toledo. Come, comrades, give the brave matador his choice! Into the ring with your blades! Viva, matador!"

His companions leaped up, each one drawing his sword. Like a shower of steel icicles, they fell into the arena, and a score of muletas—the bull-fighters' mantles—followed, strewing the ground at the feet of the bandit. The whole plaza went mad with joy and excitement.

"Viva, viva, matador! Viva! Viva!"

"All the same, it is too bad," Pepe Illo said. "He is a brave cavalier, and I shall hate to see him tossed on the horns of that black devil!"

José Maria picked a muleta from the ground and threw it over his arm. Then he picked up the sword of Pepe Illo and swished it once through the air with his strong right arm. Taking it in his left hand, he bowed to the president, fixed his eyes, in one long look, on the face of Doña Sol and walked to the center of the arena. As he passed the barrier he glanced down the corridor. Francisco Sevilla was sitting on his horse at the palisade, looking at him mournfully, as

if in farewell. Over his head, José Maria saw the robber Manuel at the barred gate, coming through and glancing fearfully from side to side. Then a door opened in the arena and, with a bellow of rage, the great black bull dashed into the ring.

Twenty feet from the door, the odor of that great mass of humanity caught the bull and he reared up on his hind legs, snuffing and pawing, roaring like a lion. Then he dropped down on all fours and pawed the ground, blowing the sawdust in great clouds, while his fiery red eyes—half-blinded still by the glare of lights—sought out a victim upon whom he could wreak his vengeance, to repay the thirst and hunger that he had been made to suffer in his dark stall.

"El toro! El toro!" the shout went up. "It is the black bull of the death herd. He is a dead man. El toro! El toro! It is a fight to the death! Viva, matador! Viva, el toro! Viva! Viva!"

Calmly waiting, the bandit thrust his sword into the ground and threw off his black velvet jacket. The black bull bellowed and roared, planting his fore feet for a rush at the man who defied him, alone, in the center of the ring. José Maria rolled up the sleeve of his right arm. The silence of death had fallen upon the plaza. The bandit wrapped his scarlet muleta around his left arm and jerked the long sword of Pepe Illo from where it stood. Then snatching off his hat, he tossed it toward the raving bull.

"El toro!" he cried, "I salute you! And now? One of us is going to die. Come, el toro!"

"The picadors, the picadors!" Francisco Sevilla cried, vaulting upon his horse. "It is murder!"

"No picadores!" the bandit shouted. "We will fight it out alone! Forward, el toro!"

One last glance showed him that Doña Sol had buried her face in her hands. Then, with a rush like a tornado, the bull was upon him.

José Maria was not a bull-fighter, but he was a swordsman. All his life he had been accustomed to the use of arms, and his long life as an outlaw had given him a heart of steel and a body of flexible iron. He had often watched the matadors, and he knew that the first rush of the bull would be straight and unswerving, but he had not the matador's years of training that would enable him to meet that rush with a straight thrust down through the shaggy neck into the heart, before he himself should be tossed high in the air by the bull's horns.

As a duelist meeting a headlong antagonist, he sprang to one side, avoiding the mad rush of the brute, and then whirled and thrust like a lightening flash at the great body rushing past him.

The fury of that enormous black body almost tore the sword from his hand, but he had felt it sink into the brute's flesh, and before the animal could turn, he was again standing in the center of the ring, coolly wiping the wet blade on the muleta that bound his left arm.

A storm of applause followed the first stroke and Pepe Illo shouted joyfully:

"Caramba! He is not a matador; he is a swordsman. I will make him a matador. Viva, señor! It was beautifully done! If you live I will teach you my own stroke—the descabello a pulso! Brava!"

The bull had not plunged back. He had learned wisdom from the touch of the bandit's sword, and, besides, his eyes were getting accustomed to the glare of lights. He wheeled, and, like a great black cat, seemed to crouch on his muscular legs as he again approached the bandit, before launching his great bulk in a final grinding avalanche of death.

Mowing and shaking his shaggy head, his red eyes rolling and his mouth foaming, he came nearer and nearer, holding his fore legs apart that he might spring to either side if the man in white and scarlet tried to avoid him. Ten feet away, he planted his fore legs and stood stock-still, José Maria held his sword straight out at arm's length, wavering it a little, to dazzle the bull's eyes.

For a full second they stood, glaring at each other, without moving a muscle. Not a soul stirred in the whole concourse.

A woman's stifled shriek broke the spell. The bandit shouted: "Come, coward!" the bull bellowed furiously and seemed to leap over the intervening space in one bound.

Quick as he was, the bandit was quick-

er. When the bull was right on top of him, he dropped on one knee and whirled his lithe body close to the ground, just missing the tremendous upward sweep of the spreading horns. As the bull slid by him, in a cloud of dust, he shortened the long sword and thrust quickly upward, the bull rearing at the same time, so that it seemed as if the bandit was lifting him bodily on his blade.

With a bellow of pain the great black fighter dropped upon his knees, the blood streaming from his mouth and nostrils. The sword was torn from the bandit's hand and he sprang to his feet, thrusting his hand into the bosom of his shirt. But before he could draw the concealed pistol, he saw Francisco Sevilla running toward him, throwing a sword to him as he came.

José Maria sprang upon it and darted back to the bull, which was trying to struggle to its feet in a last fight against death. From side to side he swung his great head as he tried to upheave his shoulders.

The sword that Sevilla had flung him was a light one, only a rapier, his own, which he had snatched from his side. Darting close to the side of the bull, the bandit waited until the shaggy head swung from him. With a motion like one using a dagger, thrusting forward, José Maria buried the needle-like blade down through the bull's neck toward the heart. It snapped off at the hilt like an icicle in a child's hand. Like an ox struck with a mallet, the bull's head dropped, his black body swayed to one side, and he fell upon the ground.

"The matador's stroke! 'Twas the matador's stroke!" Pepe Illo roared, struggling to get into the arena. "He is a brother matador—a born bull-killer. Embrace——"

His voice was drowned in the storm of applause that followed the feat of the bandit. The outburst of "Vivas" seemed to have no ending and the arena was strewn with mantillas, fans, gloves —anything that the spectators could throw in their frenzy of admiration.

But in the midst of the tumult—the shouts of the crowd—the bull-fighters clambering over the boxes to reach and embrace him—the picadors galloping their horses into the ring, and the shrill cries of the women—the bandit saw something that made every nerve taut with the sense of coming danger. In the governor's box, the court chamberlain and the president were talking eagerly together while the black-garbed notary was reading from a paper which he was showing the governor, and pointing toward him in the arena.

"That devil of a notary!" the bandit hissed. "Can he have found me out? Or is it that the fat chamberlain has recognized me!"

Just then, a shriller cry of applause and warning pierced the clamor of the Plaza: A slender figure had run down to the palisade and was motioning with a little handkerchief toward the exit.

"Viva, viva! Fly! Viva—fly!" she cried.

"Sanctissima!" The bandit shouted clear and loud. "Now, Chiquita, it is for our necks!"

The big bay mare darted through the excited picadors who were crowding around him. As he sprang upon her back he saw soldiers running along the balconies.

In one bound the mare took the barrier, scattering the bull-fighters in the corridor. At the foot of the stairway to the treasurer's office she overturned the notary and he saw Francisco Sevilla trip up a soldier.

The dark face of Manuel was peering through the gate in the wall, and the robber flung it open as Chiquita bounded through.

"Bar the gate!" José Maria cried, "and to horse, if you value your neck!"

He wheeled Chiquita on the other side and drew his pistol and waited. The tall robber flung the gate to and dropped the wooden bar into place a moment before musket butts sounded against the inside. The lieutenant's horse was browsing near-by. He flung himself into his saddle and as they fled across the field of the bulls, José Maria thrust his pistol back into the sash of his picador's shirt.

"And the money, capitan? How about the money?" the lieutenant asked anxiously.

The treasure! The bandit had forgotten all about it. Now it came to him that he had paid a heavy price for saving

that young fool Don Sebastian from the bull. But the face of Doña Sol flashed across him. It was for her sake, and because of what she had once done for him. Never mind. The coaches still ran!

"Manuel, my friend, I used that money to pay a debt," said José Maria. "I will repay my comrades in a day or two, on the word of El Tempranito!"

He wrapped Manuel's coat about him and, side by side, the robbers spurred toward the mountains.

FLAT-BROKE.*

By Bertram Lebhar.

A hard-luck yarn that is not troubled with poverty of action and excitement.

* SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

JACK FRANCIS, an Englishman flat-broke, purchases from a strange American a passage to America in a returning cattle-steamer, adopting his passports and name, Henry Bush. He arrives in Philadelphia with no friends save Bill Jordan, a companion of the voyage.

In a newspaper, Jordan reads an account of a big English bank burglary and that the detectives suspect Henry Bush. He accuses Francis, who makes his escape to New York, where chance puts him in possession of a stranger's overcoat containing $25,000. Under the name of Arnold Murray he registers at the Waldorf and falls in with William Morton, a Chicago millionaire, who introduces him to his daughter, Estella.

CHAPTER V.

THE WHIRR OF THE WHEEL.

I WENT to the theater that night with Estella and her father. The latter invited me, to my great delight.

We had the best box in the house and I felt indeed like a prince of the blood as I saw the glasses of those in the orchestra seats directed toward us.

When I could afford it I used to be a frequenter of the London theaters, but my limited resources had only permitted me to enjoy the show from the elevation of the gallery, and to see it from this distinguished view-point was a triumph which thrilled me with delight.

The full dress suit I had bought, though ready made, fitted me perfectly. I flattered myself, too, that it became me immensely.

Estella seemed to think so, at any rate, for several times I caught her casting a peculiar look at me when she thought my attention was occupied with the stage.

The play was "Romeo and Juliet." I thought it pretty good—in fact, better than ever I had seen, although we were so near the stage that the actors' make-ups looked like hideous disfigurements.

After the theater we went to supper at Sherry's, Mr. Morton insisting upon paying for the whole night's entertainment.

As we drove home to the hotel, the old millionaire, who appeared to treat the conventionalities with contempt, dozed off to sleep in the opposite seat of the carriage and left Estella and me to converse together.

I found her as charming to talk to as she was to look upon, and when I took her dainty little hand in mine on the arrival of our carriage at the Waldorf-Astoria I felt myself to be already head over heels in love with her and determined to win her at all costs.

*Began July All-Story Magazine. Single copies, 10 cents.

The Chicago millionaire shook hands with me cordially, and told me again that he liked me immensely and hoped that we should see a great deal of each other.

And as I reached my room and sank upon the soft, snowy bed, it seemed that all the delights I had participated in that night were an enchanting dream. I felt it hard to convince myself that I, plain Jack Francis, law clerk for old Adam Skinflint, solicitor, of London, England, was really sleeping on a Waldorf-Astoria bed and had gone to the theater and dined only a few hours previously with a famous millionaire financier whose beautiful daughter I might—for it seemed to me within the range of the possible—win for my bride.

"If only old Adam Skinflint could see me now," I thought, as my head sank upon the pillow. "If only that waiter who threw me out of the Bowery restaurant could see me now," and with these drowsy reflections I soon fell asleep and dreamed all night of the fair Estella.

I arose late the next day, ordered breakfast up in my room, and afterward went down-stairs to see if I could not induce Estella and her father to go with me on a carriage-tour of New York.

"Carriage-tour be hanged," said the old man, whom I found in the billiard-room. "We'll go around New York in my auto. I'll go right away and see that it is got ready. No, don't thank me or attempt to expostulate. I like you and that is enough. It will be a pleasure to show you the sights of this great metropolis."

The millionaire left me to telephone to the manager for his automobile, while I went eagerly in search of Estella.

She was not in the palm-room, and I went to the Turkish room.

There I saw an extraordinary sight—Estella in tears. She was sitting in a corner of the room. Her head was turned to the tapestried wall to prevent the other occupants of the room from noticing her grief.

Her bosom rose and fell convulsively, and she appeared to be very unhappy.

For a second I stood there beside her, hesitating whether to address her or to turn and go.

She decided the matter, however, by looking up suddenly and seeing me. She brushed her tears quickly away and tried to smile.

"Miss Morton," I said, "your father has been kind enough to invite me to see the city with him to-day in his automobile. I hope that you intend to make one of the party."

She looked at me for a few seconds without answering, but with that strange, sad expression in her beautiful eyes intensified.

"Mr. Murray," she said, in a low voice, "I wish that you would make me a promise."

"A promise? What can it be, Miss Morton? Surely I will promise you anything that it lies in my power to do."

"I want you to leave the Waldorf-Astoria immediately. I want you to leave New York City, if possible; but at any rate leave this hotel."

"Leave the Waldorf? Why, what an extraordinary request. Surely my presence here does not annoy you," I stammered.

She was about to reply, I believe, but just then her father came upon us and announced that the automobile would be ready in fifteen minutes.

The Chicago millionaire took no notice of the tears in his daughter's eyes. It seemed to me then that there was a certain amount of coolness between the two. I imagined that father and daughter had quarreled about something or other that morning, and that this quarrel was the cause of the girl's tears.

At any rate at the last minute she announced that she did not feel well, would not accompany us on the automobile trip, but would instead go up to her room and lie down.

The Chicago financier and I, therefore, made the tour alone and a very enjoyable trip we had. Mr. Morton apparently knew every inch of New York, and pointed out the most interesting sights to me. It was late in the afternoon when we got back to the hotel.

"We just have time for one game of billiards before we dress for dinner," Mr. Morton said, as we alighted from the auto, and a few minutes afterward we were busily engaged over the billiard table.

"Do you ever play the wheel, Mr.

Murray?" asked the financier suddenly, as he carefully prepared for a particularly difficult shot.

"Play the wheel? What wheel do you mean, sir?" I asked.

"The roulette wheel, of course," he answered. "You don't mean to say that you have never played roulette?"

"I have never played it. But of course, under your guidance, I should be glad to learn roulette," I replied, not knowing just what answer he expected.

"Learn roulette, my friend? There's nothing to learn about it. It isn't a game, it's a betting proposition. You can lose or win a fortune in a night at it."

"Where is it played, here in the hotel?" I asked innocently.

"In the Waldorf? I guess not. You *are* a greenhorn, for fair. It's played in a gambling-house. I'll take you around to one to-night and show you how the game is played, if you like," he offered. "You don't need to play if you don't want to. You can just stand and watch the players."

I thanked him profusely and we arranged to go. Estella did not come down to supper. I sent a card up to her room to inquire how she was. She sent down word, thanking me for my inquiry and urging me to remember my promise.

"Remember my promise," I muttered angrily. "Why on earth does the girl want me to leave the Waldorf, where I'm having such a good time? It is a ridiculous request. I shall not grant it."

As I sat in the cab with her father at twelve o'clock that night, on our way to play roulette, I mentioned Estella's extraordinary request, in a burst of confidence occasioned by the amount of wine I had drunk.

"What could Miss Morton mean by such a request as that?" I asked earnestly. "Do you think that she is tired of my society and wants to get rid of me?"

I noticed that an expression of annoyance flitted over the face of the Chicago millionaire. It was gone in a minute, however.

"Take no notice of Estella's whims, Mr. Murray," he said. "I told you before you met her that she was an extraordinary girl. She will have forgotten all about that request by to-morrow, believe me."

As he finished speaking the cab drove up before a four-story brown-stone house, and we alighted.

"This is the place," said the millionaire, leading the way up the stoop. "This is one of the best-known gambling-houses in town."

He rang the bell twice before there was any attempt to open the door, and then a man's eye peered through a little round hole in the wood panel of the door and apparently surveyed us critically.

Then the door was cautiously opened by a tall man with the look of a prize-fighter.

This person stood in the passageway with a key in his hands. Behind him was a heavy iron door, tight-closed, and this kept us in the narrow hall, and prevented our entering the house proper.

"Good evening," said he who stood guard, when he recognized the Chicago millionaire. "Who's your friend, sir?"

"He's all right," answered Mr. Morton. "This is Mr. Murray, of London, England."

"Glad to see you, Mr. Murray. You're welcome here," replied the man as he slipped his key in the iron door, and admitted us.

"That man's the door-keeper," whispered my companion. "That door there is of solid iron. It would take a strong police force to break it in, wouldn't it?"

The millionaire, who apparently knew the place well, led the way up a small flight of stairs and knocked on another iron door.

As we stood there waiting, I heard from inside the room a whirring noise.

"What is that," I asked my companion, "that noise, I mean?"

"That noise? Why that's the roulette wheel that you hear. Wait a minute and you shall see for yourself."

A man in evening dress opened the second door and nodded to Mr. Morton.

We were admitted to a big, splendidly furnished room, on the walls of which hung magnificent oil paintings.

In the center of the room a group of men in evening clothes were gathered around a big wheel, colored red and black, which was kept revolving by a person who gave it a twirl by means of

a silver knob in the center every time it stopped.

As this man twirled the wheel, he threw on it a little white ball like a diminutive billiard ball, and as the wheel revolved one way, the ball ran the other, dropping, as the revolutions ceased, into one of the red or black hollows on the wheel's margin, against each of which was printed a number.

"Fifteen wins," said he who ran the game, as he handed some checks to a distinguished-looking man in a dress suit, who silently took them.

"This is roulette," explained Morton to me. "You see that wheel there contains numbers from one to thirty-six. Adjoining that wheel is a board, as you see, with a checkerboard arrangement, numbered, with alternate red and black squares.

"You place as many chips as you like on any number in the board, and if the little white ball rolls into the corresponding number on the wheel, you win your bet. Or you can bet on a color instead of a number, at even money if you prefer, only on a number you get odds of thirty-five to one."

"Place your bets," cried the man in charge of the wheel. And several men placed stacks of chips here and there over the board.

Morton, to show me how it was done, bought ten chips and placed them on number twenty.

The wheel was twirled, and, simultaneously, the ball was thrown on to the revolving disk.

Everybody held his breath excitedly. There was a whirring noise, the wheel slowed down, and stopped. The little white ball fell into a red concavity on the rim of the wheel.

"Twenty wins," the man at the wheel announced. "Twenty wins," he repeated, and handed the Chicago millionaire three hundred and fifty dollars.

"I'm lucky to-night," said Mr. Morton to me, smiling as he put the money in his pocket. "Want to try it?"

I had left all my money with the hotel cashier for safety, save two thousand dollars, which I carried around with me for emergencies.

This two thousand dollars was in one-hundred-dollar bills.

I took out my roll and peeled off one of these bills. "How much shall I bet?" I asked.

"Put up the whole hundred. Beginners are generally lucky," advised the Chicago millionaire.

I bought a hundred chips at a dollar a chip and put them on various numbers on the board, at Mr. Morton's advice.

The dealer twirled the wheel again and the ball dropped into number sixteen.

I had ten chips on number sixteen and I won three hundred and fifty dollars, although the chips I lost on the other numbers reduced my winnings considerably.

"Try again," urged Morton, himself placing fifty chips on one number and one hundred chips on the red at even money.

I also placed a hundred chips on red and fifty chips on number twenty.

The ball fell into a black hole and the number was not twenty.

"Hard luck," said the millionaire, grinning. "We both lost, it seems. Want to try again?"

The gambling fever was on me by this time, and the whirr of the wheel was like the intoxicating music of a siren.

"Yes—yes," I cried excitedly. "I'll win a fortune to-night or lose every cent I've got in my pocket!"

"Go easy, young man," replied Morton, laughing quietly. "You'll go broke if you don't look out. This is enough for to-night."

"No—no," I protested. "Let's play a little more. I can afford to risk a thousand or so."

"Well, go ahead. You're a true sport and I like you," declared the Chicago millionaire cordially.

I played for two hours after that, betting on nearly every number on the red and black board. Sometimes I won and sometimes Morton won also. But in the end I had lost every cent of the two thousand dollars I had brought with me and Morton confessed that he had lost a thousand dollars himself.

"Hard luck," said Morton, as we left the scene of excitement and regained the cool night air. "Let's walk back to the hotel. It will freshen us up a bit."

We walked down Broadway for a time in silence. It was 3 A. M. and the great thoroughfare was almost as quiet as a graveyard.

"I suppose you are sorry you played now?" said Morton at length.

"Sorry? Not a bit of it," I replied boldly. "It's a grand game. We must go there again, and I must take more money and try my luck once more."

"But, young man, can you afford to lose two thousand dollars in a single night?"

"Afford it, Mr. Morton? Of course I can afford it, although of course I would rather win than lose. Better luck next time, let us hope."

"Well, you are a true sport," declared the financier admiringly. "Let's go in here and have a highball."

We went into the side entrance of a Broadway café and Mr. Morton ordered drinks. On a table of the café was a copy of a morning paper just out.

"Paper out already?" I remarked in surprise, taking up the sheet.

"Yes. In these days of enterprising journalism you can buy a morning paper on Broadway at 2 A. M. Can't beat that in London, eh?" laughed Morton.

I did not answer him, for my eyes were riveted on a news item on the front page of the paper. As I read it, the blood in my veins turned to ice and my heart seemed to stop beating, for this is what I read:

FORTUNE IN LOST OVERCOAT.

Aged Patient Declares that $25,501 Was in Garment that Disappeared.

Allan Hartley, an aged man, was struck last Thursday on the head by a piece of granite falling from the roof of the Flatiron Building, and was taken unconscious to the New York Hospital. Yesterday he returned to consciousness and made a startling assertion.

Hartley has sustained serious injuries which the surgeons pronounced fatal, and his partial recovery was a great surprise to the physicians. Hartley sat up in bed and asked for his overcoat, which the surgeon had been compelled to remove from his unconscious body when attending to him at the scene of the accident.

The patient made the strange declaration that the overcoat contained, in the inside pocket, a roll of bills aggregating $25,501, which he had drawn from one bank with the intention of depositing it in another.

On making a search for the overcoat, it could nowhere be found. Dr. Halsey, the ambulance surgeon who attended Hartley, remembers having given the coat to a man in the crowd, asking him to hold it, while he worked on the patient. That was the last seen of it.

Hartley became very excited when his overcoat was not brought to him, and quickly relapsed into unconsciousness.

The police are now looking for the man to whom Dr. Halsey handed the coat at the time of the Flatiron accident.

An old overcoat, much the worse for wear, was found in the hallway of an apartment house in East Twenty-Eighth Street. The police are of the opinion that this shabby garment was discarded by the man to whom the ambulance surgeon handed Hartley's overcoat, and it is the only clue they have to work upon.

CHAPTER VI.

A RASH AVOWAL.

"WHAT is the matter?" asked Mr. Morton, starting in wonder at my blanched face. "You look as if you had seen a ghost. Any bad news in that paper?"

"No—no," I gasped, immediately on my guard. "I have a chill, I think. Coming out of that hot room into this cold air affected me, I suppose."

"It'll pass off," said the millionaire reassuringly. "Your blood was heated by the excitement of the wheel, and now you feel the reaction. Don't mind it. You'll be yourself in a little while."

"Of course," I said, smiling faintly, "I feel better already. Let us get back to the hotel, if you are through here, Mr. Morton. I feel as if I should like to get to bed."

I could perceive that I had fallen several points in the great financier's estimation by this little display of weakness; for I knew that he mistook my agitation for remorse and panic over the two thousand dollars I had lost.

However, although I desired greatly to preserve his high opinion of me, it was better to have him ascribe my agitation to this cause than for him to guess the real reason.

On our way back to the Waldorf I noticed that his manner had grown considerably colder. He spoke but little and answered only in monosyllables when I addressed him.

Evidently he was used to the society of men who could lose a small matter of two thousand dollars with a laugh or an oath, and a display of weakness such as my perturbation appeared to be, vexed him considerably.

I should have worried over this change, doubtless, if I had not had a far more important trouble to occupy all my attention.

I didn't sleep a wink that night, but lay tossing in my bed, thinking of this new danger.

It had been bad enough to know that I was sought for by the police as Harry Bush, the bank robber; but then at least I knew that I was not really the guilty party.

But the warning this newspaper had given me was startling. The police were now after me as a thief, and already they were on my track with a valuable clue in their possession in the shape of my discarded overcoat.

My distorted imagination pictured them tracking me down link by link. First the detectives would come across that hotel on the Bowery, where they would learn of the young Englishman who had possessed the one-hundred-dollar bill and the overcoat.

Then, doubtless, they would discover the cigar-store man, and he would describe the extraordinary stranger who had asked where he could get a bath, a bed, and a meal, and who had displayed so much money, despite his unkempt appearance.

Then the Turkish-bath people would furnish the next link in the chain against me, and tell the police how I had sent out for a complete outfit and left all my old clothes in the bath-house locker.

And last the salesman of the swell clothing house where I had bought the clothes of Arnold Murray would furnish damning evidence against me.

With these clues in their possession how could the police fail to find me?

Tossing there on the bed, I pictured to myself the startling scene that would ensue when the detectives tramped through the corridors of the dignified Waldorf and grabbed me by the collar to take me to prison.

Perhaps I should be conversing with Mr. Morton, or with his daughter Estella, at the very moment they arrived to arrest me.

Good heavens! What would the Chicago millionaire think and say when he saw how I had imposed upon him? And worse still, what would his beautiful daughter say when she saw me arrested for a common thief?

I buried my hot head in the coverlet and groaned aloud.

What a fool I had been to think that I could carry on a game like this and escape the consequences.

I might perhaps have got away with the stolen fortune and have escaped scot free if I had been sensible enough to sail for Europe immediately, instead of trying to play the part of a young gentleman of wealth in the fashionable Waldorf.

For hours I lay in bed tossing and turning, in an agony of fear and remorse; and amid all the terrifying pictures that passed through my mind, the sweet, sad face of Estella Morton kept coming up again and again.

I had never believed in love at first sight. In fact, I had never thought it possible that I could fall in love at all; but I knew now that I was in love with the beautiful daughter of the Chicago financier, and that it was the thought of her which made the prospects of disgrace and imprisonment appear most awful.

How I wished then, for the second time since I had met this girl, that I had been introduced to her as plain Jack Francis, poor but honest, and therefore entitled to her respect and friendship.

Then I fell to thinking of her strange request of the day before that I should leave the hotel immediately and go away from the city if possible.

Why had she made this extraordinary request and what did it mean? Could it be that she already knew my story and that she felt enough interest in me to warn me to fly before the reckoning came?

Why was she always so sad while her father seemed so jolly? She was a great

mystery to me, this girl with the beautiful eyes. In thinking of her strange request, I gradually forgot my own unfortunate case and the danger which threatened me.

Next morning I went down to the dining-room for breakfast and looked for Mr. Morton and his daughter, but they were not there.

I ordered a light meal and, while I was eating it, made up my mind to draw all my money from the cashier and leave the Waldorf that day, before the police tracked me down. If they had not yet traced me to the Waldorf-Astoria, there might still be time to take a steamer to Europe and thus escape after all.

With this intention I arose from the table determined to fly instantly.

But as I walked through the palm-garden, a sudden thought occurred to me, causing my heart to bound with hope and joy.

Even if the police were successful in getting hold of all the clues, as my imagination had pictured, how were they to know that I was at the Waldorf-Astoria?

The last link in the chain they could forge was the story of the salesman of the clothing establishment where I had bought my clothes. And happily I had not told him of my intention to go to the Waldorf.

The situation was not so black after all. Probably they would never dream of searching the hotels for the thief they were after. In my pessimism I had looked at this thing in its worst light, when the circumstances really did not warrant so doing. Perhaps, after all, the safest course would be to stay at the Waldorf. Probably the police were already watching all out-going ocean steamers.

It was with an almost light heart that I paced the corridor of the hotel and came across Estella sitting alone in a corner obscured by a big palm tree.

"How do you feel this morning, Miss Morton?" I said, stopping before her. "I trust that yesterday's indisposition has all passed away."

The girl turned her glorious eyes upon me. "You, Mr. Murray?" she said softly. "Then you have not kept your promise."

"I couldn't keep it. I want to know why you asked such an extraordinary thing of me," I said, looking her squarely in the eyes.

"That I cannot tell you," answered the girl, turning her face from my ardent gaze. "I can only renew my request that you leave this hotel at once."

"Do you ask that because you dislike my presence here?" I said, taking, unbidden, the seat beside her. "Is my presence in this hotel offensive to you, Miss Morton?"

"Not offensive, but it makes me very unhappy. I cannot tell you why; but I ask you, oh! I beg of you, as a particular favor, to leave this place."

"And I beg of you as a particular favor to tell me why you want me to go. Give me a satisfactory reason and I will obey," I insisted.

"I can give you no reason except to say that you are in danger here. Now please, please do not question me any more, for I cannot tell you. Only please go at once."

"In danger here? What kind of danger?" I asked. Could it be possible that, after all, she did know who I was and the peril which threatened me.

There was so much grief and fear in her eyes, however, that I forbore to inquire further.

"I cannot leave here immediately," I answered. "Perhaps to-night I will go. Believe me, Miss Morton, I would do a great deal to please you."

As I said these words I accompanied them with an ardent look, and my heart beat faster as I saw that she blushed and did not seem angered at my boldness.

"If you would please me, surely you will grant this slight request," she said softly.

"Slight request! I cannot regard it as such. Is it a slight request, when I have enjoyed your society only for a few hours, to be asked to go away from you and perhaps never see you again?" There was a passionate thrill in my words that I could not repress.

"Hush, hush," whispered the girl. "You must not talk that way—you really must not." There were tears in her eyes.

"Pardon me for my boldness," I continued. "I am afraid that I forgot my-

self, but I couldn't help it. I had no right to talk to you like that. I know it, but—but I meant what I said, every word of it."

And then, casting all discretion to the winds, carried away by her marvelous beauty and the glorious expression in her eyes, almost before I knew what I was saying I told her that I loved her.

It was an audacious move and it caused her cheeks to blanch and a smothered cry to rise to her lips, and just as I sat there wondering what she would say and do, an interruption occurred in the shape of her father, who stood suddenly before us.

Would she tell her stern parent and would he threaten to thrash me for my insolence?

I sat there wondering what would be my fate, but the girl said nothing and Mr. Morton appeared quite unconscious that anything unusual had passed between us.

"How do you feel this morning, Estella?" he said to his daughter. "Better, eh? That's good. And how do you feel, Mr. Murray, after last night's excitement?"

"Excitement?" said the girl quickly. "What excitement was that?"

"Oh, nothing. A little game of roulette Mr. Murray and I enjoyed last night," replied the financier.

"Did you win, and how much, Mr. Murray?" asked the girl, turning to me, all traces of her previous agitation having vanished.

"Not much, Miss Morton," I replied, catching her father's wink in time.

"I hate gambling," said the girl to her father, "and I wish you would not indulge in it."

"Pooh! There is no harm in gambling for those who can afford it," said Mr. Morton. "It's the poor wretch who has to work for his living who should keep away from games of chance. To the rich it's merely recreation."

"I don't like it," said the girl earnestly. "Mr. Murray, I wish that you would promise me not to go to a gambling-house with my father any more. It isn't good for his heart."

"Rubbish," laughed the millionaire. "You are too nervous, Estella. I tell you it will do me no harm."

"I beg to differ," said the girl. "Will you promise me, Mr. Murray, not to accompany my father to a gambling-house any more?"

What an amazing girl, I thought to myself. She talks and acts now as composedly as if I had not taken the rash step I did a few minutes ago. Aloud I said:

"If you insist, Miss Morton, I will promise. That at least is a reasonable request, much more reasonable than the other favor you asked," I replied.

But although I made the promise and meant to keep it, so far as accompanying her father to a gambling-house was concerned, I had no intention of cutting out gambling myself.

For while the three of us sat chatting there a bold plan had entered my mind.

That the girl had not turned in anger from my bold avowal of love and had not denounced me to her father, caused me to hope that perhaps the declaration had not been unwelcome to her, despite her blanched cheeks and startled manner.

If she loved me, then only one course was opened to me. I must tell her who I was and what I had done, as soon as possible.

But before doing so I must make restitution by returning every cent I had stolen from the old man in the hospital and thus call off the hunt of the police.

Then, as plain Jack Francis once more, penniless but honest in the eyes of the world, I could start out in an effort to earn enough to support us both, provided she was willing to give up her luxury and wealth for my sake.

But how could I make restitution with nearly three thousand dollars of the old man's fortune already spent?

There was only one way that I could see. I must throw myself at the mercy of the gods!

To the gambling-house I would go that night and risk some more of my stolen fortune in an effort to win back all the money I had squandered.

If I lost again, then my punishment and disgrace would be not one whit greater.

If I won—oh, if I won—then it meant

a clean slate and a clean conscience, and perhaps the winning of the hand of the most beautiful girl in the world.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE ENCOUNTER.

THAT I should win, that night, I felt confident. Something seemed to tell me that it was my lucky night and that I could not lose.

I said nothing to the Chicago financier about my intention to visit the gambling-house he had introduced me into on the preceding night. I wanted to keep my promise to his daughter. If the old man's heart was weak, I certainly did not desire, in the face of Estella's request, to encourage him to indulge in the excitement of roulette.

All day long I pondered over my rash avowal to Estella and wondered how she really had regarded it. I could not bring myself to believe that she was greatly displeased, for her manner had scarcely indicated such feeling on her part, and yet, somehow or other, neither could I persuade myself that she had welcomed the declaration or was glad that I had made it.

I saw neither the girl nor her father any more that day. They both went out shortly after our meeting of the morning, and did not return to the hotel at dinner time.

I lounged around the Waldorf all day, not daring to venture outside for fear I should run into the arms of a detective who might recognize me.

It was a foolish fear, I suppose, for even if the police were already in possession of the clues furnished them by the Bowery bartender, the Park Row cigar-store man, the Turkish-bath barber, and the fashionable clothier, there was but slim chance of their being able to recognize me, at a glance.

Nevertheless, I was panic-stricken and afraid to take the slightest chance. The more I thought of the beautiful Estella, the more anxious was I to escape the disgrace of arrest and imprisonment.

As soon as the hours of night had advanced, I went to the cashier of the Waldorf and drew five thousand dollars of the money I had deposited with him.

Then, attired in my evening clothes, I took a Waldorf cab and rode briskly to the gambling-house I had visited in company with Mr. Morton.

When I rang the bell, the door was opened by the same burly lookout who had greeted us the preceding night. He looked me over from head to foot.

In response to my "Good evening," he asked suspiciously, "What's the password?"

"Password?" I replied at a loss. "I don't know any password. Mr. Morton failed to mention any to me. Surely you remember me. I was here last night with Mr. Morton, the Chicago millionaire. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, I remember," answered the man. "But we're taking no chances to-night. I understand the cops are busy to-night, and we're on the black list since them blasted reformers got to work. You just wait a minute here, sir, while I call the boss."

The fellow left me standing in the vestibule, while he went inside the second door of heavy iron and called to somebody up-stairs.

In answer to his call a man in evening clothes came down and looked me over. I recognized him as one of the men I had met the night before.

"Yes, he's all right," he said to the doorkeeper. "You are a friend of Mr. Morton's, are you not, sir? He told me last night that you were O.K. You will have to excuse me for being extra careful. The police are much in evidence these days, and we can't be too careful."

He led the way up-stairs, and I entered the handsomely decorated room I had been in the night before.

The whirr of the roulette wheel and the rattle of chips caught my ears as I entered and thrilled me through and through with eagerness to play.

There were more patrons in the place this night than on the evening of my former visit, and the play was brisk.

The men connected with the place nodded pleasantly to me, then turned their attention to the game.

I bought fifty one-dollar chips and placed them on various squares on the board. The dealer gave the silver knob of the wheel an adroit twist and threw on the little white ball.

The wheel went whirring swiftly and the ball ran buoyantly around the disk. The wheel gradually slowed down and stopped and the little white ball dropped noiselessly into the division marked thirty.

"Thirty," called the man in charge of the wheel, and thirty-five dollars in chips were handed over to me.

I placed twenty on number "27," confident that I could not lose.

Again the wheel went whirring and the little white ball dancing. Again the motion of the wheel died out and the ball dropped into a socket.

"Twenty-seven wins—black is the color," said the dealer. The cashier handed me my winnings—seven hundred dollars in chips this time. I took them, and plunged once more into the game.

I deem it my duty to say right here, in case this account of my winnings should tempt those who have hereto kept away from gambling to change their course, that it is very rarely that one comes out ahead at roulette by the end of the night. I did not know this at the time, but I have learned it since.

Sometimes you win at roulette and sometimes you lose, but the chances are thirty-five to one against any one number winning, and, once you strike a lucky number, you find it hard to break away before your losses have taken away all you have won and often much more besides.

Instinctively I felt, however, on this particular night that I could not lose, that the gods were with me, and that I was bound to win back every cent of the stolen fortune I had already expended.

My face was flushed with the excitement of the game. My temples were throbbing as if they would burst, and my hands shook so that I almost dropped the chips as I bought them from the cashier.

The other men in the place went about the game calmly and dispassionately; but then it was only a matter of dollars and cents to them, while I was playing for a good name, liberty, and the most beautiful girl in the world.

A darky bartender was opening bottles in a corner of the room and handing glasses of sparkling champagne to the players. I drained the glasses as they were handed to me and the rich wine went to my head and urged me to even madder plunges.

Several of the players stopped to look at me as I bet heavily on one number or another, and smiled amusedly at my excitement.

To them, blasé, cold, and indifferent, it was a pleasant novelty to behold a novice whose whole heart and soul was in the game.

"Who is he?" I heard one man whisper to another. The other answered, "He's a wealthy young Englishman, traveling here for pleasure and excitement."

Despite my run of luck at the start, I did not win every time or nearly every time. To my mortification I began to realize that fickle fortune seemed to have again deserted me.

I began to lose over and over again and to plunge all the heavier. I must win. It was impossible that I could go on losing much longer.

The whirr of the roulette wheel seemed to be singing all the time:

"If you lose, what does it matter, you're a gone soldier anyway; if you win, you clear your name and gain Estella, gain Estella."

Gain Estella! Ah! it was worth while. Eagerly I bought one hundred dollars' worth of chips and placed every one of them on a single number.

By this time I had lost all I had previously won and was, besides, one thousand to the bad. Luckily there was no limit at this house. If I won this time, I should gain thirty-five hundred dollars—almost enough to pay back all I had borrowed from the stolen fortune.

I feverishly watched the man at the wheel as he put his hand on the silver knob to send the disk spinning once more.

"Oh, I must win," I kept repeating to myself, unheedful of the amused smiles of the other players.

"Stop!" The word rang out suddenly, clear and sharp, and the man at the wheel stayed his hand in the act of giving the disk the twirl which might have won me back all the money I had lost.

"Stop!" The speaker was a tall, well-built man who had just put several

chips upon the board. As he spoke he put his hand in his hip-pocket and drew out a shining revolver.

The men in the place looked at each other with startled eyes. There was a sudden deathly silence. Another of the players, a short, stout, prosperous-looking man, had also quietly drawn a gun from his pocket and was holding it, spectacularly, across the wheel at the same time that he seized with the other hand the pile of stake-money on the table.

"Stung!" muttered the proprietor of the place, in a quiet voice, darting an angry glance at the up-stairs doorkeeper.

"Yes. Stung," repeated the taller of the two men with leveled guns, laughing softly and triumphantly. "Gentlemen, it pains me to have to inform you that you are all under arrest. Now don't let's have any excitement. Please, don't anybody move."

"Good God! What does this mean?" I cried in alarm to the dealer.

"Don't be frightened, sonny," said he with a bitter laugh. "It means that the darned cops have pinched us; but nothing will happen to you, don't be alarmed."

"Who introduced these fellows? Who brought them here?" exclaimed the proprietor of the place angrily, glaring at a red-faced man, who looked very uncomfortable.

"Don't get sore on your friends and customers, Frank," replied the taller of the detectives with a laugh. "Nobody turned squealer. Your own runner fell for us in the Fifth Avenue Hotel. He took us for a couple of wealthy Westerners, and didn't catch on to the size of our feet."

The two policemen laughed boisterously.

"Confound you, Mike," said the proprietor savagely to the red-faced man. "Why weren't you more careful? This night's work queers you in this business for good."

"I'm sorry," murmured the red-faced man, looking crestfallen. "They threw such a good bluff that I didn't get on to them."

Once again the two policemen laughed boisterously.

"Put up those guns," said the proprietor savagely. "Nobody is goin' to run away. We'll take our medicine. Just as business was booming, too. Confound it, that's what comes from employing an incompetent runner."

"Gentlemen," added the proprietor, turning to the patrons of the place and suddenly assuming a more agreeable tone, "I am awfully sorry for the mess my man's mistake has got you all into."

From down in the street I heard the distant clanging of a bell.

"Here comes the wagon," said the tall policeman. "Bill, go down-stairs and let the captain in. I'll take care of these gentlemen."

The second policeman went noiselessly down-stairs, and a minute afterward we heard the heavy tramp of men ascending.

The tall policeman opened the door and admitted the captain of the precinct, a tall, hatchet-faced man in citizen's clothes.

At the latter's heels were four detectives besides the one who had gone down-stairs to let them in.

"Good work, boys," said the captain to the two policemen who had secured the evidence. "I've been watching this place for some time past. Gentlemen, will you all kindly step down-stairs to the wagon. You'll find it at the door waiting. We've got your doorkeeper in there already. He is a little bit banged up, I'm afraid, for he was foolish enough to want to show fight, and my men had to use their billies on him before he would listen to reason.

"You boys stay up here and collect this stuff together. Take everything, even the telephone. Guess the wagon will have to make two trips to get all this paraphernalia to the station-house."

In silence we all filed down-stairs and into the patrol-wagon. My heart was in my shoes. Not only had I lost my chance to regain the money I had squandered, but I felt certain that when I got to the police-station I should be immediately recognized as the man the police were after and locked up on the more serious charge.

The other patrons of the place took their arrest lightly.

"You're not going to hold us, are you captain?" asked one of them.

"I guess I am, sir, this trip," replied

that official politely. "It isn't quite usual to hold the inmates; but the inspector has ordered me to do so in this case."

As I stepped into the wagon that was to take us to the police-station, I saw the burly doorkeeper crouched in a corner, a savage look upon his face, and the blood streaming from an ugly gash on his temple. He was cursing volubly to himself.

The crowd, gathered in the street, set up a cheer and a yell of derision as we drove off, with the captain and his wardman standing on the step behind.

The captain chatted pleasantly to us on the way; but I was in no mood to listen to his pleasantries. This was the end of all for me. I had walked right into the hands of my pursuers like a moth dashing into the flame.

At the station-house we were all hustled out of the wagon and lined up before the desk while our pedigrees were taken.

The proprietor was charged with "keeping and maintaining a gambling-house," and the employees of the place with "aiding and abetting." The rest of us were locked up on a technical charge of disorderly conduct.

As the pedigree of each was taken, the doorman led him to the cells below.

"Sorry I shall have to double up some of you gentlemen," declared the captain. "The cells are all full to-night, so I can't give you separate quarters. I suppose you'll all be getting bailed out very soon, however."

When my turn came and the sergeant asked me my name I hesitated for a second.

Should I give him the name of Arnold Murray and my address as the Waldorf-Astoria, or adopt a brand-new alias?

The former course might prove dangerous. "John Johnson," I replied to the sergeant's question.

"Address?"

"The Hoffman House."

"Age?"

"Thirty-two."

"Place of birth?"

"London, England."

This last fact it was no use trying to conceal, for my unmistakable accent told the story.

"Search him," ordered the sergeant, and the heavy-set doorman of the station-house went through my pockets and drew out the four thousand dollars still left from the five thousand I had brought with me.

"Let him keep his money," ordered the sergeant. "It ain't evidence. Take him back."

The doorman led me by the arm through the swinging doors which led to the cells.

As I passed through I breathed a sigh of relief. There had been detectives and reporters gathered around in the front room and yet apparently none of them regarded me as other than a gentleman who had been caught in a raid on a gambling-house. My secret appeared to be safe, as yet, despite my unpleasant situation.

The doorman put a big key in a strong lock, and then flung open the heavy, barred door of one of the cells.

"In with you," he said, giving me a gentle shove, and I stumbled forward into the half-dark, ill-smelling cage.

The cell was not unoccupied, for as I entered a man arose from a sitting posture in the corner and advanced a step forward.

In stumbling I fell against him and clutched him around the neck to save myself from falling.

"Steady," said the man in a voice that had a familiar ring. I stood looking at him and he looked at me.

Then suddenly I gave vent to a cry of horror and surprise while he simultaneously uttered a sharp ejaculation of astonishment.

For in that half-darkened cell, in the light afforded by the flickering gas jet outside in the corridor, I recognized in the face of my cell-mate—Bill Jordan, he who had come across with me on the Cattle King, the man from whom I had escaped in Philadelphia.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE POWER OF A SECRET.

"So it's you, is it?" said Jordan with a horrible laugh, after we had stood looking at each other in surprise for a full half minute.

I could not have been much more dismayed nor frightened if I had been cast into a den of wild beasts. This was the one man in all the United States of America who knew that my name was not Arnold Murray, and that I had no right to the rôle of a man of wealth. This was the man, moreover, who knew that I had landed in Philadelphia under the name of a murderer and a bank-robber who was wanted by the police at that very moment.

"Of all the providential things!" continued Jordan, in the same bitter tone, "this is the best. To think that you should be chucked into the same cell that I occupy, and all by accident, too. For I don't suppose you knew that I was here, did you, old pal? Well, I'm right glad to see you. I've been wanting real bad to meet you, Mr. Henry Bush, bank-robber and murderer!"

"Hush! oh, hush!" I whispered fearfully.

"Hush? And why hush? Ain't that your name? Reckon you ain't ashamed of it, are you? Thought that you fellows possessed professional pride, and I understood that you were an expert in your line. How did they get you?"

"Keep quiet," I implored. "The turnkey outside will hear you."

"The turnkey outside hear me?" repeated Jordan, in surprise, not lowering his voice in the slightest degree. "And why shouldn't the turnkey outside hear me, Henry Bush? Don't he know what you are locked up for?"

I realized then that the fellow was under the impression that my present occupancy of a cell was due to my arrest as Henry Bush, the bank-robber. Should I disillusionize him?

It was a ticklish question; for if he knew the truth he might, out of sheer spite, tell what he knew about me in court in the morning, while if he remained in ignorance as to the cause of my arrest, he might keep up these uncomfortable remarks and allusions all night until he was overheard by the police, who would then be enlightened as to my real identity.

After a little rapid thinking I decided to tell this man the truth and see if I could not bribe him into silence.

"Hush, Jordan," I whispered. "You are wrong in thinking that I am arrested to-night as Henry Bush. The police do not know me under that name at all. I am merely caught in a gambling-house raid, and shall escape in the morning with a slight fine."

"Caught in a raid, eh? So the police don't know that you're Henry Bush, the bank-robber and murderer," said Jordan in a voice loud enough to cause me to tremble lest the turnkey outside should hear it. "My, what a swell looker you are, too. I didn't notice those evening togs before. Where did you get them? I declare you look quite the gentleman. Far different from the dirty-looking tramp who punched me in the jaw in Philadelphia only a few days ago."

"For God's sake, keep quiet," I whispered. "I will give you one hundred dollars to hold your tongue."

"One hundred dollars, eh? You must have struck it rich since we parted. Where did you get it, Mr. Henry Bush?" His voice was even louder by this time.

"Don't call me by that name, please don't. I'll make it two hundred dollars," I whispered eagerly.

"Two hundred dollars, eh? Well, that's a good tidy sum. But why shouldn't I call you by that name? It's yours, ain't it?"

"No," I said. "If you want to know the truth, it isn't. My name is no more Henry Bush than yours is, and I think that you know it. I bought the other half of that scoundrel's pass on the Cattle King and came to America under his name because I was broke. That's the honest truth, as God is my witness, only I daren't confess it to the authorities for fear of being punished for perjury and fraud."

"A likely story," sneered Jordan. "If you came over on a cattle-steamer because you were broke, how are you going to give me that two hundred you spoke of, and where did you get the dough to buy them fine togs, Mr. Henry Bush?"

The wretch still made no attempt to lower his voice and dwelt with particular emphasis upon the hated name. I heard the steps of the turnkey as he passed in the corridor outside our cell and I shuddered.

"Confound you," I said when the

doorman had passed. "What will you gain by getting me in trouble? Hold your tongue, I tell you, and I will make it three hundred dollars."

"Tell me how you are going to get the money," insisted Jordan in a little quieter tone.

For reply I foolishly took out of my pocket the four thousand dollars I carried.

"Here's the money right here," I said eagerly. "I'll pay it to you right now if you'll only agree to shut up and keep quiet about me."

"What a lot of money," said Jordan almost in a whisper. "Seems to me that there's more than three hundred in that wad. You must have struck it rich. Give it all to me."

"All," I cried aghast. "I can't. Really I can't. The money doesn't belong to me. Honest it doesn't."

I realized then what a fool I had been to take out all that money in his presence.

"Oh, so the money don't belong to you, eh? You want to offer me stolen money, do you? Not much."

"Three hundred dollars of it belongs to me. The rest belongs to a friend. I'm holding it for him," I attempted to explain.

"You go tell that to the marines, young man. I wasn't born yesterday, nor the day before. Hand over all that money, Mr. Henry Bush, or I'll tell the police in court to-morrow that you're a bank-robber and a murderer."

He had purposely allowed his voice to grow dangerously loud again, in uttering these last few words. I trembled with fear, thinking that the turnkey outside must positively hear him.

"I'll give you a thousand," I whispered. Oh, what a fool I had been to let him know I had all this money!

"Give me it all, or I'll expose you," he answered.

What could I do? It filled me with despair to hand over four thousand dollars, for with it went my last chance of making reparation to the old man in the hospital and of winning Estella. This would make me over seven thousand dollars short on the money I had stolen, an appalling deficit.

But if, on the other hand, I refused to comply with this fellow's demands and he should carry out his threat, I shuddered to think what would happen in the morning.

Once the police got to work on the theory that I was Henry Bush, the criminal, and learned from Jordan about my ragged condition in Philadelphia, it could not be long before they also discovered that I was the man who had stolen the overcoat which contained a fortune.

Oh, how I regretted then that I had ever come to the United States! How I wished that I had never been asked by that ambulance surgeon to hold the overcoat of the old man who had been injured at the Flatiron Building. It would have been better to have remained a starving tramp than to have to go through the mental anguish I was suffering. I groaned aloud in my agony.

"Cheer up, old pal," remarked Jordan, with his hand still extended for the roll of bills. "When you get through groaning and sighing hand over that nice little nest-egg of money."

"Confound you," said I, as I unwillingly handed him over the four thousand dollars. "Now that you've taken my last cent, for the love of heaven keep your mouth shut about me."

"Taken your last cent, have I?" said Jordan busily counting the money. "Well, I don't want to do that, old pal. Let's see; there's four thousand dollars here, ain't there?

"Well, say; here's one hundred dollars for yourself. You'll need that to pay expenses in court, etc., etc., won't you? I don't want to be hard on you, old fellow. You can rely on me now to keep as quiet as a graveyard. Mum's the word for me in future. Ain't it a fortunate thing now that I met you?"

"Very fortunate," I answered bitterly.

"Come, don't feel so hard about it. Let's be friends. In future I'm goin' to forget that there ever was such a person as—as, you know—I ain't goin' to mention that name. Don't get worried. When Bill Jordan makes a promise, he sticks to it."

For some time we were both silent. I was engaged in my own bitter reflections and Jordan busied himself recounting the

money he had extorted from me by blackmail.

"Three thousand nine hundred dollars all right—all right," he said at length with a chuckle, joyfully slapping his thigh as he thrust the money in the side-pocket of his trousers. "Would you mind tellin' me, old pal, where you got so much money, if you ain't the party I had reference to before?"

"I'd rather not discuss that. You've got your money. Now be satisfied and shut up," I said savagely.

For a few minutes we both remained silent once more. He sat in one corner of the cell, on the rough plank that served as bed and seat, and I in the other corner.

Suddenly I fell to thinking what could have landed Jordan in a prison cell. The question had not occurred to me before. Somehow or other, apart from the first shock of finding him in the same cell as myself, it seemed to be quite a matter of course to find the wretch behind bars. His face and his manner quite impressed you with the fact that he belonged there naturally.

His clothes, although not stylish, were of much better quality than those he wore when I had left him in Philadelphia. What crime had he committed, I fell to wondering. I dared not ask him, well knowing that he would demand an exchange of confidences if I did so.

Jordan was the first to speak.

"Say," he said suddenly, with a leer in his evil eyes, "I've been thinking this matter over, old pal. I don't think I can take this money after all. How do I know that it's honest money? How do I know how you got it? You've got to tell me. Otherwise you can have the money back and I'll withdraw my promise. I'm honest, I am, and I can't afford to accept no stolen money."

"If you're honest, how did you come to land in here?" I ventured.

"I was locked up for accidentally smashing a showcase window. I'll get off with a fine in the morning. Don't you worry about me, old pal. But come, if you want me to keep this money, tell me all about yourself."

"Let me alone," I protested. "I give you my word that the money is honest. Let that be enough."

"Not for me. I ain't goin' to prison for takin' no stolen property. Not if I knows it. Here, take the money back. I don't want it."

He handed me the roll of bills and I groaned aloud.

"Good heavens, man! Have you no mercy?" I muttered hoarsely.

"Tell me all about yourself," was his relentless reply, "or I'll stick to my original intention of telling the police all I know."

Again his voice had risen to a high pitch and again I heard the footsteps of the turnkey outside.

The latter, in fact, approached our cell and peered through the bars.

"Why don't you gents go to sleep?" he remarked. "You've been chinning all night."

"Say, boss," said Jordan, talking through the bars to the turnkey. "Stay here for a few minutes, will you? I've got something of real interest to tell you about our swell young friend here."

"No—no," I whispered, clutching his arm in terror. "Don't give way on me. For God's sake, don't. I'll tell you everything. Honest I will."

Jordan laughed. The turnkey had come closer to the bars, not at all unwilling to hear a welcome bit of gossip about a prisoner.

"What do you want to tell me?" he asked eagerly.

"Just wanted to tell you that our friend here is awfully cut up. Tells me that he lost ten thousand dollars in the gambling-house that was raided. Ain't he a come-on?" said Jordan with a laugh in which the turnkey joined boisterously as he went away.

"That was a narrow squeak, wasn't it?" said Jordan to me. "I was just goin' to tell him everything if you hadn't stopped me. It was lucky for you, old pal, that you caught me by the arm just then. Now be a good fellow and tell me everything according to promise. If you can convince me that that money is honest money I'll be willing to take it back again and to keep your secret as originally agreed. Now go right ahead. Where did you get it?"

"I found it," I answered sullenly.

"Found it, eh? And where did you find it?"

"In the gutter on Broadway wrapped up in a piece of paper."

The lie came to my lips readily. It was a happy conceit, and he apparently believed me.

"Found it on Broadway in the gutter, eh? Well, you certainly have a lucky streak, old pal. And where did you get them togs? Did you find them on Broadway in the gutter, too?"

"No, I bought them. It was five thousand dollars I found; not four thousand. I've spent one thousand buying these clothes and trying to win a fortune at gambling, if you must know."

"Well, why didn't you say so at first? Why attempt to make all this mystery with an old friend, who liked you from the first minute he met you?

"Would you mind handing over that thirty-nine hundred once more? Now that my mind is easy about its being honest money, I don't mind taking it. And I promise never to mention that you are—you know who. What name do you want to be known by?"

"Arnold Murray," I replied eagerly.

"All right, that's the name I'll call you from this day on. A nice name it is, too. Fits you much better than the other one.

"I hope that we shall see a whole lot of each other in future, Arnold Murray. You're a man after my own heart, and now that I have found you once more I don't intend to let you get away from me so easily again.

"In future we shall be partners. I have lots of schemes for making a quick fortune, and I need a friend to help me. You're just the kind of a man I want.

"Not a word now. Let's both go to sleep, for I'm dead tired. But tomorrow, when we are discharged in court, I'll put you wise to a little plan that will make us both wealthy men or land us in Sing Sing. Pleasant dreams to you, Arnold, dear boy. Charmed to have met you, really."

In a few minutes his snores proclaimed the fact that his wicked mind was temporarily at rest, while I sat in the filthy prison cell thinking with a shudder of myself and—Estella Morton.

(To be continued.)

ACCESSORY AFTER THE FACT.

By Mary Roberts Rinehart.

YES, it is admitted in the very beginning that there was a woman at the bottom of it.

IT had been a warm day. The Professional Athlete was drinking something cool, with a strawberry and mint leaves in it. He was out of training and getting more so every day. Across from him the Editor lounged and mopped his face. He was somewhat inclined to flesh, and to vivid remarks about the heat. Conversation in the club had been staccato—no one seemed to have energy for long remarks, but, as darkness closed in, a little breeze came up, lifting the Editorial hair in fitful puffs. The P. A. yawned and took the strawberry, then he picked up his Panama and wiped the leather band thoughtfully.

"Why so glum and taciturn?" asked the Editor suddenly. "Is it love, adventure, or the spleen?"

"Stop piffling," said the P. A. glumly. "I've gone through enough to-day——"

"Aha! Adventure! Well, speak up," he said encouragingly, "remember the rules; out with it. Take my mind off this heat; relieve my overstrained imagination."

"Oh, it isn't much," said the P. A. sheepishly. "I've been making considerable of a fool of myself."

"No, that's not much," said the Editor pleasantly, "nor unexpected."

"Shut up, little man, if you want the

story. I'm a bit puzzled about this thing yet, and still," he mused, "she was pretty and in trouble, so what could a fellow do?"

"Sir Knight!" said the Editor mockingly. "Sir Galahad! A fair lady, and in trouble! What ho, varlet! Fetch me my armor!"

"It wasn't the fact that she was pretty," mused the P. A., ignoring the bantering tone, "or that she was in trouble, exactly; it was—well, perhaps I'd better begin at the beginning.

"I was standing at the corner of Broad and Main Streets to-day about one-thirty. I remember the time precisely, because I had just looked at my watch, and was wondering what I should do between that and two, when I had an appointment at the office."

"That was an event," said the Editor. "Also, I presume you were waiting for your one-forty-five cocktail. That's a useful way to mark the time.

"Don't interrupt. I had just looked up when a hansom drove sharply to the curb in front of me. In it, alone, was the most beautiful—well, let it go at that. I've seen pretty women before, and I would probably not have noticed this one particularly, if she hadn't leaned out as if to speak to me."

"Oh, breaker of hearts!" said the Editor, with his eyes shut.

"I glanced at her, hesitated, then took a step toward her, and raised my hat. She leaned forward at once, and smiled, but even then I noticed that she looked troubled and distressed."

"When a woman works the pathetic racket," quoth the Editor, "there's nothing in heaven or earth she can't get."

"'I'm going to ask you to do me a little favor,' she said, and I could see she didn't like to ask it. 'I wonder—would it be very much trouble for you to make a purchase for me in that store just behind you?'

"I looked around. It was a store for men's hats. If she had asked me to go in and steal something, I might have said I would.

"'Madam,' I said, 'if I can be of any service to you, command me.' I may have overdone the thing, I know I was a trifle ardent and emphatic."

"Trust you, when youth and beauty are combined," said the Editor sarcastically.

"Well, to shorten the tale, what do you suppose she wanted me to get her, in there?"

"Couldn't guess in a year. Go on."

"Oh, stop interrupting! She asked me to go into that store and buy her a man's soft felt hat, number seven and a quarter! And to bring it to her at the next corner, where she would wait for it."

"Hat!" said the Editor, suddenly alert.

"Now, the whole affair would not have been funny, or remarkable, or sad, if it hadn't been for her air of mystery, and her very evident distress. Imagine a beautiful woman driving up to a fellow on the street and asking him to buy her a man's hat; then accepting it from him with gratitude and eagerness, as if he had given her a yacht, and driving off madly down the street with the hat clutched in her hand!"

"Here's where I sit up and begin to take notice," said the Editor. "Hum! At one-thirty, you say? Well, go on—don't stop in the middle of it. That isn't all, is it?"

"Well, I had a little time, and the whole incident had sort of got into me, so she had no sooner started off than I jumped into another cab and followed her. I needn't tell you about the ride. It was like a flight, for all the world—up one street and down another, cross over and turn your corners, and all hands round, on two wheels, until I hardly knew where we were. Then, my lady suddenly pulled up, and I did the same, a little distance back and across the street. I noticed then it was Pitt and Spring Streets, down-town. The young lady didn't get out, and I sat there feeling pretty small. I was determined, now that I had gone so far, to see who was waiting for the hat. My curiosity began to cool, after a while; it seemed so perfectly clear that she had bought a hat for her father, and was merely waiting to meet him.

"I had sat there for about fifteen minutes, and was just deciding to move on, when a young fellow came dashing down a side street, breathless and hatless. He stopped on the corner and looked quick-

ly around. A hand waved out of the girl's cab, he dived in head first, the cab started off at a lively clip, and—well, I won't say what I called myself. I wouldn't allow any one else to say it. But I told cabby to take me to the office in a hurry, and I got there ten minutes after the man I was to meet had left."

"I was pretty sore for a while, but, when you come to think of it, the incident, as far as the girl is concerned, was closed when I gave her the hat, and she handed me the price and the grateful smile. But what I'd like to know," he said, after a pause, "was, what that fellow was doing without a hat, and why she was so anxious to get him one."

During the last of the P. A.'s recital the Editor had sat quite still; except for a nervous gnawing at the butt of his cigar, he might have been asleep. At the end of the story, however, he sat up and looked around. There was no one in hearing, the club was deserted, except for a bald-headed man in the reading-room just beyond.

The Editor leaned over and threw his cigar away. Then he put a hand on the other man's knee.

"I say," he said, in a subdued tone, "did you happen to notice what that woman wore?"

"It was pretty good, whatever it was," said the P. A. doubtfully. "Blue, perhaps, or green, maybe. I was so busy looking at her face——"

The Editor drew a long breath.

"Then it wasn't—gray, with a dash of red?"

This time the P. A. sat up and took notice.

"It was," he said slowly. "Exactly—gray, with a dash of red. I remember every curve of it now. And a black hat with a long white feather."

The Editor mopped his face again, and drew his chair nearer.

"Go on," he said. "Pile it on. She wore a gray and red dress, and a white feather in her hat. Her hair was yellow——"

"Pure gold," said the P. A. with enthusiasm.

"She had blue eyes——"

"Sky blue!"

The Editor snorted.

"Women don't have sky blue eyes," he said scornfully. "You'd know that if you read as many love-stories as I do. They have azure eyes, or violet eyes, or heavenly blue or——"

Then the Cashier came in. Like the others, he seemed done up with the heat. His face had the peculiar drooping lines that extreme heat and extreme dejection both bring. He dropped into a chair near the other men, and stretching his feet out before him, relaxed to the extent of sitting on the small of his back. The Editor and the P. A. recognized him with a nod, and went back to the golden-haired lady with the eyes.

"From what you say," the Editor said, more amiably, "I imagine her manner was conciliatory—er—ingratiating?"

"A little more than either," said the P. A., beginning on the mint.

The Editor sighed.

"After all," he said, "there were two of us. That's better than one. Is that the last edition?"

He picked up the newspaper the Cashier had brought, and went over it quickly. At the third page he stopped and frowned.

"Listen, you fellows," he said, and read: 'Owing to the over-officiousness of the police since the recent graft crusade, a well-known magazine editor was arrested to-day at Try Street and the river, and detained for some time at a police station. The affair was conducted quietly, and the prisoner was released at once on being identified. Needless to say, the gentleman in question was subjected to much annoyance and loss of time. As usual in such affairs, it was a case of mistaken identity.'"

"Very nice little article," said the P. A. "But what's the lay?"

"Oh! nothing—nothing much, Willie," said the Editor, "only—I happened to be the victim."

The P. A.'s glass turned over on its side and rolled from the table to the floor, where it lay in a little sticky rivulet. The Editor prepared for a recital of his wrongs by lighting a cigar.

"It seems," he said judicially, "that of the three of us here, there are two fools, anyhow."

The tired lines on the Cashier's face relaxed in a smile. "Perhaps there are three," he murmured.

"Ever been pulled in before?" asked the P. A., with interest.

"No," shortly. "The whole thing, as I look back at it, is the fault of a hat with a long white feather, and a pair of eyes, blue, green, yellow—I don't care now that they were. It was about eleven this morning. I'd been in buying a necktie——"

"The one you have on?" asked the Cashier pointedly.

"And was coming out of the store, when a young woman, passing, dropped her leather bag. I picked it up, of course, and she asked me if I would look around for a small purse, which had dropped out of it. To my surprise, when I said I didn't see it, she burst into tears. In fact, she was so much agitated that I didn't like to pass on and leave her."

"Sir Knight!" broke in the P. A., mockingly. "Sir Galahad!"

After a minute I thought of the University Club, and suggested that she go in there to the ladies' room, until she recovered a little. She was, in spite of the tears"—the Editor cleared his throat—"an extremely presentable young person, in a gray gown, with a black hat and a white feather."

"Two of us! Oh, Lord!" said the P. A., collapsing.

"She seemed to take to the suggestion, and in a little while she emerged, a little red around the eyes, but becomingly confused. 'What must I think of her?' and so on. Well, at the time, I thought quite a lot. But my self-esteem got a knock when she confessed that she was eloping—in other words, some other fellow had got in ahead of me. She had come in from Mayville that morning, and the arrangement was that they were to be married as soon as the man could get a license. She was to meet him somewhere near the court-house at two o'clock, and they had arranged with a minister. Oh, it was all perfectly conventional. There was even a pursuing father."

"Did she tell you all this while you stood outside the club?"

"The fact is," confessed the Editor, with some embarrassment, "it was my lunch-time then, and I asked her to—to have something to eat. I couldn't do anything else, could I? She'd lost her purse!"

"Certainly *not*," assented the P. A. gravely.

"It was during luncheon that she sprang her—er—little joke. It was, briefly, that having shown so friendly a spirit, I go a bit farther and become a co-conspirator for her happiness—that I hold back the old gentleman while some other fellow annexed her. I didn't mind throwing papa off the scent—the father of a good-looking girl is usually a blatant ass, who pats himself on the back because Nature has laid herself out for him—but I wasn't stuck on the other part. However, a fair lady in trouble——"

"What, ho, varlet! Fetch me my armor," murmured the P. A.

"Launcelot was to be at the court-house at or about two o'clock. Also, it was probable that papa would be there. I was not unlike Launcelot" (here the Editor apologetically ran his hand over the fast thinning remnant of his hair, which was brushed straight across the top of his head to cover an overassertive scalp). "Launcelot seldom wore his hat in the summer, preferring to carry it. Would I—could I—be in a cab near the court-house at two o'clock, sitting bareheaded? Would I, when I saw a young man leap into her cab and drive off, would I drive furiously in an opposite direction?"

"Then you were there too!" said the P. A. breathlessly.

"Keep still," growled the Editor. "At least I wasn't following a helpless girl around, spying on her actions. At first I demurred a little. It seemed to me the trick could be done in a more dignified manner. Why couldn't we get some one to say that they had gone in a different direction? Why should it be necessary to take a man of position and maturity, like myself——"

"Oh, tush!" said the P. A.

"Put him in a hansom without his hat, and send him clattering away with his reverend hairs rising in the breeze, and an irate papa chasing him in another cab, leaning forward to offer monetary inducements to the cabby, while people lined up to see the end. But she had set her mind on a Garrison finish, and nothing else would do. It was twelve-forty-five when I left her, pledged to rob

an innocent fellow countryman of his daughter, and minus a small bill, which I pressed on her with my card, to relieve temporarily the embarrassment of the lost purse. Easy? Oh, yes, of course I'm easy. Well, at one-forty-five I found myself in a cab at Pitt and Spring Streets, with my lady in another cab, near-by. We waited for some time. I kept a sharp lookout for an elderly gentleman with iron gray hair, who was likely to be on the war-path, and smoked a cigar to keep up my spirits. Then, about two-fifteen, down the street dashed Launcelot, hatless. He then bolted into the lady's cab, and the chase was on.

"I took off my hat at once, and wheeled in the opposite direction. I had squared the cabby, and we made time. After a while, it struck me that the girl had been needlessly alarmed. There was no pursuit that I could see. Of course, the decoy might have failed to work, and the lovers might be having the excitement of the chase. So, after ten minutes, I called to the cabby to let up a little, and the cab stopped suddenly jerking me back and forward till my neck was almost dislocated. At that moment a man stepped out to the curb, as if he had been waiting for me, and, in precisely three minutes, I was in the eighth precinct police station, under arrest. I've been most of the afternoon getting out. It seems they were looking for another fellow, also supposed to be chasing frantically around the streets in a cab."

"'So it was an elopement!" mused the P. A. "Queer, isn't it, the trouble some fellows will go to to tie themselves up for life? But I'm puzzled still. How in thunder did that girl know he was going to forget his hat in the license clerk's office?"

The Cashier sipped slowly out of a tall glass. Then he hitched his chair closer to the other two men.

"Misery loves company," he quoted sententiously. "Also, birds of a feather, and so on. It seems to have been a bad day all around."

On the strength of the gloom in the Cashier's voice, the Editor called a waiter.

"It wasn't about a cab, I suppose?" he queried, as he made out a stub.

"Cab? No, or if there was one, I didn't notice it. Fact is, I cashed a worthless check to-day, and I've felt like thunder about it ever since."

"Woman?" The Editor lifted his eyebrows.

"Yes."

"What did she look like?"

"What has that got to do with it?"

"A good bit, sometimes." The Editor laughed ruefully. "Well, go on."

"It was almost closing time—about five to three—when a young woman came in and presented a check."

"Wait a minute," said the Editor. "How was she dressed?"

"How in the world do I know?" asked the Cashier irritably. "Why can't you let me tell the story?"

"It was merely an idea of mine," said the Editor humbly. "You see—well, go on."

The Cashier was mollified. "It was lightish stuff of some sort," he said. "And a hat that—that drooped over her face, so she had to look up from under it." The P. A. nudged the Editor furtively. "And she had an appealing look, as if going to a bank was an unusual piece of work, and she didn't quite know the ropes."

Here the Editor and the P. A. solemnly exchanged winks.

"She had a check drawn by Campbell Hayes, the man who owns *The Press*, you know, for five hundred dollars, and she explained that she was going on a journey, and could she have some small bills and change for tips and incidentals. Well, Hayes has about a dozen daughters, and I knew it—Burke, the assistant teller, is crazy about one of them—so I cashed the check, in new money. She said she always liked crisp bills—you never could tell who had been handling the old ones. Then she went out, and I went back to interview Burke. 'Did you see her?' I said. 'Is that your inamorata, or is it only one of the other sisters?' 'That girl!' he said. 'Why, she's not a Hayes. I never saw her before.' Then I began to feel queer. The girl was gone, lost in the crowd, and when I called up Campbell Hayes—well, of course, you know. He didn't know any such check or any such girl."

"Stung, by Jove!" said the P. A.,

running his finger around the inside of his wilted collar. And then the Genial Criminal Lawyer came in.

"What I would like to know," said the Editor, to no one in particular, "is how our friend the G. C. L. can work all day in the Criminal Court, stretching his throat with whopping—er—prevarications, and can turn up here at six-thirty in stiff and unwilted linen!"

"I can't sweat any more," said the G. C. L. placidly. "I've been to a Turkish bath."

"Waiter," said the Editor, "bring this gentleman something liquid at once."

"It has been absolutely the worst day I ever put in," said the G. C. L. "Let me see that paper, will you?"

He went over the paper anxiously, page by page, stopping a moment at the paragraph which had interested the Editor. When he had finished, he put it down with an air of relief.

"Nothing there yet," he said, "but the morning papers will be full of it. I'll tell you fellows, for it's too good a story to keep, although it's on me, somewhat. You all know the Hawkins case?"

The three nodded.

"I've been defending Hawkins, and in all my experience there has been nothing to equal the thing that happened this afternoon. Hawkins disappeared between the court-room and the cell where he was to wait while the jury deliberated. Disappeared absolutely, without a trace, as if he had been spirited into thin air. What do you think of that?"

"I didn't think such a thing could happen, with the system they have there."

"It couldn't happen," said the G. C. L. with conviction. "The thing is absolutely impossible. There wasn't a door, or a window, or a recess. There was no chance for collusion, for it was old Manning, who has been at the courthouse for forty years. The old fellow is hysterical to-night."

"Give us the particulars," said the P. A. "We've had everything here tonight but a touch of the supernatural. Bring on your ghost."

"Well, it's the second trial, you remember. The jury disagreed the first time. This time the prosecution was better prepared, and they made a good case from the start. There were four counts in the indictment. I did the best I could, but everything was against us, and when the case went to the jury I could see just what was coming. I didn't care much about Hawkins—the fellow's a fakir and 'con' man, and he has been everything from a vaudeville performer to a balloon and parachute artist. But he had a very nice little wife—really, a very nice little wife."

"What did she look like?" asked the editor carelessly.

"Very attractive little blond with blue eyes. Wears a black hat with a long white plume that makes her look quite a child."

Here the Cashier looked around him in a startled way, and dropped farther into his chair.

"Well, the jury went out, and Manning took Hawkins out to wait for the verdict. You know the way they do. A court attendant takes out the prisoner, leads him along a hallway to the head of the flight of stairs leading to the cells. At the foot of the stairs a keeper receives the prisoner and locks him up until he is sent for again. There is a bend in the staircase, but as there are no doors or windows, there is no danger of an escape; that is, of course, there has never been an escape. Well, old Manning started Hawkins down the stairs and called to the keeper below, whom he could hear, but, on account of the bend, not see. He distinctly heard the keeper below say 'All right,' and he went back to the court. The jury came in in a few minutes—I knew just how it would be—and Hawkins was sent for. But—he wasn't there! That's all there is to it. He wasn't there, and the keeper below said he never had been there; that he didn't answer Manning, because he didn't hear him call; and that he had not even seen Hawkins after the trial."

"But I thought you said the keeper answered Manning?" The little group was expectant interest personified. Every one there seemed to feel more than the casual interest of the outsider.

"Manning says some one distinctly answered. It was a puzzler. But a little while ago, in the Turkish bath, I had a gleam of light. Hawkins had been a

ventriloquist on the vaudeville stage, and that explains the whole thing. It's so simple that it is absurd. When he started down the stairs it was he who said 'All right.' When Manning started back to the court-room, all Hawkins had to do was to retrace his steps, which he did, going through the court-house and down the steps rather slowly to avoid attracting attention. He may have had a confederate and planned the whole thing beforehand. He could have jumped into a cab and have been a mile or so away before his flight had been discovered. That is why we sent out a general order to watch all cabs. I have one satisfaction," said the G. C. L., preparing to leave. "He had no money, and I don't think he could get out of town. Also, he had no hat."

"Of course he couldn't go far without money," broke in the Cashier eagerly.

When the G. C. L. had gone the three men gazed blankly at each other.

"Why the deuce," said the P. A. finally. "Why in the name of the law didn't she buy her own hat, instead of roping me into the thing?"

"Because there was probably some one in that hat store whom she wished to avoid," said the Editor. Then he shook hands, first with the Cashier, then with the Professional Athlete.

"We'll have to stick together," he said solemnly. "One of us bought the fellow a hat to get away in, another provided the funds for his escape, and the third, I regret to say, acted as a decoy for the police. Waiter! Waiter! Where in thunder is that darky?"

THE OLD ORCHARD.

Minna Irving.

I.

OH, I know an ancient orchard
Where the trees are all in bloom;
You will find it if you follow
Bee and butterfly and swallow
And the wafts of rich perfume.

II.

There the robin builds his dwelling
On a pink and dewy spray;
When the wicket clicks behind you
Care and pain can never find you,
For the world is shut away.

III.

Gray the broken fence around it
(Painted by the suns and rains),
But the hand of Time embosses
With the green of velvet mosses
Every picket that remains.

IV.

Overhead the apple blossoms
Spread a tent of rosy snow,
Marking off the golden minutes
For the thrushes and the linnets
With the flakes that fall below.

V.

'Tis the orchard of our childhood
Where all day we used to swing,
When the winds were sweet as honey,
And the hours long and sunny
In the bridal bowers of spring.

FOUL PLAY.

Sometimes called "The New Robinson Crusoe."

By Charles Reade and Dion Boucicault.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

ARTHUR WARDLAW, junior partner of a large mercantile concern, forges his father's name, contriving to throw the guilt upon Rev. Robert Penfold, his best friend. Penfold serves his sentence in a penal colony in Australia, and then, under the name of James Seaton, procures a position as shipping clerk in Wardlaw's Australian office. This is obtained for him through Helen Rolleston, Wardlaw's fiancée, in return for a service which Seaton had rendered her.

Helen is to sail for England in the Shannon, one of her lover's ships, but finally takes passage in the Proserpine, which carries a large sum of money much needed by the English end of the concern. Seaton, disguised as Mr. Hazel, a curate, accompanies her, and she reveals to him that she is suffering from a lung affection and has but little time to live.

Seaton discovers a plot between Wylie, the mate, and Captain Hudson, to scuttle the ship and steal the treasure. He tells Helen, but, as he has previously declared his love for her and his purpose in returning to England to bring Wardlaw to justice, she will have nothing to say to him. The vessel runs into a gale, but not until the wind has died and the ship is a little becalmed, does Cooper, one of the sailors, discover a leak.

All efforts are useless and the vessel sinks. Miss Rolleston, with Hazel and a few sailors, is put in the cutter with two days' provisions, while Wylie, with the rest, follows in the long boat. He seizes the first opportunity to desert the helpless cutter. They are rescued by another vessel and Wylie arrives in England simultaneously with General Rolleston from the Shannon. Arthur Wardlaw is prostrated by the loss of Helen. The firm is in sore need of money and Rolleston starts out in one of Wardlaw's sailing vessels to the scene of the disaster, in hopes of finding some trace of his daughter.

Meanwhile, after many days of terrible privation, Hazel and Helen, the only survivors, arrive at an uninhabited island. The question is how to get away.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE perplexity into which Hazel was thrown by the outburst of his companion rendered him unable to reduce her demand at once to an intelligible form. For some moments he seriously employed his mind on the problem until it assumed this shape:

First—I do not know where this island is, having no means of ascertaining either its latitude or longitude.

Secondly—If I had such a description of its locality, how might the news be conveyed beyond the limits of the place?

As the wildness of Helen's demand broke upon his mind, he smiled sadly, and sat down upon the bank of the little river near his boat-house, and buried his head in his hands. A deep groan burst from

---

Note.—In reprinting as a serial Charles Reade's memorable novel "Foul Play," we feel that we deserve our readers' thanks. Charles Reade has for some years experienced that temporary eclipse of popularity which always follows on the death of a great writer and the rise of new celebrities in literature. But there are many signs that he is once more coming back into his old ascendency as one of the most vividly dramatic and thrilling story-tellers who ever used the English language.

"Foul Play" has been selected from among his six or seven finest novels because it is a masterpiece in the sphere of adventurous fiction; because the purpose of its author was purely to interest and fascinate and not to point a moral; and because in it his most splendid qualities as a picturesque narrator are seen on every page.—The Editor.

*Began June All-Story Magazine. Single copies, 10 cents.

him and the tears at last came through his fingers, as in despair he thought how vain must be any effort to content or to conciliate her. Impatient with his own weekness, he started to his feet, when a hand was laid gently upon his arm. She stood beside him.

"Oh, sir! Oh, Mr. Hazel! Do forgive me. I am not ungrateful—indeed, indeed, I am not; but I am mad with despair. Judge me with compassion. At this moment those who are very, very dear to me, are awaiting my arrival in London; and when they learn the loss of the Proserpine, how great will be their misery! Well, that misery is added to mine. Then my poor papa: he will never know how much he loved me until this news reaches him. And to think that I am dead to them, yet living! living here helplessly, helplessly. Dear, dear Arthur, how you will suffer for my sake! O papa! papa! shall I never see you again?" and she wept bitterly.

"I am helpless either to aid or to console you, Miss Rolleston. By the act of a Divine Providence you were cast upon this desolate shore, and by the same Will I was appointed to serve and to provide for your welfare. I pray God that He will give me health and strength to assist you. Good night."

She looked timidly at him for a moment, then slowly regained her hut. He had spoken coldly and with dignity. She felt humbled, the more so that he had only bowed his acknowledgment to her apology.

The following morning Helen was surprised to see the boat riding at anchor in the surf, and Hazel busily engaged on her trim. He was soon on shore, and by her side.

"I am afraid I must leave you for a day, Miss Rolleston," he said. "I wish to make a circuit of the island; indeed I ought to have done so many days ago."

"Is such an expedition necessary? Surely you have had enough of the sea."

"It is very necessary. You have urged me to undertake this enterprise. You see, it is the first step toward announcing to all passing vessels our presence in this place. I have commenced operations already. See on yonder bluff, which I have called Telegraph Point, I have mounted the boat's ensign, and now it floats from the top of the tree beside the bonfire. I carried it there at sunrise.

"Do you see that pole I have shipped on board the boat? That is intended as a signal, which shall be exhibited on your great palm-tree. The flag will then stand for a signal on the northern coast, and the palm tree, thus accoutered, will serve for a similar purpose on the western extremity of the island. As I pass along the southern and eastern shores, I propose to select spots where some mark can be erected, such as may be visible to ships at sea."

"But will they remark such signals?"

"Be assured they will, if they come within sight of the place."

The young man had regained an elasticity of bearing, an independence of tone, to which she was not at all accustomed; his manners were always soft and deferential; but his expression was more firm, and she felt that the reins had been gently removed from her possession, and there was a will to guide her which she was bound to acknowledge and obey.

Hazel went about his work briskly; the boat was soon laden with every requisite. Helen watched these preparations askance, vexed with the expedition which she had urged him to make. Then she fell to reflecting on the change that seemed to have taken place in her character; she, who was once so womanly, so firm, so reasonable—why had she become so petulant, childish, and capricious?

The sail was set, and all ready to run the cutter into the surf of the rising tide, when, taking a sudden resolution, as it were, Helen came rapidly down, and said, "I will go with you, if you please," half in command and half in doubt. Hazel looked a little surprised, but very pleased; and then she added, "I hope I shall not be in your way."

He assured her, on the contrary, that she might be of great assistance to him; and now with double alacrity he ran out the little vessel and leaped into the prow as she danced over the waves. As they proceeded, he marked roughly on the side of his tin baler, with the point of a pin borrowed from Helen, the form of the coast line.

An hour and a half brought them to the northwestern extremity of the

island. As they cleared the shelter of the land, the southerly breeze coming with some force across the open sea caught the cutter, and she lay over in a way to inspire Helen with alarm; she was about to let go the tiller, when Hazel seized it, accidentally enclosing her hand under the grasp of his own, as he pressed the tiller hard to port.

"Steady, please; don't relinquish your hold; it is all right—no fear," he cried, as he kept his eye on their sail.

He held this course for a mile or more, and then, judging with a long tack he could weather the southerly side of the island, he put the boat about. He took occasion to explain to Helen how this operation was necessary, and she learned the alphabet of navigation. The western end of their little land now lay before them; it was about three miles in breadth.

For two miles the bluff coast line continued unbroken; then a deep bay, a mile in width and two miles in depth, was made by a long tongue of sand projecting westerly; on its extremity grew the gigantic palm, well recognized as Helen's landmark. Hazel stood up in the boat to reconnoiter the coast. He perceived the sandy shore was dotted with multitudes of dark objects. Erelong, these objects were seen to be in motion, and, pointing them out to Helen, with a smile, he said:

"Beware, Miss Rolleston, yonder are your bugbears—and in some force, too. Those dark masses, moving upon the hillocks of sand, or rolling on the surf, are sea-lions—the *phocaleonina,* or lion-seal."

Helen strained her eyes to distinguish the forms, but only descried the dingy objects. While thus engaged, she allowed the cutter to fall off a little, and, ere Hazel had resumed his hold upon the tiller, they were fairly in the bay; the great palm tree on their starboard bow.

"You seem determined to make the acquaintance of your nightmares," he remarked; "you perceive that we are embayed."

Her consternation amused him; she saw that, if they held their present course the cutter would take the beach about a mile ahead, where these animals were densely crowded.

At this moment, something dark bulged up close beside her in the sea, and the rounded back of a monster rolled over and disappeared. Hazel let drop the sail, for they were now fairly in the smooth water of the bay, and close to the sandy spit; the gigantic stem of the palm tree was on their quarter, about half a mile off.

He took to the oars, and rowed slowly toward the shore. A small seal rose behind the boat and followed them, playing with the blade, its gambols resembling that of a kitten. He pointed out to Helen the mild expression of the creature's face, and assured her that all this tribe were harmless animals, and susceptible of domestication. The cub swam up to the boat quite fearlessly, and he touched its head gently; he encouraged her to do the like, but she shrank from its contact. They were now close ashore, and Hazel, throwing out his anchor in two feet of water, prepared to land the beam of wood he had brought to decorate the palm tree as a signal.

The huge stick was soon heaved overboard, and he leaped after it. He towed it to the nearest landing to the tree, and dragged it high up on shore. Scarcely had he disposed it conveniently, intending to return in a day or two with the means of affixing it in a prominent and remarkable manner, in the form of a spar across the trunk of the palm, when a cry from Helen recalled him. A large number of the sea-lions were coasting quietly down the surf toward the boat; indeed, a dozen of them had made their appearance around it.

Hazel shouted to her not to fear, and, desiring that her alarm should not spread to the swarm, he passed back quietly but rapidly. When he reached the water, three or four of the animals were already floundering between him and the boat. He waded slowly toward one of them, and stood beside it. The man and the creature looked quietly at each other, and then the seal rolled over, with a snuffing, self-satisfied air, winking its soft eyes with immense complacency.

Helen, in her alarm, could not resist a smile at this conclusion of so terrible a demonstration; for, with all their gentle expression, the tusks of the brute looked formidable. But, when she saw Hazel pushing them aside, and patting

a very small cub on the back, she recovered her courage completely.

It was midday when they were fairly on the southern coast; and now, sailing with the wind aft, the cutter ran through the water at racing speed. Fearing that some reefs or rocky formations might exist in their course, he reduced sail, and kept away from the shore, about a mile. At this distance he was better able to see inland, and mark down the accidence of its formation.

The southern coast was uniform, and Helen said it resembled the cliffs of the Kentish or Sussex coast of England, only the English white was here replaced by the pale volcanic gray. By one o'clock they came abreast the very spot where they had first made land; and, as they judged, due south of their residence. Had they landed here, a walk of three miles across the center of the island would have brought them home.

For about a similar distance the coast exhibited monotonous cliffs unbroken even by a rill. It was plain that the water-shed of the island was all northward. They now approached the eastern end, where rose the circular mountain of which mention has been already made.

Looking narrowly along the low shore for some good landing, where under shelter of a tree they might repose for an hour and spread their midday repast, they discovered an opening in the reeds, a kind of lagoon or bayou, extending into the morass between the highlands of the island and the circular mountain, but close under the base of the latter. This inlet he proposed to explore, and accordingly the sail was taken down, and the cutter was poled into the narrow creek. Suddenly, however, and after proceeding very slowly through the bends of the canal, the reeds decreased in height and density, and they emerged into an open space of about five acres in extent, a kind of oasis in this reedy desert, created by a mossy mound which arose amid the morass, and afforded firm footing, of which a grove of trees and innumerable shrubs availed themselves. Helen uttered an exclamation of delight as this island of foliage in a sea of reeds met her eyes, that had been famished with the arid monotony of the brake.

They soon landed.

Helen insisted on the preparations for their meal being left to her, and, having selected a sheltered spot, she was soon busy with their frugal food. Hazel surveyed the spot, and, selecting a red cedar, was soon seated forty feet above her head, making a topographical survey of the neighborhood. He found that the bayou by which they had entered continued its course to the northern shore, thus cutting off the mountain or easterly end, and forming of it a separate island.

He saw that a quarter of a mile farther on the bayou or canal parted, forming two streams, of which that to the left seemed the main channel. This he determined to follow. Turning to the west, that is, toward their home, he saw at a distance of two miles a crest of hills broken into cliffs, which defined the limit of the mainland. The sea had at one time occupied the site where the morass now stood.

These cliffs formed a range, extending from north to south: their precipitous sides, clothed here and there with trees, marked where the descent was broken by platforms. Between him and this range the morass extended. Hazel took note of these places where the descent from these hills into the marsh could, he believed, most readily be made.

On the eastern side and close above him arose the peculiar mountain. Its form was that of a truncated cone, and its sides densely covered with trees of some size.

The voice of Helen called him from his perch, and he descended quickly, leaping into a mass of brushwood growing at the foot of his tree. Helen stood a few yards from him, in admiration, before a large shrub.

"Look, Mr. Hazel, what a singular production," said the girl, as she stooped to examine the plant. It bore a number of red flowers, each growing out of a fruit like a prickly pear.

Hazel examined the fruit and flowers very carefully, and stood rapt, transfixed.

"It must be!—and it is!" said he, at last. "Well, I'm glad I've not died without seeing it."

"What is it?" said she.

"One of the most valuable productions of the earth. It is cochineal. This is the Tunal tree."

"Oh, indeed," said Helen, indifferently. "cochineal is used for dye; but as it is not probable we shall require to dye anything, the discovery seems to me more curious than useful."

"You wanted some ink. This pigment, mixed with lime-juice, will form a beautiful red ink. Will you lend me your handkerchief and permit me to try if I have forgotten the method by which these little insects are obtained?" He asked her to hold her handkerchief under a bough of the Tunal tree, where the fruit was ripe. He then shook the bough. Some insects fell at once into the cloth. A great number rose and buzzed a little in the sun not a yard from where they were born; but the sun dried their blood so promptly that they soon fell dead in the handkerchief. Those that the sun so killed went through three phases of color before their eyes. They fell down black or nearly. They whitened on the cloth: and after that came gradually to their final color, a flaming crimson. The insect thus treated appeared the most vivid of all.

They soon secured about half a teacupful; they were rolled up and put away; then they sat down and made a very hearty meal, for it was now past two o'clock. They reentered the boat, and, passing once more into the morass, they found the channel of the bayou as it approached the northern shore less difficult of navigation.

The bottom became sandy and hard, and the presence of trees in the swamp proved that spots of *terra firma* were more frequent. But the water shallowed, and, as they opened the shore, he saw with great vexation that the tide in receding had left the bar at the mouth of the canal visible in some parts.

He pushed on, however, until the boat grounded. This was a sad affair. There lay the sea not fifty yards ahead. Hazel leaped out, and examined and forded the channel, which at this place was about two hundred feet wide. He found a narrow passage near the eastern side, and to this he towed the boat. Then he begged Miss Rolleston to land, and relieved the boat of the mast, sail, and oars.

Thus lightened, he dragged her into the passage; but the time occupied in these preparations had been also occupied by Nature—the tide had receded, and the cutter stuck immovably in the waterway, about six fathoms short of deeper water.

"What is to be done now?" inquired Helen, when Hazel returned to her side, panting, but cheerful.

"We must await the rising of the tide. I fear we are imprisoned here for three hours at least."

There was no help for it. Helen made light of the misfortune.

Having three hours to spare, Hazel asked Miss Rolleston's permission to ascend the mountain. She assented to remain near the boat while he was engaged in this expedition; and selecting a spot at the foot of an aged cypress, she sat down with her back against its trunk. Then she took out Arthur's letter, and began to read those impassioned sentences; as she read she sighed deeply, as earnestly she found herself pitying Arthur's condition more than she regretted her own.

She fell into revery, and from revery into a drowsy languor. How long she remained in this state she could not remember, but a slight rustle overhead recalled her senses. Believing it to be a bird moving in the branches, she was resigning herself again to rest, when she became sensible of a strange emotion—a conviction that something was watching her with a fixed gaze. She cast her eyes around, but saw nothing. She looked upward.

From the tree immediately above her lap depended a snake, its tail coiled around a dead branch. The reptile hung straight, its eyes fixed like two rubies upon Helen's, as very slowly it let itself down by its uncoiling tail. Now its head was on a level with hers; in another moment it must drop into her lap.

She was paralyzed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ascent became at times so arduous that more than once Hazel almost resolved to relinquish, or, at least, to defer his task; but a moment's rest recalled him to himself, and he was one not easily baffled by difficulty or labor, so he toiled

on until he judged the summit ought to have been reached. After pausing to take breath and counsel, he fancied that he had borne too much to the left, and he concluded that, instead of ascending, he was circling the mountain-top. He turned aside, therefore, and after ten minutes' hard climbing he was pushing through a thick and high scrub, when the earth seemed to give way beneath him, and he fell—into an abyss.

He was engulfed. He fell from bush to bush—down—down—scratch—rip—plump! until he lodged in a prickly bush more winded than hurt. Out of this he crawled, only to discover himself thus landed in a great and perfectly circular plain of about thirty acres in extent, or about 350 yards in diameter. In the center was a lake, also circular. The broad belt of shore around this lake was covered with rich grass, level as a bowling-green, and all this again was surrounded by a nearly perpendicular cliff, down which indeed he had fallen: this cliff was thickly clothed with shrubs and trees.

Hazel recognized the crater of an extinct volcano.

On examining the lake he found the waters impregnated with volcanic products. Its bottom was formed of asphaltum. Having made a circuit of the shores, he perceived on the westerly side —that next the island—a break in the cliff! and on a narrow examination he discovered an outlet.

He made his way rapidly downward, and in half an hour reached marshy ground. The cane-brake now lay before him. The edge of the swamp was very clear, and, though somewhat spongy, afforded good walking unimpeded. As he approached the spot where he judged the boat to be, the underwood thickened, the trees again interlaced their arms, and he had to struggle through the foliage. At length he struck the smaller lagoon, and, as he was not certain whether it was fordable, he followed its course to the shore, where he had previously crossed. In a few moments he reached the boat, and was pleased to find her afloat. The rising tide had even moved her a few feet back into the canal.

Hazel shouted to apprise Miss Rolleston of his return, and then proceeded to restore the mast to its place, and replace the rigging and the oars. This occupied some little time. He felt surprised that she had not appeared. He shouted again. No reply.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HAZEL advanced hurriedly into the grove, which he hunted thoroughly, but without effect. He satisfied himself that she could not have quitted the spot, since the marsh enclosed it on one side, the canals on the second and third, the sea on the fourth. He returned to the boat more surprised than anxious. He waited awhile, and again shouted her name—stopped—listened—no answer.

Yet surely Helen could not have been more than a hundred yards from where he stood. His heart beat with a strange sense of apprehension. He heard nothing but the rustling of the foliage and the sop of the waves on the shore, as the tide crept up the shingle. As his eyes roved in every direction, he caught sight of something white near the foot of a withered cypress tree, not fifty yards from where he stood.

He approached the bushes in which the tree was partially concealed on that and quickly recognized a portion of Helen's dress. He ran toward her—burst through the underwood, and gained the enclosure. She was sitting there, asleep, as he conjectured, her back leaning against the trunk. He contemplated her thus for one moment, and then he advanced, about to awaken her; but was struck speechless. Her face was ashy pale, her eyes open and widely distended; her bosom heaved slowly. Hazel approached rapidly, and called to her.

Her eyes never moved, not a limb stirred. She sat glaring forward. On her lap was coiled a snake.

Hazel looked around and selected a branch of the dead tree, about three feet in length. Armed with this, he advanced slowly to the reptile. It was very quiet, thanks to the warmth of her lap. He pointed the stick at it; the vermin lifted its head, and its tail began to quiver; then it darted at the stick, throwing itself its entire length.

Hazel retreated, the snake coiled again, and again darted. By repeating this process four or five times, he enticed the creature away, and then, availing himself of a moment before it could recoil, he struck it a smart blow on the neck.

When Hazed turned to Miss Rolleston, he found her still fixed in the attitude into which terror had transfixed her. The poor girl had remained motionless for an hour, under the terrible fascination of the reptile, comatized. He spoke to her, but a quick spasmodic action of her throat and a quivering of her hands alone responded. The sight of her suffering agonized him beyond expression, but he took her hands—he pressed them, for they were icy cold—he called piteously on her name. But she seemed incapable of effort. Then stooping he raised her tenderly in his arms, and carried her to the boat, where he laid her, still unresisting and incapable.

With trembling limbs and weak hands, he launched the cutter, and soon they were once more afloat and bound homeward.

He dipped the baler into the fresh water he had brought with him for their daily supply, and dashed it on her forehead. This he repeated until he perceived her breathing became less painful and more rapid. Then he raised her a little, and her head rested upon his arm. When they reached the entrance of the bay he was obliged to pass it, for, the wind being still southerly, he could not enter by the north gate, but came round and ran in by the western passage, the same by which they had left the same morning.

Hazel bent over Helen, and whispered tenderly that they were at home. She answered by a sob. In half an hour the keel grated on the sand near the boat-house. Then he asked her if she were strong enough to reach her hut unassisted.

She raised her head, but she felt dizzy; he helped her to land; all power had forsaken her limbs; her head sank on his shoulder, and his arm, wound round her lithe figure, alone prevented her falling helplessly at his feet. Again he raised her in his arms and bore her to the hut. Here he laid her down on her bed, and stood for a moment beside her, unable to restrain his tears.

CHAPTER XXX.

It was a wretched and anxious night for Hazel. He watched the hut, without the courage to approach it. That one moment of weakness which occurred to him on board the Proserpine, when he had allowed Helen to perceive the nature of his feelings toward her, had rendered all his actions open to suspicion. He dared not exhibit toward her any sympathy—he might not extend to her the most ordinary civility.

If she fell ill, if fever supervened, how could he nurse her, attend upon her? His touch must have a significance, he knew that; for as he bore her insensible form, he embraced rather than carried the precious burden. Could he look upon her in her suffering without betraying his forbidden love? And then would not his attentions afflict more than console?

Chewing the cud of such bitter thoughts, he passed the night without noticing the change which was taking place over the island. The sun rose; and this awakened him from his revery, which had replaced sleep; he looked around, and then became sensible of the warnings in the air.

The sea-birds flew about vaguely and absurdly, and seemed sporting in currents of wind; yet there was but little wind down below. Presently clouds came flying over the sky, and blacker masses gathered on the horizon.

Hazel knew the weather was breaking. The wet season was at hand—the moment when fever, if such an invisible inhabitant there was on that island, would visit them. In a few hours the rain would be upon them, and he reproached himself with want of care in the construction of the hut.

For some hours he hovered around it, before he ventured to approach the door, and call to Helen. He thought he heard her voice faintly, and he entered. She lay there as he had placed her. He knelt beside her, and was appalled at the change in her appearance.

Hazel took her unresisting hand, which he would have given a world to press. He felt her pulse. It was weak, but slow. Her cheeks were hollow, her eyes sunken; her hand dropped helplessly when he released it.

Leaving the hut quietly, but hastily, he descended the hill to the rivulet, which he crossed. About half a mile above the boat-house the stream forked, one of its branches coming from the west, the other from the east. Between this latter branch and Terrapin Wood was a stony hill; to this spot Hazel went, and fell to gathering a handful of poppies.

When he had obtained a sufficient quantity he returned to the boat-house, made a small fire of chips, and, filling his tin baler with water, he set down the poppies to boil. When the liquor was cool, he measured out a portion and drank it. In about twenty minutes his temples began to throb, a sensation which was rapidly followed by nausea.

It was midday before he recovered from the effects of his experiment sufficiently to take food. Then he waited for two hours, and felt much restored. He stole to the hut and looked in. Helen lay there as he had left her. He stooped over her; her eyes were half closed, and she turned them slowly upon him; her lips moved a little—that was all. He felt her pulse again; it was still weaker, and slower.

He rose and went away, and, regaining the boat-house, he measured out a portion of the poppy liquor, one third of the dose he had previously taken, and drank it. No headache or nausea succeeded: he felt his pulse; it became quick and violent, while a sense of numbness overcame him, and he slept. It was but for a few minutes. He awoke with a throbbing brow, and some sickness; but with a sense of delight at the heart, for he had found an opiate, and prescribed its quantity.

He drained the liquor away from the poppy leaves, and carried it to the hut. Measuring with great care a small quantity, he lifted the girl's head and placed it to her lips. She drank mechanically. Then he watched beside her, until her breathing and her pulse changed in character. She slept. He turned aside then, and buried his face in his hands and prayed fervently for her life—prayed as we pray for the daily bread of the heart. He prayed and waited.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE following day passed, and Helen recovered more strength, but still was too weak to walk; but she employed herself, at Hazel's request, in making a rope of cocoanut fiber, some forty yards long. This he required to fish up the spar to a sufficient height on the great palm tree, and bind it firmly in its place. While she worked nimbly, he employed himself in gathering a store of such things as they would require during the coming wintry season. She watched him with a smile, but he persevered. So that day passed.

The next morning the rope was finished. Helen was not so well, and was about to help herself to the poppy liquor, when Hazel happily stopped her hand in time: he showed her the exact dose necessary, and explained minutely the effects of a larger draft. Then he shouldered the rope, and set out for Palm-tree Point.

He was absent about six hours, of which Helen slept four. And for two, which seemed very long, she ruminated. What was she thinking of that made her smile and weep at the same moment? And she looked so impatiently toward the door.

He entered at last, very fatigued. It was eleven miles to the Point and back. While eating his frugal supper, he gave her a detail of his day's adventures. Strange to say he had not seen a single seal on the sands. He described how he had tied one end of her rope to the middle of the spar, and, with the other between his teeth he climbed the great palm.

For more than an hour he toiled; he gained its top, passed the rope over one of its branches, and hauled up the spar to about eighty feet above ground: then, descending with the other end, he wound the rope spirally round and round the tree, thus binding to its trunk the first twenty feet by which the spar hung from the branch.

She listened very carelessly he thought,

and betrayed little interest in this enterprise which had cost him so much labor and fatigue.

When he had concluded, she was silent awhile, and then, looking up quickly, said, to his great surprise:

"I think I may increase the dose of your medicine there. You are mistaken in its power. I am sure I can take four times what you gave me."

"Indeed you are mistaken," he answered quickly. "I gave you the extreme measure you can take with safety."

"How do you know that? You can only guess at its effects. At any rate, I shall try it."

Hazel hesitated, and then confessed that he had made a little experiment on himself before risking its effects upon her.

Helen looked up at him as he said this so simply and quietly. Her great eyes filled with an angelic light. Was it admiration? Was it thankfulness? Her bosom heaved, and her lips quivered. It was but a moment, and she felt glad that Hazel had turned away from her and saw nothing.

A long silence followed this little episode, when she was aroused from her revery.

Patter—pat—pat—patter.

She looked up.

Pat—patter—patter.

Their eyes met. It was the rain. Hazel only smiled a little, and then ran down to his boat-house, to see that all was right there, and then returned with a large bundle of chips, with which he made a fire, for the sky had darkened overhead. Gusts of wind ran along the water; it had become suddenly chilly. They had almost forgotten the feel of wet weather.

Ere the fire had kindled, the rain came down in torrents, and, the matted roof being resonant, they heard it strike here and there above their heads.

She pondered his character while she watched his movements. He put down his embers, then he took a cocoa-pod cut from the wall, cut it in slices with his knife, and made a fine clear fire; then he ran out again, in spite of Helen's remonstrance, and brought a dozen large scales of the palm tree. It was all the more cheering for the dismal scene without and the pattering of the rain on the resounding roof.

But, thanks to Hazel's precaution, the hut proved weather-tight; of which fact having satisfied himself, he bade her good night. He was at the door when her voice recalled him.

"Mr. Hazel, I cannot rest this night without asking your pardon for all the unkind things I may have done and said; without thanking you humbly for your great forbearance and your—respect for the unhap—I mean the unfortunate girl thus cast upon your mercy."

She held out her hand; he took it between his own, and faintly expressed his gratitude for her kindness; and so she sent him away brimful of happiness.

The rain was descending in torrents. She heard it, but he did not feel it; for she had spread her angel's wings over his existence, and he regained his sheltered boat-house he knew not how.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE next day was Sunday. Hazel had kept a calendar of the week, and every seventh day was laid aside with jealousy, to be devoted to such simple religious exercises as he could invent. The rain still continued, with less violence indeed, but without an hour's intermission.

After breakfast he read to her the exodus of the Israelites, and their sufferings during that desert life. He compared those hardships with their own troubles, and pointed out to her how their condition presented many things to be thankful for. The island was fruitful, the climate healthy. They might have been cast away on a sandy key or reef, where they would have perished slowly and miserably of hunger and exposure.

Then they were spared to each other. Had she been alone there, she could not have provided for herself; had he been cast away a solitary man, the island would have been to him an intolerable prison.

In all these reflections Hazel was very guarded that no expression should escape him to arouse her apprehension. He was so careful of this, that she observed his caution and watched his restraint. And

Helen was thinking more of this man than of the holy subject on which he was discoursing. The disguise he threw over his heart was penetrable to the girl's eye. She saw his love in every careful word, and employed herself in detecting it under his rigid manner.

Secure in her own position, she could examine his from the loopholes of her soul, and take pleasure in witnessing the suppressed happiness she could bestow with a word. She did not wonder at her power. The best of women have the natural vanity to take for granted the sway they assume over the existence which submits to them.

A week passed thus, and Hazel blessed the rain that drove them to this sociability. He had prepared the bladder of a young seal which had drifted ashore dead. This membrane, dried in the sun, formed a piece of excellent parchment, and he desired to draw upon it a map of the island. To accomplish this, the first thing was to obtain a good red ink from the cochineal, which is crimson. He did according to his means.

He got one of the tin vessels, and filed it till he had obtained a considerable quantity of the metal. This he subjected for forty hours to the action of lime-juice. He then added the cochineal, and mixed till he obtained a fine scarlet. In using it he added a small quantity of a hard and pure gum—he had found gum abounded in the island. His pen was made of an osprey's feather, hundreds of which were strewn about the cliffs, and some of these he had already secured and dried.

Placing his tin baler before him, on which he had scratched his notes, he drew a map of the island.

"What shall we call it?" said he.

Helen paused, and then replied, "Call it 'GODSEND' Island."

"So I will," he said, and wrote it down.

Then they named the places they had seen. A reef off the northwest coast they called "White Water Island," because of the breakers. Then came "Seal Bay," "Palm-tree Point," "Mount Look-out" (this was the hill due south of where they lived). They called the cane-brake "Wild Duck Swamp," and the spot where they lunched "Cochineal Clearing." The mountain was named "Mount Cavity."

"But what shall we call the capital of the kingdom—this hut?" said Miss Rolleston, as she leaned over him and pointed to the spot.

"Saint Helen's," said Hazel, looking up; and he wrote it down ere she could object.

Then there was a little awkward pause, while he was busily occupied in filling up some topographical details. She turned it off gaily.

"What are those caterpillars that you have drawn there, sprawling over my kingdom?" she asked.

"Caterpillars! You are complimentary, Miss Rolleston. Those are mountains."

"Oh, indeed; and those lines you are now drawing are rivers, I presume."

"Yes; let us call this branch of our solitary estuary, which runs westward, the river Lee, and this, to the east, the river Medway. Is such your Majesty's pleasure?"

"*La Reine le veut,*" replied Helen, smiling.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HELEN'S strength was coming back to her but slowly; she complained of great lassitude and want of appetite. But the following day having cleared up, the sun shone out with great power and brilliancy. She gladly welcomed the return of the fine weather, but Hazel shook his head; ten days' rain was not their portion—the bad weather would return, and complete the month or six weeks' winter to which Nature was entitled.

While they were eating their little meal the tops of the trees were heard to sigh, so still was everything else. None the less strange clouds were flying northward, eighty miles an hour. After supper, Helen sat busy over the fire, where some gum, collected by Hazel, resembling India-rubber, was boiling; she was preparing to cover a pair of poor Welch's shoes, inside and out, with a coat of this material, which Hazel believed to be water-proof. She sat in such a position that he could watch her.

It was a happy evening. She seemed content. She had got over her fear of

him; they were good comrades if they were nothing more. It was happiness to him to be by her side even on those terms. He thought of it all as he looked at her. How distant she had seemed once to him; what an unapproachable goddess. Yet there she was by his side in a hut he had made for her.

But by and by he felt his heart was dissolving within him, and he was trifling with danger. He must not look on her too long, seated by the fire like a wife. The much-enduring man rose, and turned his back upon the sight he loved so dearly. He went out at the open door intending to close it and bid her good night. But he did not do so, just then; for his attention as an observer of nature was arrested by the unusual conduct of certain animals. Gannets and other sea-birds were running about the opposite wood and craning their necks in a strange way. He had never seen one enter that wood before.

Seals and sea-lions were surrounding the slope, and crawling about, and now and then plunging into the river, which they crossed with infinite difficulty, for it was running very high and strong. The trees also sighed louder than ever. Hazel turned back to tell Miss Rolleston something extraordinary was going on. She sat in sight from the river, and, as he came toward the hut, he saw her sitting by the fire, reading.

He stopped short. Her work lay at her feet. She had taken out a letter, and she was reading it by the fire.

As she read it her face was a puzzle. But Hazel saw the act alone; and a dart of ice seemed to go through and through him.

This, then, was her true source of consolation. He turned sick with jealous misery, and stood there rooted and frozen.

Then came a fierce impulse to shut the sight out that caused this pain.

He almost flung her portcullis to, and made his hands bleed. But a bleeding heart does not feel scratches.

"Good night," said he hoarsely.

"Good night," said she kindly.

And why should she not read his letter? She was his affianced bride, bound to him by honor as well as inclination. This was the reflection to which, after a sore battle with his loving heart, the much-enduring man had to come at last; and he had come to it, and was getting back his peace of mind, though not his late complacency, and about to seek repose in sleep, when suddenly a clap of wind came down like thunder, and thrashed the island and everything in it.

Everything animate and inanimate seemed to cry out as the blow passed.

Another soon followed, and another—intermittent gusts at present, but of such severity that not one came without making its mark.

Birds were driven away like paper; the sea-lions whimpered, and crouched into corners, and huddled together, and held each other, whining.

Hazel saw but one thing; the frail edifice he had built for the creature he adored. He looked out of his boat, and fixed his horror-stricken eyes on it; he saw it waving to and fro, yet still firm. But he could not stay there. If not in danger she must be terrified. He must go and support her. He left his shelter, and ran toward her hut. With a whoop and a scream another blast tore through the wood, and caught him.

He fell, dug his hands into the soil, and clutched the earth. While he was in that position, he heard a sharp crack; he looked up in dismay, and saw that one of Helen's trees had broken like a carrot, and the head was on the ground leaping about; while a succession of horrible sounds of crashing, and rending, and tearing, showed the frail hut was giving way on every side; racked and riven, and torn to pieces.

Hazel, though a stout man, uttered cries of terror death would never have drawn from him; and, with a desperate headlong rush, he got to the place where the bower had been; but now it was a prostrate skeleton, with the mat roof flapping like a loose sail above it, and Helen below.

As he reached the hut, the wind got hold of the last of the four shrubs that did duty for a door, and tore it from the cord that held it, and whirled it into the air; it went past Hazel's face like a bird flying.

Though staggered himself by the same blow of wind, he clutched the tree and got into the hut.

He found her directly. She was kneel-

ing beneath the mat that a few minutes ago had been her roof. He extricated her in a moment, uttering inarticulate cries of pity and fear.

"Don't be frightened," said she. "I am not hurt."

But he felt her quiver from head to foot. He wrapped her in all her rugs, and, thinking of nothing but her safety, lifted her in his strong arms to take her to his own place, which was safe from wind at least.

But this was no light work. To go there erect was impossible.

Holding tight by the tree, he got her to the lee of the tent and waited for a lull. He went rapidly down the hill, but ere he reached the river, a gust came careering over the sea. A sturdy young tree was near him. He placed her against it and wound his arms round her and its trunk.

The blast came: the tree bent down almost to the ground, then whirled round, recovered, shivered; but he held firmly. It passed. Again he lifted her, and bore her to the boat-house. As he went, the wind almost choked her, and her long hair lashed his face like a whip. But he got her in, and then sat panting and crouching, but safe. They were none too soon; the tempest increased in violence, and became more continuous. No clouds, but a ghastly glare all over the sky. No rebellious waves, but a sea hissing and foaming under its master's lash.

The river ran roaring and foaming by, and made the boat heave even in its little creek. The wind, though it could no longer shake them, went screaming terribly close over their heads—no longer like air in motion, but, solid and keen, it seemed the Almighty's scythe mowing down Nature; and soon it became, like turbid water, blackened with the leaves, branches, and fragments of all kinds it whirled along with it. The trees fell crashing on all sides, and the remains passed over their heads into the sea.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

On the morning that followed this memorable night our personages seemed to change characters. Hazel sat down before the relics of the hut—three or four strings dangling, and a piece of network waving—and eyed them with shame, regret, and humiliation. He was so absorbed in his self-reproaches that he did not hear a light footstep, and Helen Rolleston stood near him a moment or two, and watched the play of his countenance with a very inquisitive and kindly light in her own eyes.

"Never mind," said she soothingly.

Hazel started at the music.

"Never mind your house being blown to atoms, and mine has stood?" said he, half reproachfully.

"You took too much pains with mine."

"I will take a great deal more with the next."

"I hope not. But I want you to come and look at the havoc. It is terrible; and yet so grand." And thus she drew him away from the sight that caused his pain.

They entered the wood by a path Hazel had cut from the seashore, and viewed the devastation in Terrapin Wood. Prostrate trees lay across one another in astonishing numbers, and in the strangest positions; and their glorious plumes swept the earth.

From the wood she took him to the shore, and there they found many birds lying dead; and Hazel picked up several that he had read of as good to eat. For certain signs had convinced him his fair and delicate companion was carnivora, and must be nourished accordingly. Seeing him so employed, she asked him archly whether he was beginning to see the comforts of a hurricane. "Not yet," said he; "the account is far from even."

"Then come to where the rock was blown down." She led the way gaily across the sands to a point where an overhanging crag had fallen, with two trees and a quantity of earth and plants that grew above it. But, when they got nearer, she became suddenly grave and stood still.

The mass had fallen upon a sheltered place, where seals were hiding from the wind, and had buried several; for two or three limbs were sticking out, of victims overwhelmed in the ruin; and a magnificent sea-lion lay clear of the smaller rubbish, but quite dead. Hazel

went up to the creature and looked at it: then he came to Helen; she was standing aloof. "Poor bugbear," said he. "Come away. It is an ugly sight for you."

"Oh, yes," said Helen. Then, as they returned, "Does not that reconcile you to the loss of a hut? We are not blown away nor crushed."

"That is true," said Hazel; "but suppose your health should suffer from the exposure to such fearful weather."

"I am all the better for it. Last night has done me a world of good. It has shaken me out of myself. I am in better health and spirits. Of course I am very sorry the hut is blown down—because you took so much trouble to build it; but, on my own account, I really don't care a straw. Find me some corner to nestle in at night, and all day I mean to be about, and busy as a bee, helping you, and—— Breakfast! breakfast! Oh, how hungry I am." And this spirited girl led the way to the boat with a briskness and a vigor that charmed and astonished him.

This gracious behavior did not blind Hazel to the serious character of the situation, and all breakfast-time he was anxious and puzzled. At last he said, "I know a large hollow tree with apertures. No! Trees have betrayed me. I'll never trust another tree with you. Stay; I know—I know—a cavern!"

"A cavern!" cried Helen. "It has always been the dream of my life to live in a cavern."

Hazel brightened up. But the next moment he clouded again. "But I forgot. It will not do; there is a spring running right through it; it comes down nearly perpendicular through a channel it has bored, or enlarged, and splashes on the floor."

"How convenient!" said Helen; "now I shall have a bath in my room, instead of having to go miles for it. By the by, now you have invented the shower-bath, please discover soap. Not that one really wants any in this island; for there is no dust, and the very air seems purifying. But who can shake off the prejudices of early education?"

Hazel said, "Now I'll laugh as much as you like, when once this care is off my mind."

He ran off to the cavern, and found it spacious and safe; but the spring was falling in great force, and the roof of the cave glistening with moisture. It looked a hopeless case. But if Necessity is the mother of Invention, surely Love is the father. He mounted to the rock above, and found the spot where the spring suddenly descended into the earth with the loudest gurgle he had ever heard; a gurgle of defiance.

Nothing was to be done there. But he traced it upward a little way, and found a place where it ran beside a deep incline. "Aha, my friend!" said he. He got his spade, and with some hours' hard work dug it a fresh channel, and carried it away entirely from its course. He returned to the cavern.

Water was dripping very fast; but, on looking up, he could see the light of day twinkling at the top of the spiral watercourse he had robbed of its supply. Then he conceived a truly original idea: why not turn his empty watercourse into a chimney, and so give to one element what he had taken from another?

Hazel lighted a bonfire in the cavern, and had the satisfaction of seeing some of the smoke issue above. Then he lost no time in laying down a great hearth, and built a fireplace and chimney in the cave. The chimney went up to the hole in the arch of the cave; then came the stone funnel, stolen from Nature; and above, on the upper surface of the cliff, came the chimney-pot. Thus the chimney acted like a German stove: it stood in the center, and soon made the cavern very dry and warm and a fine retreat during the rains.

When it was ready for occupation, Helen would not go by land; and at high water they got into the boat, and went down the river into the sea with a rush. He soon rowed her across the bay to a point distant not more than fifty yards from the cavern, and installed her.

But he never returned to the river; it was an inconvenient place to make excursions from; and, besides, all his work was now either in or about the cavern; and that convenient hurricane, as Helen called it, not only made him a builder again; it also made him a currier, a soap-boiler, and a salter. So they

drew the boat just above high-water mark in a sheltered nook, and he set up his arsenal ashore.

Hazel fixed two uprights at each side of the cavern's mouth, and connected each pair by a beam; a netting laid on these, and covered with gigantic leaves from the prostrate palms, made a sufficient roof in this sheltered spot. On this terrace they could sit even in the rain, and view the sea. Helen cooked in the cave, but served dinner upon this beautiful terrace.

So now she had a But and a Ben, as the Scotch say. He got a hogshead of oil from the sea-lion; and so the cave was always lighted now, and that was a great comfort, and gave them more hours of indoor employment and conversation. The poor bugbear really brightened their existence. Of the same oil, boiled down and mixed with wood-ashes, he made soap, to Helen's great delight. The hide of this animal was so thick he could do nothing with it but cut off pieces to make the soles of shoes if required. But the seals were miscellaneous treasures. He contrived with guano and aromatics to curry their skins; of their bladders he made vile parchment, and of their entrails gut, catgut, and twine, beyond compare. He salted two cubs, and laid up the rest in store, by enclosing large pieces in clay. When these were to be used, the clay was just put into hot embers for some hours, then broken, and the meat eaten with all its juices preserved.

Helen cooked and washed, and manufactured salt; and collected quite a store of wild cotton, though it grew very sparingly, and it cost her hours to find a few pods. But in hunting for it she found other things—health for one. After sunset she was generally employed a couple of hours on matters which occupy the fair in every situation in life. She made herself a sealskin jacket and pork-pie hat. She made Mr. Hazel a man's cap of sealskin with a point. But her great work was with the cotton, which will be described hereafter.

Nor were his fingers idle even at night. He had tools to sharpen for the morrow, glass to make and polish out of a laminated crystal he had found. And then the hurricane had blown away, among many properties, his map; so he had to make another with similar materials.

To the reader it is now presented, not as a specimen of chartographic art, but as a little curiosity in its way, being a facsimile of the map John Hazel drew for Helen Rolleston with such out-of-the-way materials as that out-of-the-way island afforded. Above all, it will enable the reader to follow our personages in their little excursions past and future, and also to trace the course of a mysterious event we have to record.

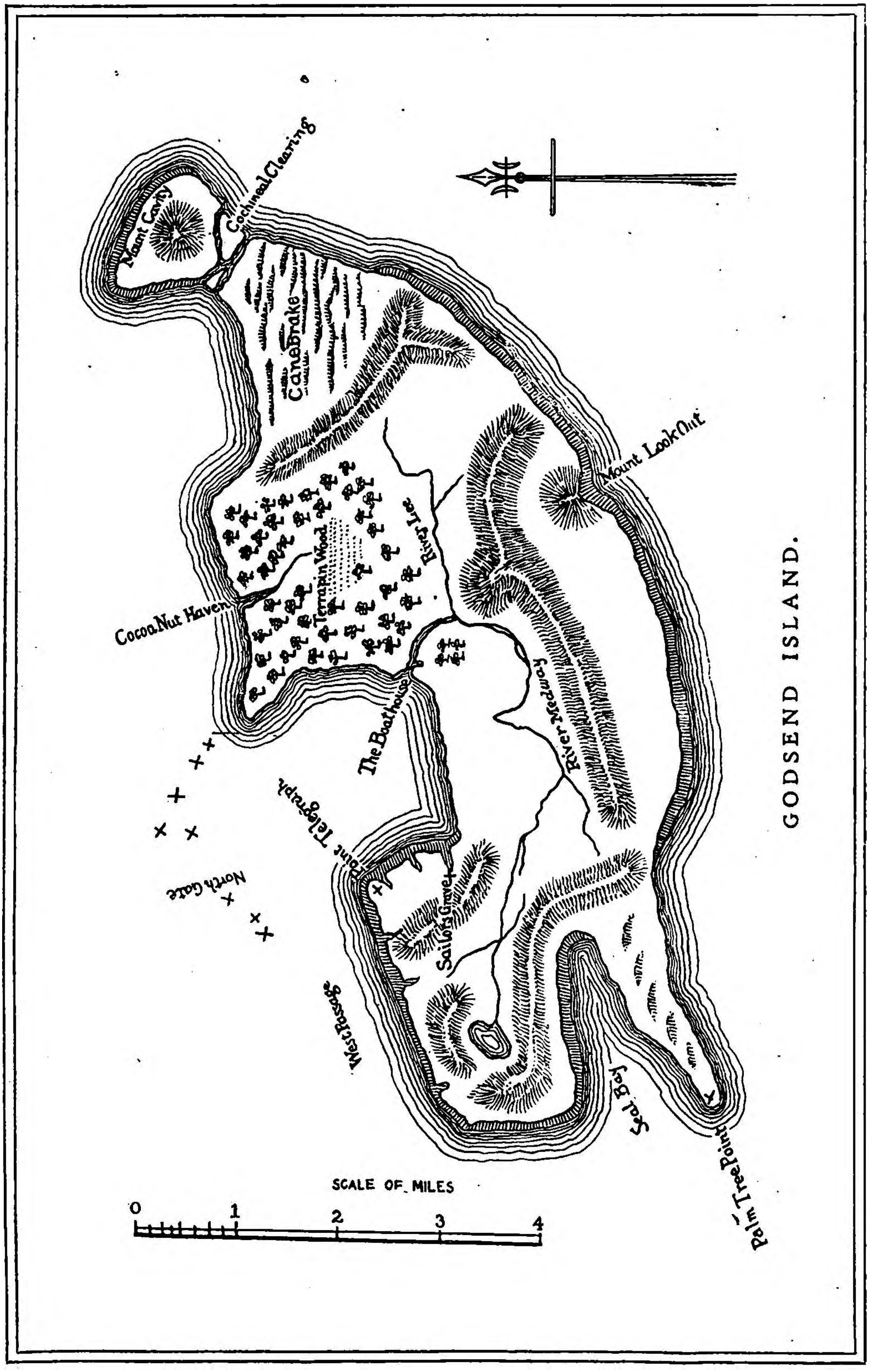
Relieved of other immediate cares, Hazel's mind had time to dwell upon the problem Helen had set him; and one fine day a conviction struck him that he had taken a narrow and puerile view of it, and that, after all, there must be in the nature of things some way to attract ships from a distance.

Possessed with this thought he went up to Telegraph Point, abstracted his mind from all external objects, and fixed it on this idea—but came down as he went. He descended by some steps he had cut zigzag for Helen's use, and as he put his foot on the fifth step—whoo—whir—whiz—came nine ducks, cooling his head, they whizzed so close; and made right for the lagoons.

"Hum!" thought Hazel; "I never see you ducks fly in any other direction but that."

This speculation rankled in him all night, and he told Helen he should reconnoiter at daybreak, but should not take her, as there might be snakes. He made the boat ready at daybreak, and certain gannets, pintadoes, boobies, and noddies, and divers with eyes in their heads like fiery jewels—birds whose greedy maws he had often gratified—chose to fancy he must be going a-fishing, and were on the alert, and rather troublesome. However, he got adrift, and ran out through North Gate, with a light westerly breeze, followed by a whole fleet of birds. These were joined in due course by another of his satellites, a young seal he called Tommy, also fond of fishing.

The feathered convoy soon tailed off; but Tommy stuck to him for about eight miles. He ran that distance to have a nearer look at a small island which lay


Mount Cavity
Cochineal Clearing
Cane Brake
Terrapin Wood
River Lee
Cocoa Nut Haven
Mount Look Out
River Medway
The Boathouse
Point Telegraph
North Gate
Sailor's Grove
West Passage
Seal Bay
Palm Tree Point
SCALE OF MILES
0 1 2 3 4
GODSEND ISLAND.

due north of Telegraph Point. He satisfied himself it was little more than a very long, large reef, the neighborhood of which ought to be avoided by ships of burden, and, resolving to set some beacon or other on it ere long, he christened it White Water Island, on account of the surf. He came about and headed for the East Bluff.

Then Tommy gave him up in disgust; perhaps thought his conduct vacillating. Animals all despise that.

He soon landed almost under the volcano, and moored his boat not far from a cliff peaked with guano. Exercising due caution this time, he got up to the lagoons, and found a great many ducks swimming about. He approached little parties to examine their varieties. They all swam out of his way; some of them even flew a few yards, and then settled. Not one would let him come within forty yards. This convinced Hazel the ducks were not natives of the island, but strangers, who were not much afraid, because they had never been molested on this particular island; but still distrusted man.

While he pondered thus, there was a great noise of wings, and about a dozen ducks flew over his head on the rise, and passed westward, still rising till they got into the high currents, and away upon the wings of the wind for distant lands.

The grand rush of their wings, and the off-hand way in which they spurned, abandoned, and disappeared from an island that held him tight, made Hazel feel very small, but did not prevent his taking their exact line of flight, and barking a tree to mark it. He was about to leave the place, when he heard a splashing not far from him, and there was a duck jumping about on the water in a strange way. Hazel thought a snake had got hold of her, and ran to her assistance. He took her out of the water and soon found what was the matter; her bill was open, and a fish's tail was sticking out.

Hazel inserted his finger and dragged out a small fish, which had erected the spines on its back so opportunely as nearly to kill its destroyer. The duck recovered enough to quack in a feeble and dubious manner. Hazel kept her for Helen, because she was a plain brown duck. With some little reluctance he slightly shortened one wing, and stowed away his captive in the hold of the boat.

He happened to have a great stock of pitch in the boat, so he employed a few hours in writing upon the guano rocks. On one he wrote in huge letters:

**AN ENGLISH LADY WRECKED HERE.
HASTE TO HER RESCUE.**

On another he wrote in small letters:

**Beware the reefs on the north side.
Lie off for signals.**

Then he came home and beached the boat, and brought Helen his captive.

"Why, it is an English duck!" she cried, and was enraptured.

By this visit to the lagoons, Hazel gathered that this island was a half-way house for migrating birds, especially ducks; and he inferred that the line those vagrants had taken was the shortest way from this island to the nearest land. This was worth knowing, and set his brain working. He begged Helen to watch for the return of the turtle-doves (they had all left the island just *before* the rain) and learn, if possible, from what point of the compass they arrived.

The next expedition was undertaken to please Helen; she wished to examine the beautiful creeks and caves on the north side, which they had seen from a distance when they sailed around the island.

They started on foot one delightful day, and walked briskly, for the air, though balmy, was exhilarating. They followed the course of the river till they came to the lake that fed it, and was fed itself by hundreds of little natural gutters down which the hills discharged the rains. This was new to Helen, though not to Hazel. She produced the map, and told the lake slyly that it was incorrect, a little too big.

She took some of the water in her hand, sprinkled the lake with it, and called it Hazelmere. They bore a little to the right, and proceeded till they found a creek shaped like a wedge, at whose broad end shone an arch of foliage studded with flowers, and the sparkling blue water peeped behind. This was tempting, but the descent was rather hazardous at first; great square blocks

of rock, one below another, and these rude steps were coated with mosses of rich hue, but wet and slippery. Hazel began to be alarmed for his companion.

However, after one or two difficulties, the fissure opened wider to the sun, and they descended from the slimy rocks into a sloping hot-bed of exotic flowers, and those huge succulent leaves that are the glory of the tropics. The ground was carpeted a yard deep with their luxuriance, and others, more aspiring, climbed the warm sides of the diverging cliffs, just as creepers go up a wall, lining every crevice as they rose.

Helen leaned against the cliff and quivered with delight, and that deep sense of flowers that belongs to your true woman.

Hazel feared she was ill.

"Ill?" said she. "Who *could* be ill here? It is heaven upon earth."

"And it is only one of a dozen such," said Hazel. "If you would like to inspect them at your leisure, I'll just run to Palm-tree Point; for my signal is all askew. I saw that as we came along."

Helen assented readily, and he ran off; but left her the provisions. She was not to wait dinner for him.

Helen examined two or three of the flowery fissures, and found fresh beauties in each, and also some English leaves, that gave her pleasure of another kind; and, after she had reveled in the flowers, she examined the shore, and soon discovered that the rocks which abounded here (though there were also large patches of clear sand) were nearly all pure coral, in great variety.

Red coral was abundant; and even the pink coral, to which fashion was just then giving a fictitious value, was there by the ton. This interested her, and so did some beautiful shells that lay sparkling. The time passed swiftly; and she was still busy in her researches, when suddenly it darkened a little, and, looking back, she saw a white vapor stealing over the cliff, and curling down.

Upon this she thought it prudent to return to the place where Hazel had left her; the more so as it was near sunset.

The vapor descended and spread and covered sea and land. Then the sun set, and it was darkness visible. Coming from the south, the sea-fret caught Hazel sooner and in a less favorable situation. Returning from the palm tree, he had taken the shortest cut through a small jungle, and been so impeded by the scrub that, when he got clear, the fog was upon him. Between that and the river he lost his way several times, and it was long past midnight when he at last hit off the creek, as he thought. He halloed; but there was no reply; halloed again, and, to his joy, her voice replied; but at a distance. He had come to the wrong creek. She was farther westward. He groped his way westward, and came to another creek. He halloed to her, and she answered him. But to attempt the descent would have been mere suicide. She felt that herself, and almost ordered him to stay where he was.

"Why, we can talk all the same," said she; "and it is not for long."

It was a curious position, and one typical of the relation between them. So near together, yet the barrier so strong.

"You are not afraid to be alone down there?"

"I am not alone when your voice is near me. Listen: how calm and silent it all is; the place; the night! The mind seems to fill with great ideas, and to feel its immortality."

She spoke with solemnity, and he heard in silence.

"Mr. Hazel," continued Helen, in a low, earnest voice; "they say that Night gives wisdom even to the wise; think now, and tell me your true thoughts. Has the foot of man ever trod upon this island before?"

At last Hazel's thoughtful voice came down. "The world is very, very, very old. So old that the words 'ancient history' are a falsehood, and Moses wrote but as yesterday. And man is a very old animal upon this old, old planet; and has been everywhere. I cannot doubt he has been here."

Her voice went up. "But have you seen any signs?"

His voice came down. "I have not looked for them. The bones and the weapons of primeval man are all below earth's surface at this time of day."

There was a dead silence. Then Helen's voice went up again. "But in modern times? Has no man landed here

from far-off places, since ships were built?"

The voice came sadly down. "I do not know."

The voice went up. "But think!"

The voice came down. "What calamity can be new in a world so old as this? Everything we can do, and suffer, others of our race have done, and suffered."

The voice went up. "Hush! There's something moving on the sand."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HAZEL waited and listened. So did Helen, and her breath came fast; for in the stilly night she heard light but mysterious sounds. Something was moving on the sand very slowly and softly, but nearer and nearer. Her heart began to leap. She put out her hand instinctively to clutch Mr. Hazel; but he was too far off. She had the presence of mind and the self-denial to disguise her fears; for she knew he would come headlong to her assistance.

She said in a quivering whisper, "I'm not frightened; only ve—very curious."

And now she became conscious that not only one but several things were creeping about.

Presently the creeping ceased, and was followed by a louder and more mysterious noise. In that silent night it sounded like raking and digging. Three or four mysterious visitants seemed to be making graves.

This was too much; especially coming as it did after talk about the primeval dead. Her desire to scream was so strong, and she was so afraid Hazel would break his neck, if she relieved her mind in that way, that she actually took her handkerchief and bit it hard.

But this situation was cut short by a beneficent luminary. The sun rose with a magnificent bound—it was his way in that latitude—and everything unpleasant winced that moment; the fog shivered in its turn, and appeared to open in furrows as great javelins of golden light shot through it from the swiftly rising orb. Soon those golden darts increased to streams of portable fire, that burst the fog and illumined the wet sands: and Helen burst out laughing like a chanticleer, for this first break of day revealed the sextons that had scared her—three ponderous turtles, crawling, slow and clumsy, back to sea.

Hazel joined her, and they soon found what these evil spirits of the island had been at, poor wretches. They had each buried a dozen eggs in the sand: one dozen of which were very soon set boiling. At first, indeed, Helen objected that they had no shells, but Hazel told her she might as well complain of a rose without a thorn. He assured her turtles' eggs were a known delicacy, and very superior to birds' eggs; and so she found them.

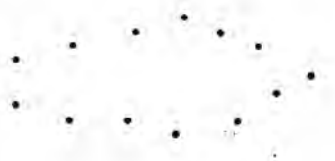
"And now," said Helen, "for my discoveries. First, here are my English leaves, only bigger. I found them on a large tree."

"English leaves!" cried Hazel, with rapture. "Why, it is the caoutchouc!"

"Oh, dear," said Helen, disappointed: "I took it for the India-rubber tree."

"It is the India-rubber tree; and I have been hunting for it all over the island in vain, and using wretchedly inferior gums for want of it."

"I'm so glad," said Helen. "And now I have something else to show you: something that curdled my blood; but I dare say I was very foolish." She then took him half across the sand and pointed out to him a number of stones dotted over the sand in a sort of oval. These stones, streaked with sea-grass, and incrusted with small shells, were not at equal distances, but yet, allowing for gaps, they formed a decided figure. Their outline resembled a great fish, wanting the tail.



"Can this be chance?" asked Helen. "Oh, if it should be what I fear, and that is—savages!"

Hazel considered it attentively a long time. "Too far at sea for living savages," said he. "And yet it cannot be chance. What on earth is it? It looks Druidical. But how can that be? The island was smaller when these were

placed here than it is now." He went nearer and examined one of the stones; then he scraped away the sand from its base, and found it was not shaped like a stone, but more like a whale's rib. He became excited; went on his knees, and tore the sand up with his hands. Then he rose up agitated, and traced the outline again. "Great heaven!" said he, "why, it is a ship."

"A ship!"

"Aye," said he, standing in the middle of it; "here, beneath our feet, lies man, with all his work and treasures. This carcass has been here for many a long year; not so very long, either; she is too big for the sixteenth century, and yet she must have been sunk when the island was smaller. I take it to be a Spanish or Portuguese ship; probably one of those treasure-ships our commodores, and chartered pirates, and the American buccaneers, used to chase about these seas. Here lie her bones, and the bones of her crew. Your question was soon answered. All that we can say has been said; can do has been done; can suffer has been suffered."

They were silent, and the sunk ship's bones moved them strangely. In their deep isolation from the human race, even the presence of the dead brought humanity somehow nearer to them.

Before they reached home, Helen suggested that, perhaps, if he were to dig in the ship, he might find something useful.

He shook his head. "Impossible! The iron has all melted away like sugar long before this. Nothing can have survived but gold and silver, and they are not worth picking up, much less digging for; my time is too precious. No, you have found two buried treasures to-day—turtles' eggs, and a ship, freighted, as I think, with what men call the precious metals. Well, the eggs are gold, and the gold is a drug—there it will lie for me."

Both discoveries bore fruits. The ship: Hazel made a vow that never again should any poor ship lay her ribs on this island for want of warning. He buoyed the reefs. He ran out to White Water Island, and wrote an earnest warning on the black reef, and, this time, he wrote with white on black. He wrote a similar warning, with black on white, at the western extremity of Godsend Island.

The eggs: Hazel watched for the turtles at daybreak; turned one now and then; and fed Helen on the meat or its eggs, morn, noon, and night.

For some time she had been advancing in health and strength. But, when the rains declined considerably, and she was all day in the air, she got the full benefit of the wonderful climate, and her health, appetite, and muscular vigor became truly astonishing; especially under what Hazel called the turtle cure; though, indeed, she was cured before.

Hazel often walked the island by himself; not to explore, for he knew the place well by this time, but he went his rounds to see that all his signals were in working order.

He went to Mount Lookout one day with this view.

It was about an hour before noon. Long before he got to the mountain he had scanned the horizon carefully, as a matter of course; but not a speck. So, when he got there, he did not look seaward, but just saw that his flagstaff was all right and was about to turn away and go home, when he happened to glance at the water; and there, underneath him, he saw—a ship, standing toward the island.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

He started, and rubbed his eyes, and looked again. It was no delusion. A keen thrill went through him; and his mind was in a whirl. He ran home with the great news.

But, even as he ran, a cold sickly feeling crawled over him.

"That ship parts her and me."

He resisted the feeling as a thing too monstrous and selfish, and resisted it so fiercely, that, when he got to the slopes and saw Helen busy at her work, he waved his hat and hurrahed again and again, and seemed almost mad with triumph.

Helen stood transfixed, she had never seen him in such a state.

"Good news!" he cried; "great

news! A ship in sight! You are rescued!"

Her heart leaped into her mouth.

"A ship!" she screamed. "Where? Where?"

He came up to her, panting.

"Close under the island. Hid by the bluff; but you will see her in half an hour. God be praised! Get everything ready to go. Hurrah! This is our last day on the island."

The words were brave, and loud, and boisterous, but the face was pale and drawn, and Helen saw it, and, though she bustled and got ready to leave, the tears were in her eyes. But the event was too great to be resisted. A wild excitement grew on them both. They ran about like persons crazed, and took things up, and laid them down again, scarcely knowing what they were doing. But presently they were sobered a little, for the ship did not appear. They ran across the sands, where they could see the bluff; she ought to have passed that half an hour ago.

Hazel thought the vessel must have anchored.

Helen looked at him steadily.

"Dear friend," said she, "are you sure there is a ship at all? Are you not under a delusion? This island fills the mind with fancies. One day I thought I saw a ship sailing in the sky. Ah!" She uttered a faint scream, for while she was speaking the bowsprit and jib of a vessel glided past the bluff so closely they seemed to scrape it, and a ship emerged grandly, and glided along the cliff.

"Are they mad," cried Hazel, "to hug the shore like that? Ah, they have seen my warning."

And it appeared so, for the ship just then came up in the wind several points, and left the bluff dead astern.

The better to watch her maneuvers, and signal her if necessary, they both went up to Telegraph Point. They could not go out to her, being low water. Seen from this height, the working of this vessel was unaccountable. She was to and off the wind as often as if she was drunk herself, or commanded by a drunken skipper. However, she was kept well clear of the home reefs, and made a good offing, and so at last she opened the bay heading toward the northwest, and distant four miles, or thereabout.

Now was the time to drop her anchor. So Hazel worked the telegraph to draw her attention, and waved his hat and hand to her. But the ship sailed on. She yawed immensely, but she kept her course; and, when she had gone a mile or two more, the sickening truth forced itself at last upon those eager watchers. She had decided not to touch at the island. In vain their joyful signals. In vain the telegraph. In vain that cry for help upon the eastern cliff. It had saved her, but not pleaded for them. The monsters saw them on the height—their hope, their joy—saw and abandoned them.

They looked at one another with dilating eyes, to read in a human face whether such a deed as this could really be done by man upon his fellow. Then they uttered wild cries to the receding vessel.

Vain, vain, all was in vain.

Then they sat down stupefied, but still glaring at the ship, and each at the same moment held out a hand to the other, and they sat hand in hand; all the world to each other just then, for there was the world in sight abandoning them in cold blood.

"Be calm, dear friend," said Helen patiently. "Oh, my poor father!" And her other hand threw her apron over her head, and then came a burst of anguish that no words could utter.

At this Hazel started to his feet in fury.

"Now may the God that made sea and land judge between those miscreants there and you!"

"Be patient," said Helen, sobbing. "Oh, be patient."

"No! I will not be patient," roared Hazel. "Judge thou her cause, O God; each of these tears against a reptile's soul."

And so he stood glaring, and his hair blowing wildly to the breeze; while she sighed patiently at his knee.

Presently he began to watch the vessel with a grim and bitter eye. Anon he burst out suddenly, "Aha! That is right. Well steered. Don't cry, sweet one; our cause is heard. Are they blind?

Are they drunk? Are they sick? I see nobody on deck! Perhaps I have been too—God forgive me, the ship's ashore!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HELEN looked up; and there was the ship fast, and on her side. She was on the White Water Reef. Not upon the black rocks themselves, but on a part of them that was under water.

Hazel ran down to the beach; and there Helen found him greatly agitated. All his anger was gone; he had but one thought now—to go out to her assistance. But it still wanted an hour to high water, and it was blowing smartly, and there was nearly always a surf upon that reef. What if the vessel should break up, and lives be lost?

He paced the sands like a wild beast in its cage, in an agony of pity, remorse, and burning impatience. His feelings became intolerable; he set his back to the boat, and with herculean strength forced it down to meet the flowing tide, and in a moment jumped into the boat, and pushed off. Helen begged with sparkling eyes to be allowed to accompany him.

"What, to a ship smitten with scurvy or heaven knows what? Certainly not. Besides, you would be wet through; it is blowing rather fresh, and I shall carry on. Pray for the poor souls I go to help; and for me, who have sinned in my anger."

He hoisted his sail, and ran out.

Helen stood on the bank and watched him at first with admiration, but soon with anxiety; for he had no sooner passed North Gate, than the cutter, having both sails set, though reefed, lay down very much, and her hull kept disappearing.

By and by only her staggering sails were visible; and the sun set ere she reached the creek. The wind declined with the sun, and Helen made two great fires, and prepared food for the sufferers; for she made sure Hazel would bring them off in a few hours more. She promised herself the happiness of relieving the distressed. But to her infinite surprise she found herself almost regretting that the island was likely to be peopled with strangers.

About midnight the wind shifted to the northwest, and Helen ran down to the shore, and looked seaward. This was a fair wind for Hazel's return: and she began to expect him every hour. But no; he delayed unaccountably.

The night wore on; no signs of the boat; and now there was a heavy gale outside, and a great sea rolling in, brown and foaming.

Day broke, and showed the sea for a mile or two; the rest was hidden by driving rain.

Helen kneeled on the shore and prayed for him.

Dire misgivings oppressed her. And soon these were heightened to terror; for the sea began to disgorge things of a kind that had never come ashore before. A great ship's mast came tossing in. Huge as it was, the waves handled it like a toy. Then came a barrel; then a broken spar. These were but the forerunners of more fearful havoc.

The sea became strewed and literally blackened with fragments; part wreck, part cargo, of a broken vessel.

But what was all this compared with the horror that followed?

A black object caught her eye; driven in upon the crest of a wave.

She looked, with her hair flying straight back, and her eyes almost starting from her head.

It was a boat, bottom up; driven on, and tossed like a cork.

It came nearer, nearer, nearer.

She dashed into the water with a wild scream, but a wave beat her backward on the sand, and, as she rose, an enormous roller lifted the boat upright into the air, and, breaking, dashed it keel uppermost on the beach at her side—empty!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HELEN uttered a shriek of agony, and her knees smote together, and she would have swooned on the spot but for the wind and the spray that beat against her.

To the fearful stun succeeded the wildest distress. She ran to and fro like some wild animal bereaved; she kept wringing her hands and uttering cries of pity and despair, and went back to

the boat a hundred times; it held her by a spell.

It was long before she could think connectedly, and, even then, it was not herself, nor of her lonely state, but only, Why did she not die with him? Why did she not die instead of him?

He had been all the world to her; and now she knew it. Oh, what a friend, what a champion, what a lover, these cruel waves had destroyed!

The morning broke, and still she hovered and hovered about the fatal boat with great horror-stricken eyes, and hair flying to the breeze; and not a tear. If she could only have smoothed his last moments, have spoken one word into his dying ear! But no! Her poor hero had died in going to save others; died thinking her as cold as the waters that had destroyed him.

Dead or alive he was all the world to her now. She went, wailing piteously, and imploring the waves to give her at least his dead body to speak to, and mourn over. But the sea denied her even that dismal consolation.

The next tide brought in a few more fragments of the wreck, but no corpse floated ashore.

Then, at last, as the waves once more retired, leaving, this time, only petty fragments of wreck on the beach, she lifted up her voice, and almost wept her heart out of her body.

Such tears as these are seldom without effect on the mind: and Helen now began to rebel, though faintly, against despair. She went swiftly to Hazel's store, and searched it; there she found the jib-sail, a boat-hook, some rope, and one little oar, that Hazel was making for her, and had not quite completed. A single oar was of no use to row with. She rigged the boat-hook as a mast and fastened the sail to it, and, with this poor equipment, she actually resolved to put out to sea.

By this time, it was nearly high tide. She watched the water creeping up. Will it float the boat? It rises over the keel; two inches, three inches. Five inches water! Now she pushes with all her strength. No; the boat has water in it she had forgotten to bale out. She strained every nerve, but could not move it.

She sighed, heart-broken, awhile; then went home and prayed.

When she had prayed a long time for strength and wisdom, she lay down for an hour, and tried to sleep, but failed. Then she prepared for a more serious struggle with the many difficulties she had to encounter. Now she thanked God more than ever for the health and rare strength she had acquired in this island: without them she could have done nothing now. She got a clay platter, and baled the vessel nearly dry. She left a little water for ballast. She fortified herself with food, and put provisions and water on board the boat. In imitation of Hazel, she went and got two round logs, and, as soon as the tide crawled up to four inches, she lifted the bow a little, and got a roller under.

She got to the stern of the boat, and, setting the small of her back under the projecting gunwale, she gathered herself together and gave a superb heave, that moved the boat a foot. She followed it up, and heaved again with like effect. Then, with a cry of joy, she ran and put down another roller forward. The boat was now on two rollers. One more magnificent heave with all her zeal, and strength, and youth, and the boat glided forward.

She turned and rushed at it as it went, and the water deepening, and a gust catching the sail, it went out to sea, and she had only just time to throw herself across the gunwale, panting. She was afloat. The wind was southwest, and, before she knew where she was, the boat headed toward the home reefs, and slipped through the water pretty fast considering how small a sail she carried. She ran to the helm. Alas! the rudder was broken off above the waterline. The helm was a mockery, and the boat running for the reefs. She slacked the sheet, and the boat lost her way and began to drift with the tide, which luckily had not yet turned. It carried her in shore.

Helen cast her eyes around for an expedient, and she unshipped one of the transoms, and by trailing over the side, and alternately slacking and hauling the sheet, she contrived to make the boat crawl like a winged bird through the western passage. After that it soon got

becalmed under the cliff, and drifted into two feet of water.

Instantly she tied a rope to the mast, got out into the water, and took the rope ashore. She tied it round a heavy barrel she found there, and set the barrel up, and heaped stones round it and on it; then she went round the point, sometimes wet and sometimes dry, for the little oar she had left behind. With that oar, his last work, she might steer if she could not row.

She found the boat all safe, but in six inches of water, and the tide going out. So ended her voyage; four hundred yards at most, and then to wait another twelve hours for the tide.

It was too cruel, and every hour so precious, for, even if Hazel was alive, he would die of cold and hunger ere she could get to him. She cried like any woman.

She persisted like a man.

She made several trips, and put away things in the boat that could possibly be of use—abundant provisions, and a keg of water; Hazel's wooden spade to paddle or steer with; his basket of tools, etc. Then she snatched some sleep; but it was broken by sad and terrible dreams. Then she waited in an agony of impatience for high water.

We are not always the best judges of what is good for us. Probably these delays saved her own life. She went out at last under far more favorable circumstances—a light westerly breeze, and no reefs to pass through.

It was a muggy day, neither wet nor dry. White Water Island was not in sight from Godsend Island; but, as soon as she lost the latter, the former became visible—an ugly grinning reef, with an eternal surf on the south and western sides.

When she was about four miles from the nearest part of the reef, there was a rush and a bubble in the water, and a great shark came after the boat. Helen screamed, and turned very cold. She dreaded the monster, not for what he could do now, but for what he might have done. He seemed to know the boat, he swam so vigilantly behind it. Was he there when the boat upset with Hazel in it? Was it in his greedy maw the remains of her best friend must be sought? Her lips opened, but no sound. She shuddered and hid her face at this awful thought.

The shark followed steadily.

She got to the reef, but did not hit it off as she intended. She ran under its lee, lowered the little sail, and steered the boat into a knick where the shark could hardly follow her.

But he moved to and fro like a sentinel, while she landed in trepidation and secured the boat to the branches of a white coral rock.

It was an archipelago of coral reef incrusted here and there with shells. She could not see all over it, where she was, so she made for what seemed the highest part, a bleak, sea-weedy mound, with some sandy hillocks about it. She went up to this, and looked eagerly all round.

Not a soul.

She called as loud as her sinking heart would let her.

Not a sound.

The rocks were rugged and sharp in places, slippery in others; often she had to go about, and once she fell and hurt her pretty hands and made them bleed; she never looked at them, nor heeded, but got up and at last she discovered something. She saw at the eastern side of the reef a wooden figure of a woman, and, making her way to it, found the figurehead and a piece of the bow of the ship, with a sail on it and a yard on that. On the reef itself she found a cask with its head stove in, also a little keg and two wooden chests or cases. But what was all this to her?

She sat down again and bowed her head. Presently something came sniffing up to her and put a cold nose to her hand. She started violently, and both her hands were in the air in a moment.

It was a dog, a pointer. He whimpered and tried to gambol, but could not manage it; he was too weak. However, he contrived to let her see, with the wagging of his tail and a certain contemporaneous twist of his emaciated body, that she was welcome.

A dog saved from the wreck! Then why not a man? And why not that life? Oh, thought she, would God save that creature, and not pity my poor angel and me?

She got up animated with hope, and

recommenced her researches. She now kept at the outward edge of the island, and so went all round till she reached her boat again. The shark was swimming to and fro, waiting for her with horrible pertinacity. She tried to eat a mouthful, but, though she was faint, she could not eat. She drank a mouthful of water, and then went to search the very small portion that remained of the reef, crying as she went. In a sort of gully she saw the dog, quietly seated high on his tail. She called him; but he never moved. So then she went to him, and, when she got near him, she saw why he would not come. He was watching. Close by him lay the form of a man nearly covered with sea-weed. The feet were visible, and so was the face, the latter deadly pale. It was he. In a moment she was by him, and leaning over him with both hands quivering. Was he dead? No; his eyes were closed; he was fast asleep.

Her hands flew to his face to feel him alive, and then grasped both his hands and drew them up toward her panting bosom, and the tears of joy streamed from her eyes, as she sobbed and murmured over him, she knew not what. At that he awoke and stared at her. He uttered a loud ejaculation of joy and wonder, then, taking it all in, burst into tears himself and fell to kissing her hands and blessing her. The poor soul had almost given himself up for lost. And to be saved, all in a moment, and by her!

They could neither of them speak, but only mingled tears of joy and gratitude.

Hazel recovered himself first; and, rising somewhat stiffly, lent her his arm. Her father's spirit went out of her in the moment of victory, and she was all woman—sweet, loving, clinging woman. She got hold of his hand as well as his arm, and clutched it so tight, her little grasp seemed velvet and steel.

"Let me feel you," said she: "but no words! no words!"

He supported his preserver tenderly to the boat, then, hoisting the sail, he fetched the east side in two tacks, shipped the sail and yard, and also the cask, keg, and boxes. He then put a great quantity of loose oysters on board, each as large as a plate. She looked at him with amazement.

"What," said she, when he had quite loaded the boat, "only just out of the jaws of death, and yet you can trouble your head about oysters and things."

"Wait till you see what I shall do with them," said he. "These are pearl oysters. I gathered them for *you*, when I had little hope I should ever see you again to give them to you."

This was an unlucky speech. Something rose in her throat; she tried to laugh instead of crying, and so she did both, and went into a violent fit of hysterics that showed how thoroughly her nature had been stirred to its depths.

At last they got ashore; and he sat by her fire and told her all, while she cooked his supper and warmed clothes at the fire for him.

"The ship," said he, "was a Dutch vessel, bound from Batavia to Callao, that had probably gone on her beam ends, for she was full of water. Her crew had abandoned her; I think they underrated the buoyancy of the ship and cargo. They left the poor dog on board. Her helm was lashed a-weather a couple of turns, but why that was done I cannot tell for the life of me. I boarded her; unshipped my mast, and moored the boat to the ship; fed the poor dog; rummaged in the hold, and contrived to hoist up a small cask of salted beef, and a keg of rum, and some cases of grain and seeds.

"I managed to slide these onto the reef by means of the mast and oar lashed together. But a roller ground the wreck farther onto the reef, and the sudden snap broke the rope, as I suppose, and the boat went to sea. I never knew the misfortune till I saw her adrift. I could have got over that by making a raft; but the gale from the north brought such a sea on us. I saw she must break up, so I got ashore how I could. Ah, I little thought to see your face again, still less that I should owe my life to you."

"Spare me," said Helen faintly.

"What, must I not thank you even for my life?"

"No. *The account is far from even yet.*"

"You are no arithmetician to say so. What astonishes me most is, that you have never once scolded me for all the trouble and anxiety——"

"I am too happy to see you sitting there to scold you. But still I do ask you to leave the sea alone after this. The treacherous monster! Oh, think what you and I have suffered on it!"

She seemed quite worn out. He saw that, and retired for the night, casting one more wistful glance on her. But at that moment she was afraid to look at him. Her heart was welling over with tenderness for the dear friend whose life she had saved.

Next morning Hazel rose at daybreak as usual, but found himself stiff in the joints, and with a pain in his back. The mat that hung at the opening of Helen's cave was not removed as usual. She was on her bed with a violent headache.

Hazel fed Ponto, and corrected him. He was at present a civilized dog, so he made a weak rush at the boobies and noddies directly.

He also smelt Tommy inquisitively, to learn was he an eatable. Tommy somehow divined the end of this sinister curiosity and showed his teeth.

Then Hazel got a rope, and tied one end round his own waist, and one round Ponto's neck, and, at every outbreak of civilization, jerked him sharply onto his back. The effect of this discipline was rapid; Ponto soon found that he must not make war on the inhabitants of the island. He was a docile animal, and in a very short time consented to make one of "the happy family," as Hazel called the miscellaneous crew that beset him.

Helen and Hazel did not meet till past noon; and when they did meet it was plain she had been thinking a great deal, for her greeting was so shy and restrained as to appear cold and distant to Hazel. He thought to himself, I was too happy yesterday, and she too kind. Of course it could not last.

This change in her seemed to grow, rather than diminish.

She carried it so far as to go and almost hide during the working hours. She made off to the jungle, and spent an unreasonable time there. She professed to be collecting cotton, and it must be admitted she brought a good deal home with her. But Hazel could not accept cotton as the only motive for this sudden separation.

He lost the light of her face till the evening. Then matters took another turn; she was too polite. Ceremony and courtesy appeared to be gradually encroaching upon tender friendship and familiarity; yet, now and then, her soft hazel eyes seemed to turn on him in silence, and say, forgive me all this. Then at those sweet looks, love and forgiveness poured out of his eyes.

Since he was so exposed to the weather on the reef, Hazel had never been free from pain, but he had done his best to work it off. He had collected all the valuables from the wreck, made a new mast, set up a rude capstan to draw the boat ashore, and cut a little dock for her at low water, and clayed it in the full heat of the sun; and, having accomplished this drudgery, he got at last to his labor of love; he opened a quantity of pearl oysters, fed Tommy and the duck with them, and began the great work of lining the cavern with them.

The said cavern was somewhat shell-shaped, and his idea was to make it out of a gloomy cavern into a vast shell, lined entirely, roof and sides, with glorious, sweet, prismatic mother-of-pearl, fresh from the ocean. Well, one morning while Helen was in the jungle, he made a cement of guano, sand, clay and water, nipped some shells to a shape with the pincers, and cemented them neatly, like mosaic almost; but in the middle of his work he was cut down by the disorder he had combated so stoutly. He fairly gave in, and sat down groaning with pain. And in this state Helen found him.

"Oh, what is the matter?" she said.

He told her the truth, and said he had violent pains in the back and head. She did not say much, but she turned pale. She bustled and lighted a great fire, and made him lie down by it. She propped his head up; she set water on to boil for him, and would not let him move for anything; and all the time her features were brimful of the loveliest concern. Toward evening he got better, or rather he mistook an intermission for cure, and retired to his boat, but she made him take her rug with him.

She passed an uneasy, restless night, and long before morning she awoke for the sixth or seventh time, with a misgiv-

ing in her mind, and some sound ringing in her ears. She listened and heard nothing; but in a few moments it began again.

It was Hazel talking—talking in a manner so fast, so strange, so loud, that it made her blood run cold. It was the voice of Hazel, but not his mind.

"*Dens and caves!*" he roared, answering an imaginary detractor. "Well, never mind, love shall make that hole in the rock a palace for a queen; for a queen! For *the* queen." Here he suddenly changed characters and fancied he was interpreting the discourse of another. "He means the Queen of the Fairies," said he patronizingly: then, resuming his own character with loud defiance, "I say her chamber shall outshine the glories of the Alhambra, as far as the lilies outshone the artificial glories of King Solomon. Oh, almighty Nature, let others rely on the painter, the goldbeater, the carver of marble, come you and help me adorn the temple of my beloved. Amen."

(The poor soul thought, by the sound of his own words, it must be a prayer he uttered.)

And now Helen, with streaming eyes, tried to put in a word, but he stopped her with a wild hush! and went off into a series of mysterious whisperings. "Make no noise, please, or we shall frighten her. There—that is her window—no noise, please! I've watched and waited for hours, just to see her sweet, darling shadow on the blinds, and shall I lose it for your small talk? What is the use putting up little bits of telegraphs on the island? I'll make a kite a hundred feet high, get five miles of rope ready against the next hurricane; and then I'll rub it with phosphorus and fly it. But what can I fasten it to? No tree would hold it. Dunce! To the island itself, of course. And now go to Stantle, Magg, Melton, and Copestake for one thousand yards of silk—*Money! Money! Money!* Well, give them a mortgage on the island, and a draft on the galleon. Now stop the pitch-fountain, and bore a hole near it; fill fifty balloons with gas, inscribe them with the latitude and longitude, fly them, and bring all the world about our ears. The problem is solved. It is solved, and I am destroyed. She leaves me; she thinks no more of me. Her heart is in England."

Then he muttered for a long time unintelligibly; and Helen ventured near, and actually laid her hand on his brow to soothe him. But suddenly his muttering ceased, and he seemed to be puzzling hard over something.

The result came out in a clear articulate sentence, that made Helen recoil, and, holding by the mast, cast an indescribable look of wonder and dismay on the speaker.

The words that so staggered her were these to the letter:

"She says she hates reptiles. Yet she marries Arthur Wardlaw."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE very name of Arthur Wardlaw started Helen, and made her realize how completely her thoughts had been occupied with another.

But add to that the strange and bitter epigram! Or was it a mere fortuitous concourse of words?

She was startled, amazed, confounded, puzzled. And, ere she could recover her composure, Hazel was back to his problem again: but no longer with the same energy.

He said in a faint and sleepy voice: "'He maketh the winds His messengers, and flames of fire His ministers.' Ah! if I could do that! Well, why not? I can do anything she bids me." And soon after this doughty declaration he dozed off, and forgot all his trouble for a while.

The sun rose, and still he slept, and Helen watched him with undisguised tenderness in her face; undisguised now that he could not see it.

Erelong she had companions in her care. Ponto came out of his den, and sniffed about the boat; and then began to scratch it and whimper for his friend. Tommy swam out of the sea, came to the boat, discovered, Heaven knows how, that his friend was there, and, in the way of noises, did everything but speak. The seabirds followed and fluttered here and there in an erratic way, with now and then a peck at each other. All animated

nature seemed to be uneasy at this eclipse of their Hazel.

At last Tommy raised himself quite perpendicular, in a vain endeavor to look into the boat, and invented a whine in the minor key, which tells on dogs: it set Ponto off in a moment; he sat upon his tail, and delivered a long and most deplorable howl.

"Everything loves him," thought Helen.

With Ponto's music Hazel awoke and found her watching him, with tears in her eyes; he said softly: "Miss Rolleston! There is nothing the matter, I hope. Why am I not up getting things for your breakfast?"

"Dear friend," said she, "why you are not doing things for me and forgetting yourself is because you have been very ill. And I am your nurse. Now tell me what I shall get for you. Is there nothing you could fancy?"

No; he had no appetite; she was not to trouble about him. And then he tried to get up; but that gave him such a pain in his loins, he was fain to lie down again. So then he felt that he had got rheumatic fever. He told her so; but, seeing her sweet, anxious face, begged her not to be alarmed—he knew what to take for it. Would she be kind enough to go to his arsenal and fetch some specimens of bark she would find there, and also the keg of rum?

She flew at the word, and soon made him an infusion of the barks in boiling water; to which the rum was added.

His sweet nurse administered this from time to time. The barks used were of the cassia tree, and a wild citron tree. Cinchona did not exist in this island, unfortunately. Perhaps there was no soil for it at a sufficient elevation above the sea.

Nevertheless with these inferior barks they held the fever in check. But the pain was obstinate, and cost Helen many a sigh; for, if she came softly, she could often hear him moan; and, the moment he heard her foot, he set to and whistled, for a blind; with what success may be imagined. She would have bought those pains, or a portion of them; ah, and paid a heavy price for them.

But pain, like everything, intermits, and in those blessed intervals his mind was more active than ever, and ran a great deal upon what he called the Problem.

But she, who had set it for him, gave him little encouragement now to puzzle over it.

"The air of this island," said he, "gives one a sort of vague sense of mental power. Ah! if I was only an inventor!"

"And so you are."

"No, no," said Hazel, disclaiming as earnestly as some people claim; "I do things that look like acts of invention, but they are acts of memory."

"I am sure I wish I had never said the fatal word. You will never get well if you puzzle your brain over impossibilities."

"Impossibilities! As for me, I have got a smattering of so many subjects, all full of incredible truths, that my faith in the impossibility of anything is gone. Ah! if James Watt was only here instead of John Hazel—James Watt from the Abbey with a head as big as a pumpkin—he would not have gone groping about the island, writing on rocks, and erecting signals. No; he would have had some grand and bold idea worthy of the proposition."

"Well, so I think," said Helen, archly; "that great man with the great head would have begun by making a kite a hundred yards high."

"Would he? Well, he was quite capable of it."

"Yes; and rubbed it with phosphorus, and flown it the first tempest, and made the string fast to—the island itself."

"Well, that is an idea," said Hazel, staring; "rather hyperbolical, I fear. But, after all, it is an idea."

"Or else," continued Helen, "he would weave a thousand yards of some light fabric, and make balloons; then he would stop the pitch-fountain, bore a hole in the rock near it, and so get the gas, fill the balloons, inscribe them with our sad story and our latitude and longitude, and set them flying all over the ocean—there!"

Hazel was amazed.

"I resign my functions to you," said he. "What imagination! What invention!"

"Oh, dear, no," said Helen, slyly;

"acts of memory sometimes pass for invention, you know. Shall I tell you? when first you fell ill, you were rather light-headed, and uttered the strangest things. They would have made me laugh heartily, only I couldn't—for crying. And you said that about kites and balloons, every word."

"Did I? Then I have most brains when I have least reason, that's all."

"Aye," said Helen, "and other strange things—very strange and bitter things. One I should like to ask you about, what on earth you could mean by it; but perhaps you meant nothing, after all."

"I'll soon tell you," said Hazel; but he took the precaution to add, "provided I know what it means myself."

She looked at him steadily, and was on the point of seeking the explanation so boldly offered; but her own courage failed her. She colored and hesitated.

"I shall wait," said she, "till you are quite, quite well. That will be soon, I hope; only you must be good, and obey my prescriptions. Cultivate patience; aspire no more beyond the powers of man. Here we shall stay unless Providence sends us a ship. I have ceased to repine; and don't you begin. Dismiss that problem altogether; see how hot it has made your poor brow."

Hazel smiled, well pleased, and leaned back, soothed, silenced, subdued, by her soft voice, and the exquisite touch of her velvet hand on his hot brow; for, womanlike, she laid her hand like down on that burning brow to aid her words in soothing it. But the topic had entered his mind too deeply to be finally dismissed. It returned next day, though in a different form. You must know that Hazel, as he lay on his back in the boat, had often, in a half-drowsy way, watched the effect of the sun upon the boat's mast; it now stood, a bare pole, and at certain hours acted like the needle of a dial by casting a shadow on the sands. Above all, he could see pretty well by means of this pole and its shadow when the sun attained its greatest elevation. He now asked Miss Rolleston to assist him in making this observation exactly.

She obeyed his instructions, and the moment the shadow reached its highest angle, and showed the minutest symptom of declension, she said, "Now," and Hazel called out in a loud voice:

"Noon!"

"And forty-nine minutes past eight at Sydney," said Helen, holding out her chronometer; for she had been sharp enough to get it ready of her own accord.

Hazel looked at her and at the watch with amazement and incredulity.

"What?" said he. "Impossible. You can't have kept Sydney time all this while."

"And pray why not?" said Helen. "Have you forgotten that once somebody praised me for keeping Sydney time; it helped you, somehow or other, to know where we were."

"And so it will now," cried Hazel, exultingly. "But no! it is impossible. We have gone through scenes that—you can't have wound that watch up without missing a day."

"Indeed, but I have," said Helen. "Not wind my watch up! Why, if I was dying I should wind my watch up. Do you remember that terrible night in the boat, when neither of us expected to see the morning—Oh, how good and brave you were—well, I remember winding it up that night. I kissed it, and bade it good-by; but I never dreamed of not winding it up because I was going to be killed. What! am I not to be praised again, as I was on board ship? Stingy! can't afford to praise one twice for the same thing."

"Praised!" cried Hazel, excitedly; "worshiped, you mean. Why, we have got the longitude by means of your chronometer. It is wonderful! It is providential! It is the finger of Heaven! Pen and ink, and let me work it out."

In his excitement he got up without assistance, and was soon busy calculating the longitude of Godsend Isle.

CHAPTER XL.

"THERE," said he. "Now the latitude I must guess at by certain combinations. In the first place the slight variation in the length of the day. Then I must try and make a rough calculation of the sun's parallax. And then my bot-

any will help me a little; spices furnish a clue; there are one or two that will not grow outside the tropic. It was the longitude that beat me, and now we have conquered it. Hurrah! Now I know what to diffuse, and in what direction; east-southeast; the ducks have shown me that much. So there's the first step toward the impossible problem."

Hazel spliced a long, fine-pointed stick to the masthead, and set a plank painted white with guano at right angles to the base of the mast; and so, whenever the sun attained his meridian altitude, he went into a difficult and subtle calculation to arrive at the latitude, or as near it as he could without proper instruments; and he brooded and brooded over his discovery of the longitude, but unfortunately he could not advance.

Having thought and thought till his head was dizzy, at last he took Helen's advice and put it by for a while. He set himself to fit and number a quantity of pearl-oyster shells, so that he might be able to place them at once, when he should be able to recommence his labor of love in the cavern.

One day Helen had left him so employed, and was busy cooking the dinner at her own place, but, mind you, with one eye on the dinner and another on her patient, when suddenly she heard him shouting very loud, and ran out to see what was the matter.

He was roaring like mad, and whirling his arms over his head like a demented windmill.

She ran to him.

"Eureka! Eureka!" he shouted, in furious excitement.

"Oh, dear!" cried Helen; "never mind." She was all against her patient exciting himself.

But he was exalted beyond even her control. "Crown me with laurel," he cried; "I have solved the problem": and up went his arms.

"Oh, is that all?" said she calmly.

"Get me two squares of my parchment," cried he; "and some of the finest gut."

"Will not after dinner do?"

"No, certainly not," said Hazel, in a voice of command, "I wouldn't wait a moment for all the flesh-pots of Egypt."

Then she went like the wind and fetched them.

"Oh, thank you! thank you! Now I want—let me see—ah, there's an old rusty hoop that was washed ashore, on one of that ship's casks. I put it carefully away; how the unlikeliest things come in useful sooner or later!"

She went for the hoop, but not so rapidly, for here it was that the first faint doubt of his sanity came in. However, she brought it, and he thanked her.

"And now," said he, "while I prepare the intelligence, will you be so kind as to fetch me the rushes?"

"The what?" said Helen, in growing dismay.

"The rushes! Oh, I am on fire; and, if you don't want me to go into a fever, why, get me my rushes."

"Where shall I find them?" said Helen, catching fire at him.

"Go to where your old hut stood, and follow the river about a furlong: you will find a bed of high rushes; cut me a good bundle, cut them below the water, choose the stoutest. Here is a pair of shears I found in the ship."

She took the shears and went swiftly across the sands and up the slope. He watched her with an admiring eye; and well he might, for it was the very poetry of motion. It was the vigor and freedom of a savage, with the grace of a lady.

While she was gone, Hazel cut two little squares of seals' bladder, one larger than the other. On the smaller he wrote: "An English lady wrecked on an island. Longitude , S., latitude between the and parallels. Haste to her rescue." Then he folded this small, and enclosed it in the larger slip, which he made into a little bag, and tied the neck extremely tight with fine gut, leaving a long piece of the gut free.

And now Helen came gliding back, as she went, and brought him a large bundle of rushes.

Then he asked her to help him fasten these rushes round the iron hoop.

"It must not be done too regularly," said he; "but so as to look as much like a little bed of rushes as possible."

Helen was puzzled still, but interested. So she set to work, and, between them, they fastened rushes all round the hoop, although it was a large one.

But, when it was done, Hazel said they were too bare.

"Then we will fasten another row," said Helen good-humoredly. And, without more ado, she was off to the river again.

When she came back, she found him up, and he said the great excitement had cured him—such power has the brain over the body. This convinced her he had really hit upon some great idea. And, when she had made him eat his dinner by her fire, she asked him to tell her all about it.

"Don't ask me yet," he sighed. "Theory is one thing; practise is another. We count without our antagonists. I forgot they will set their wits against mine; and they are many, I am but one. And I have been so often defeated."

The female mind, rejecting all else, went like a needle's point at one thing in this explanation. "Our antagonists?" said Helen, looking sadly puzzled. "Why, what antagonists have we?"

"The messengers," said Hazel, with a groan. "The aerial messengers."

That did the business. Helen dropped the subject with almost ludicrous haste; and, after a few commonplace observations, made a nice comfortable dose of grog and bark for him.

It operated unkindly for her purpose; it did him so much good that he lifted up his dejected head, and his eyes sparkled again, and he set to work, and, by sunset, prepared two more bags of bladder with inscriptions inside, and long tails of fine gut hanging. Then, with fingers far less adroit than hers, he fastened another set of rushes round the hoops. He set them less evenly, and some of them not quite perpendicular; and Helen's hazel eye dwelt on him with furtive pity; for, to her this girdle of rushes was now an instrument that bore an ugly likeness to the scepter of straw with which vanity run to seed sways imaginary kingdoms in Bedlam or Bicêtre.

And yet he was better. He walked about the cavern and conversed charmingly; and when he retired, she presented him with the fruits of a fortnight's work, a glorious wrapper made of fleecy cotton enclosed in a plaited web of flexible and silky grasses.

About midnight she awoke and felt uneasy: so she did what since his illness she had done a score of times without his knowledge—she stole from her lair to watch him.

She found him wrapped in her present, which gave her great pleasure; and sleeping like an infant, which gave her joy. She eyed him eloquently for a long time; and then very timidly put out her hand, and, in her quality of nurse, laid it lighter than down upon his brow.

The brow was cool, and a very slight moisture on it showed the fever was going or gone.

She folded her arms and stood looking at him; and she thought of all they two had done and suffered together. Her eyes absorbed him, devoured him. The time flew by unheeded. It was so sweet to be able to set her face free from its restraint, and let all its sunshine beam on him; and even when she retired at last, those light hazel eyes, that could flash fire at times, but were all dove-like now, hung and lingered on him as if they could never look at him enough.

Half an hour before daybreak she was awakened by the dog howling piteously. She felt a little uneasy at that: not much. However, she got up, and issued from her cavern, just as the sun showed his red eye above the horizon. She went toward the boat as a matter of course. She found Ponto tied to the helm: the boat was empty, and Hazel nowhere to be seen.

She uttered a scream of dismay.

The dog howled and whined louder than ever.

CHAPTER XLI.

WARDLAW senior was not what you would call a tender-hearted man; but he was thoroughly moved by General Rolleston's distress, and by his fortitude. The gallant old man! Landing in England one week and going back to the Pacific the next! Like goes with like; and Wardlaw senior, energetic and resolute himself, though he felt for his son, stricken down by grief, gave his heart to the more valiant distress of his contemporary. He manned and victualled the Springbok for a long voyage, ordered

her to Plymouth, and took his friend down to her by train.

They went out to her in a boat. She was a screw steamer, that could sail nine knots an hour without burning a coal. As she came down the Channel, the general's trouble got to be well-known on board her, and, when he came out of the harbor, the sailors, by an honest, hearty impulse, that did them credit, waited for no orders but manned the yards to receive him with the respect due to his services and his sacred calamity.

On getting on board, he saluted the captain and the ship's company with sad dignity, and retired to his cabin with Mr. Wardlaw. There the old merchant forced on him by loan seven hundred pounds, chiefly in gold and silver, telling him there was nothing like money, go where you will. He then gave him a number of notices he had printed, and a paper of advice and instructions: it was written in his own large, clear, formal hand.

General Rolleston tried to falter out his thanks. John Wardlaw interrupted him.

"Next to you I am her father; am I not?"

"You have proved it."

"Well, then. However, if you do find her, as I pray to God you may, I claim the second kiss, mind that: not for myself, though: for my poor Arthur, that lies on the sick-bed for her."

And so they parted: and that sad parent went out to the Pacific.

To abridge this gloomy and monotonous part of our tale, suffice it to say that he endured two months of water and infinity ere the vessel, fast as she was, reached Valparaiso. Their progress, however, had been more than once interrupted to carry out Wardlaw's instructions.

The poor general himself had but one idea: to go and search the Pacific with his own eyes; but Wardlaw, more experienced, directed him to overhaul every whaler and coasting vessel he could, and deliver printed notices; telling the sad story, and offering a reward for any positive information, good or bad, that should be brought in to his agent at Valparaiso. Acting on these instructions they had overhauled two or three coasting vessels as they steamed up from the Horn.

They now placarded the port of Valparaiso, and put the notices on board all vessels bound westward; and the captain of the Springbok spoke to the skippers in the port. But they all shook their heads, and could hardly be got to give their minds seriously to the inquiry, when they heard in what water the cutter was last seen and on what course.

One old skipper said, "Look on Juan Fernandez, and then at the bottom of the Pacific; but the sooner you look *there* the less time you will lose."

From Valparaiso they ran to Juan Fernandez, which, indeed, seemed the likeliest place; if she was alive.

When the larger island of that group came in sight, the father's heart began to beat higher.

The ship anchored and took in coal, which was furnished at a wickedly high price by Mr. Joshua Fullalove, who had virtually purchased the island from Chili, having got it on lease for longer than the earth itself is to last, we hear.

And now Rolleston found the value of Wardlaw's loan; it enabled him to prosecute his search through the whole group of islands; and he did hear at last of three persons who had been wrecked on Masa Fuero; one of them a female. He followed this up, and at last discovered the parties. He found them to be Spaniards, and the woman smoking a pipe.

After this bitter disappointment he went back to the ship, and she was to weigh her anchor next morning.

But, while General Rolleston was at Masa Fuero, a small coasting vessel had come in, and brought a strange report at second-hand, that in some degree unsettled Captain Moreland's mind; and being hotly discussed on the forecastle, set the ship's company in a ferment.

CHAPTER XLII.

HAZEL had risen an hour before dawn for reasons well known to himself. He put on his worst clothes, and a leathern belt, his little bags round his neck, and took his bundle of rushes in his hand. He also provided himself with some pieces of raw fish and fresh oyster; and,

thus equipped, went up through Terrapin Wood, and got to the neighborhood of the lagoons before daybreak.

There was a heavy steam on the water, and nothing else to be seen. He put the hoop over his head, and walked into the water, not without an internal shudder, it looked so cold.

But, instead of that, it was very warm, uncomfortably warm. He walked in up to his middle, and tied his iron hoop to his belt, so as to prevent it sinking too deep. This done, he waited motionless, and seemed a little bed of rushes. The sun rose, and the steam gradually cleared away, and Hazel, peering through a hole or two he had made expressly in his bed of rushes, saw several ducks floating about, and one in particular, all purple, without a speck but his amber eye. He contrived to detach a piece of fish, that soon floated to the surface near him. But no duck moved toward it. He tried another, and another; then a mallard he had not observed, swam up from behind him, and was soon busy pecking at it within a yard of him. His heart beat; he glided slowly and cautiously forward till the bird was close to the rushes.

Hazel stretched out his hand with the utmost care, caught hold of the bird's feet, and dragged him sharply under the water, and brought him up within the circle of the rushes. He quacked and struggled. Hazel soused him under directly, and so quenched the sound; then he glided slowly to the bank, so slowly that the rushes merely seemed to drift ashore. This he did not to create suspicion, and so spoil the next attempt. As he glided, he gave his duck air every now and then, and soon got on *terra firma*.

By this time he had taught the duck not to quack, or he would get soused and held under. He now took the long gut-end and tied it tight round the bird's leg, and so fastened the bag to him. Even while he was effecting this, a posse of ducks rose at the west end of the marsh, and took their flight from the island. As they passed, Hazel threw his captive up in the air; and such was the force of example, aided, perhaps, by the fright the captive had received, that Hazel's bird instantly joined these travelers, rose with them into the high currents, and away, bearing the news eastward upon the wings of the wind. Then Hazel returned to the pool, and twice more he was so fortunate as to secure a bird, and launch him into space.

•

So hard is it to measure the wit of man, and to define his resources. The problem was solved; the aerial messengers were on the wing, diffusing over hundreds of leagues of water the intelligence that an English lady had been wrecked on an unknown island in longitude 103 deg. 30 min., and between the 32d and 25th parallels of south latitude; and calling good men and ships to her rescue for the love of God.

CHAPTER XLIII.

And now for the strange report that landed at Juan Fernandez while General Rolleston was searching Masa Fuero.

The coaster who brought it ashore had been in company, at Valparaiso, with a whaler from Nantucket, who told him he had fallen in with a Dutch whaler out at sea, and distressed for water: he had supplied the said Dutchman, who had thanked him, and given him a runlet of Hollands, and had told him in conversation that he had seen land and a river reflected on the sky, in waters where no land was marked in the chart; namely, somewhere between Juan Fernandez and Norfolk Island; and that, believing this to be the reflection of a part of some island, near at hand, and his water being low, though not at that time run out, he had gone considerably out of his course in hopes of finding this watered island, but could see nothing of it.

This tale soon boarded the Springbok, and was hotly discussed on the forecastle. Captain Moreland, however, communicated it to General Rolleston on his arrival, and asked him whether he thought it worth while to deviate from their instructions upon information of such a character. Rolleston shook his head. "An island reflected in the sky!"

"The phenomenon is rare, but it is well established. I never saw it myself, but I have come across those that have. Suppose we catechize the forecastle. Hy! Fok'sel!"

"Sir!"

"Send a man aft: the oldest seaman aboard."

"Aye, aye, sir."

There was some little delay; and then a sailor of about sixty slouched aft and awaited the captain's commands.

"Isaac," said the captain, "do you believe land and ships have ever been seen in the sky, reflected? I suppose you never *saw* a phenomenon of the kind?"

"Hain't I!" said Isaac grimly. Then, with sudden and not very reasonable heat, "D—— my eyes and limbs if I hain't seen the Peak o' Teneriffe in the sky topsy-turvy, and as plain as I see that there cloud there."

"Come," said Moreland; "now we are getting to it. Tell us all about that."

"Well, sir," said the seaman, "I don't care to larn them as laughs at everything they hain't seen in maybe a dozen voyages at most; but you know me, and I knows you; though you command the ship and I work before the mast. Now I axes you, sir, should you say Isaac Aiken was the man to take a sugar-loaf, or a cocked hat, for the Peak o' Teneriffe?"

"As likely as I am myself, Isaac."

"No commander can say fairer nor that," said Isaac, with dignity. "Well, your honor, we were bound for Teneriffe with a fair wind, though not so much of it as we wanted, by reason she was a good sea-boat, but broad in the bows. The Peak hove in sight in the sky, and all the glasses was at her. She lay a point or two on our weather quarter like, full two hours, and then she just melted away like a lump o' sugar. We kept on our course a day and a half, and at last we sighted the real Peak, and anchored off the port; whereby, when we saw Teneriffe Peak in the sky to winnard, she lay a hundred leagues to looard, s' help me God!"

"That is wonderful," said General Rolleston.

"That will do, Isaac," said the captain. "Mr. Butt, double his grog for a week, for having seen more than I have."

The captain and General Rolleston had a long discussion; but the result was, they determined to go to Easter Island first, for General Rolleston saw no sufficient ground for deviating from Wardlaw's positive instructions.

At eight next morning, Captain Moreland and General Rolleston being on deck, one of the ship's boys comes up to the gentlemen, takes off his cap, and shoves a paper into General Rolleston's hand.

"This won't do," said the captain sternly.

The high-bred soldier handed the paper to him unopened. The captain opened it, looked a little vexed, but more amused, and handed it back to the general.

It was a ROUND ROBIN.

Round Robins are not ingratiating as a rule. But this one came from some rough but honest fellows, who had already shown that kindliness and tact may reside in a coarse envelope. The sailors of the Springbok, when they first boarded her in the Thames, looked on themselves as men bound on an empty cruise; and nothing but the pay, which was five shillings per month above the average, reconciled them to it.

But the sight of the general had touched them afar off. His gray hair and pale face, seen as he rowed out of Plymouth Harbor, had sent them to the yards by a gallant impulse; and all through the voyage the game had been to put on an air of alacrity and hope, whenever they passed the general or came under his eye.

If hypocrisy is always a crime, this was a very criminal ship; for the men, and even the boys, were hypocrites, who, feeling quite sure that the daughter was dead at sea months ago, did, nevertheless, make up their faces to encourage the father into thinking she was alive and he was going to find her.

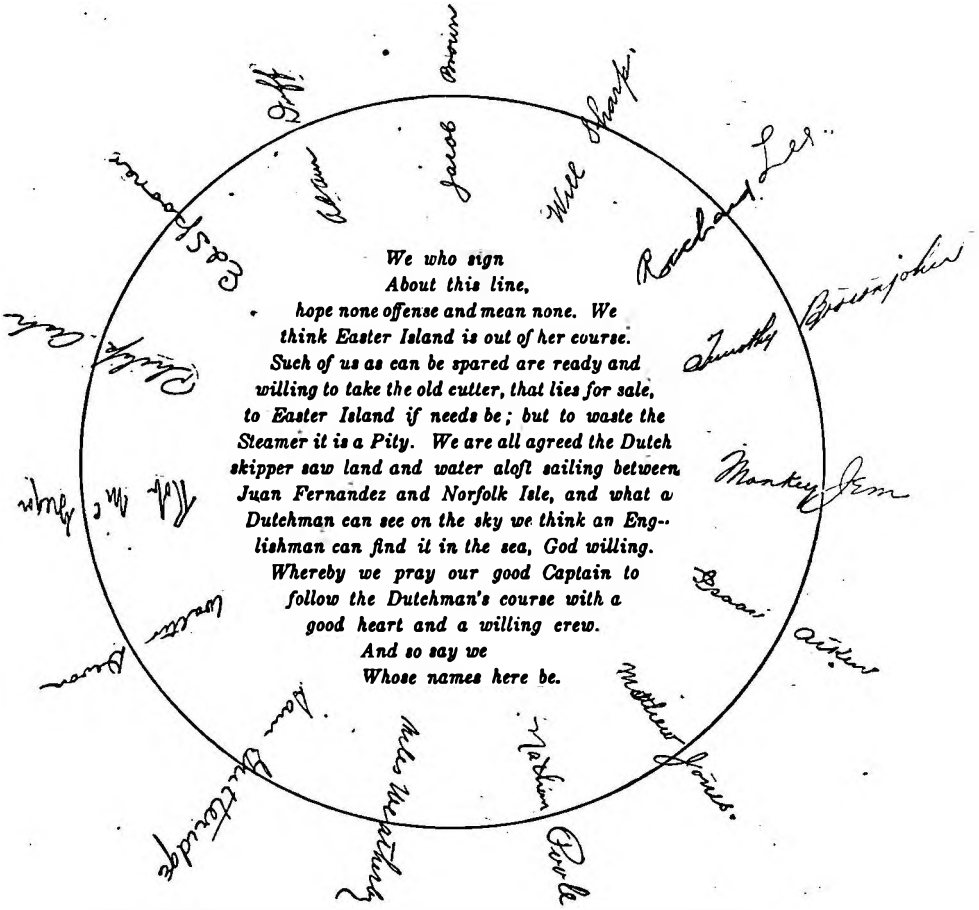
But people who pursue this game too long, and keep up the hopes of another, get infected at last themselves; and the crew of the Springbok arrived at Valparaiso infected with a little hope. Then came the Dutchman's tale, and the discussion, which ended adversely to their views; and this elicited the circular we have now the honor to lay before our readers.

General Rolleston and Captain Moreland returned to the cabin and discussed this document. They came on deck again, and the men were piped aft. General Rolleston addressed them thus:

"My men, I thank you for taking my

trouble to heart as you do. But it would be a bad return to send any of you to Easter Island in that cutter; for she is not seaworthy: so the captain tells me. I will not consent to throw away your

land; and so pursued her way to the Society Islands; sent out her boats; made every inquiry around about the islands, but with no success; and, at last, after losing a couple of months there, brought



lives in trying to save a life that is dear to me; but, as to the Dutchman's story about an unknown island, our captain seems to think that is possible, and you tell us you are of the same opinion. Well, then, I give up my own judgment, and yield to yours. Yes, we will go westward with a good heart and a willing crew."

The men cheered. The boatswain piped; the anchor was heaved, and the Springbok went out on a course that bade fair to carry her within a hundred miles of Godsend Island.

She ran fast. On the second day some ducks passed over her head, one of which was observed to have something attached to its leg.

She passed within sixty miles of Mount Lookout; but never saw Godsend Island; and so pursued her way to the Society Islands; sent out her boats; made every inquiry around about the islands, but with no success; and, at last, after losing a couple of months there, brought the heart-sick father back on much the same course, but rather more northerly.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HAZEL returned homeward in a glow of triumph, and for once felt disposed to brag to Helen of his victory.

They met in the wood. She seemed pale and disturbed, and speedily interrupted his exclamations of triumph by one of delight, which was soon, however, followed by one of distress.

"Oh, look at you!" said Helen, "only just getting well of rheumatic fever, and to go stand in water up to the middle."

"Why don't you listen to me!" cried Hazel, in amazement. "I tell you I have solved the problem."

"It is you that don't listen to common sense," retorted Helen. "If you go and make yourself ill, all the problems in the world will not compensate me. And I must say I think it was not very kind of you to run off so without warning. Why give me hours of anxiety for want of a word? But there, it is useless to argue with a boy; yes, sir, a boy. Go home this moment, sir, and change your clothes; and don't you presume to come into the presence of the nurse you have offended till there's not a wet thread about you."

The inventor in his moment of victory slunk away crestfallen to change his clothes.

So far Helen Rolleston was a type of her sex in its treatment of inventors. At breakfast she became a brilliant exception. The moment she saw Hazel seated by her fire in dry clothes she changed her key, and made him relate the whole business, and expressed the warmest admiration and sympathy.

"But," said she, "I do ask you not to repeat this exploit too often; now don't do it again for a fortnight. The island will not run away. Ducks come and go every day, and your health is very, very precious."

He colored with pleasure, and made the promise at once. But during this fortnight events occurred. In the first place, he improved his invention. He remembered how a duck, over-weighted by a crab, which was fast to her leg, had come on board the boat. Memory dwelling on this, and invention digesting it, he resolved to weight his next batch of ducks; for he argued thus:

"Probably our ducks go straight from this to the great American Continent. Then it may be long ere one of them falls into the hands of a man; and perhaps that man will not know English. But if I could impede the flight of my ducks, they might alight on ships: and three ships out of four know English."

Accordingly, he now inserted stones of various sizes into the little bags. It was a matter of nice calculation: the problem was to weight the birds just so much that they might be able to fly three or four hundred miles, or about half as far as their unencumbered companions.

But in the midst of all this a circumstance occurred that would have made a vain man, or indeed most men, fling the whole thing away. Helen and he came to a rupture. It began by her fault, and continued by his. She did not choose to know her own mind, and, in spite of secret warnings from her better judgment, she was driven by curiosity, or by the unhappy restlessness to which her sex are peculiarly subject at odd times, to sound Hazel as to the meaning of a certain epigram that rankled in her.

Said she one day, quietly, though with a deep blush: "Do you know Mr. Arthur Wardlaw?"

Hazel gave a shiver, and said, "I do."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"I do."

"Nothing to his discredit, I am sure."

"If you are sure, why ask me? Do I ever mention his name?"

"Perhaps you do, sometimes, without intending it."

"You are mistaken: he is in your thoughts, no doubt; but not in mine."

"Ought I to forget people entirely, and what I owe them?"

"That is a question I decline to go into."

"How harshly you speak to me. Is that fair? You know my engagement, and that honor and duty draw me to England; yet I am happy here. You, who are so good and strong, might pity me at least; for I am torn this way and that." And here the voice ceased, and the tears began to flow.

"I do pity you," said Hazel. "I must pity any one who is obliged to mention honor and duty in the same breath as Arthur Wardlaw."

At this time Helen drew back, offended bitterly. "*That* pity I reject and scorn," said she. "No, I plighted my faith with my eyes open, and to a worthy object. I never knew him blacken any person who was not there to speak for himself, and that is a very worthy trait, in my opinion."

Hazel, racked with jealously, lost his temper for once, and said those who lay traps must not complain if others fall into them.

"Traps! Who lay them?"

"You did, Miss Rolleston. Did I ever condescend to mention that man's

name since we have been on the island? It is you make me talk of him."

"Condescend?"

"That is the word. Nor will I ever deign to mention him again. If my love had touched your heart, I should have been obliged to mention him, for then I should have been bound to tell you a story in which he is mixed, my own miserable story—my blood boils against the human race when I think of it. But no, I see I am nothing to you; and I will be silent."

"It is very cruel of you to say that," replied Helen, with tears in her eyes; "tell me your story, and you will see whether you are nothing to me."

"Not one word of it," said Hazel slowly, "until you have forgotten that that man exists."

"Oh, thank you, sir; this is plain speaking. I am to forget honor and plighted faith; and then you will trust me with your secrets, when I have shown myself unworthy to be trusted with anything. Keep your secrets, and I'll try and keep faith; aye, and I shall keep it, too, as long as there's life in my body."

"Can't you keep faith without torturing me, who love you?"

Helen's bosom began to heave at this, but she fought bravely. "Love me less, and respect me more," said she, panting. "I looked on you as a brother, a dear brother. But now I am afraid of you—I am afraid——"

He was so injudicious as to interrupt her, instead of giving her time to contradict herself. "You have nothing to fear," said he; "keep this side of the island, and I'll live on the other, rather than hear the name of Arthur Wardlaw."

Helen's courage failed her at that spirited proposal, and she made no reply at all, but turned her back haughtily, and went away from him, only when she had got a little way, her proud head dropped, and she went crying.

A coolness sprang up between them, and neither of them knew how to end it. Hazel saw no way to serve her now, except by flying weighted ducks, and he gave his mind so to this that one day he told her he had twenty-seven ducks in the air, all charged, and two-thirds of them weighted. He thought that must please her now. To his surprise and annoyance, she received the intelligence coldly, and asked him whether it was not cruel to the birds.

His parchment was exhausted, and he was driven to another expedient. He obtained alcohol by distillation from rum, and having found dragon's blood in its pure state, little ruby drops, made a deep red varnish that defied water; he got slips of bark, white inside, cut his inscription deep on the inner side, and filled the incised letters with this red varnish.

He had forty-eight ducks in the air, and was rising before daybreak to catch another couple, when he was seized with a pain in the right hip and knee, and found he could hardly walk, so he gave in that morning, and kept about the premises. But he got worse, and he had hardly any use of his right side, from the waist down, and was in great pain.

As the day wore on, the pain and loss of power increased, and resisted all his remedies; there was no fever to speak of; but nature was grimly revenging herself for many a gentler warning neglected. When he realized his condition, he was terribly cut up, and sat on the sand with his head in his hands for nearly two hours. But, after that period of despondency, he got up, took his boat-hook, and, using it as a staff, hobbled to his arsenal, and set to work.

Among his materials was a young tree he had pulled up; the roots ran at right angles to the stem. He just sawed off the ends of the roots, and then proceeded to shorten the stem.

But meantime Helen, who had always a secret eye on him and his movements, had seen there was something wrong and came timidly and asked what was the matter.

"Nothing," said he doggedly.

"Then, why did you sit so long on the sand? I never say you like that."

"I was ruminating."

"What upon? Not that I have any right to ask."

"On the arrogance and folly of men; they attempt more than they can do, and despise the petty prudence and common sense of women, and smart for it; as I am smarting now for being wiser than you."

"Oh," said Helen; "why, what is the matter? and what is that you have made? It looks like—— Oh, dear!"

"It is a crutch," said Hazel, with forced calmness; "and I am a cripple."

Helen clasped her hands, and stood trembling.

Hazel lost his self-control for a moment, and cried out in a voice of agony, "A useless cripple. I wish I was dead and out of the way."

Then, ashamed of having given way before *her,* he seized his crutch, placed the crook under his arm, and turned sullenly away from her.

Four steps he took with his crutch.

She caught him with two movements of her supple and vigorous frame.

She just laid her left hand gently on his shoulder, and with her right she stole the crutch softly away, and let it fall upon the sand. She took his right hand, and put it to her lips like a subject paying homage to her sovereign; and then she put her strong arm under his shoulder, still holding his right hand in hers, and looked in his face. "No wooden crutches when I am by," said she, in a low voice, full of devotion.

He stood surprised, and his eyes began to fill.

"Come," said she, in a voice of music. And, thus aided, he went with her to her cavern. As they went, she asked him tenderly where the pain was.

"It *was* in my hip and knee," he said: "but now it is nowhere; for joy has come back to my heart."

"And to mine, too," said Helen; "except for this."

The quarrel dispersed like a cloud, under this calamity.

The pair so strangely thrown together commenced a new chapter of their existence. It was not patient and nurse over again; Hazel, though very lame, had too much spirit left to accept that position. But still the sexes became in a measure reversed—Helen, the fisherman and forager; Hazel, the cook and domestic.

He was as busy as ever, but in a narrow circle; he found pearl-oysters near the sunk galleon, and, ere he had been lame many weeks, he had entirely lined the sides of the cavern with mother-of-pearl set in cement, and close as mosaic.

Every day he passed an hour in Paradise; for his living crutch made him take a little walk with her; her hand held his; her arm supported his shoulder; her sweet face was near his, full of tender solicitude; they seemed to be one; and spoke in whispers to each other, like thinking aloud.

And, of the two, Helen was the happier. The days passed by, and the island was fast becoming the world to those two.

It was a happy dream.

What a pity that dreams dissolve so soon! This had lasted for nearly two months, and Hazel was getting better, though still not well enough, or not fool enough, to dismiss his live crutch, when one afternoon Helen, who had been up on the heights, observed a dark cloud in the blue sky toward the west. There was not another cloud visible, and the air marvelously clear; time, about three quarters of an hour before sunset. She told Hazel about this solitary cloud, and asked him, with some anxiety, if it portended another storm. He told her to be under no alarm—there were no tempests in that latitude except at the coming in and going out of the rains—but he should like to go round the Point and look at her cloud.

She lent him her arm, and they went around the Point; and there they saw a cloud entirely different from anything they had ever seen since they were on the island. It was like an enormous dark ribbon stretched along the sky, at some little height above the horizon. Notwithstanding its prodigious length it got larger before their very eyes.

Hazel started.

Helen felt him start, and asked him, with some surprise, what was the matter.

"Cloud!" said he; "that is no cloud. That is smoke."

"Smoke!" echoed Helen, becoming agitated in her turn.

"Yes; the breeze is northerly, and carries the smoke nearer to us; it is the smoke of a steamboat."

CHAPTER XLV.

BOTH were greatly moved; and after one swift glance Helen stole at him, neither looked at the other. They spoke in flurried whispers.

"Can they see the island?"

"I don't know; it depends on how far the boat is to windward of her smoke."

"How shall we know?"

"If she sees the island, she will make for it that moment."

"Why? Do ships never pass an unknown island?"

"Yes. But that steamer will not pass us."

"But why?"

At this question Hazel hung his head, and his lip quivered. He answered her at last. "Because she is looking for *you*."

Helen was struck dumb at this.

He gave his reasons. "Steamers never visit these waters. Love has brought that steamer out; love that will not go unrewarded. Arthur Wardlaw is on board that ship."

"Have they seen us yet?"

Hazel forced on a kind of dogged fortitude. He said, "When the smoke ceases to elongate, you will know they have changed their course, and they will change their course the moment the man at the mast-head sees us."

"Oh! But how do you know they have a man at the mast-head?"

"I know by myself. I should have a man at the mast-head night and day."

And now the situation was beyond words. They both watched, and watched, to see the line of smoke cease.

It continued to increase, and spread eastward; and that proved the steamer was continuing her course.

The sun drew close to the horizon.

"They don't see us," said Helen, faintly.

"No," said Hazel; "not yet."

"And the sun is just setting. It is all over." She put her handkerchief to her eyes a moment, and then, after a sob or two, she said almost cheerfully, "Well, dear friend, we were happy till that smoke came to disturb us; let us try and be as happy now it is gone. Don't smile like that, it makes me shudder."

"Did I smile? It must have been at your simplicity in thinking we had seen the last of that steamer."

"And so we have."

"Not so. In three hours she will be at anchor in that bay."

"Why, what will bring her?"

"I shall bring her."

"You? How?"

"By lighting my bonfire."

CHAPTER XLVI.

Helen had forgotten all about the bonfire. She now asked whether he was sure those on board the steamer could see the bonfire. Then Hazel told her that it was now of prodigious size and height.

"That bonfire," said he, "will throw a ruddy glare over the heavens that they can't help seeing on board the steamer. Then, as they are not on a course, but on a search, they will certainly run a few miles southward to see what it is. They will say it is either a beacon or a ship on fire; and, in either case, they will turn the boat's head this way. Well, before they have run southward half a dozen miles, their lookout will see the bonfire, and the island in its light. Let us get to the boat, my lucifers are there."

She lent him her arm to the boat, and stood by while he made his preparations. They were very simple. He took a pine torch and smeared it all over with pitch; then put his lucifer-box in his bosom and took his crutch. His face was drawn pitiably, but his closed lips betrayed unshaken and unshakable resolution. He shouldered his crutch and hobbled up as far as the cavern. Here Helen interposed.

"Don't you go toiling up the hill," said she. "Give me the lucifers and the torch, and let me light the beacon. I shall be there in half the time you will."

"Thank you! Thank you!" said Hazel eagerly, not to say violently.

He wanted it done; but it killed him to do it. He then gave her his instructions.

"It is as big as a haystack," said he, "and as dry as a chip; and there are eight bundles of straw placed expressly. Light the bundles to windward first, then the others; it will soon be all in a blaze."

"Meanwhile," said Helen, "you prepare our supper. I feel quite faint—for want of it."

Hazel assented.

"It is the last we shall——" he was going to say it was the last they would

eat together; but his voice failed him, and he hobbled into the cavern, and tried to smother his emotion in work. He lighted the fire, and blew it into a flame with a palmetto-leaf, and then he sat down a while, very sick at heart; then he got up and did the cooking, sighing all the time; and, just when he was beginning to wonder why Helen was so long, she came in, looking pale.

"Is it all right?" said he.

"Go and look," said she. "No, let us have our supper first."

Neither had any appetite: they sat and kept casting strange looks at one another.

To divert this anyhow, Hazel looked up at the roof and said faintly, "If I had known, I would have made more haste, and set pearl *there* as well."

"What does that matter?" said Helen, looking down.

"Not much, indeed," replied he sadly. "I am a fool to utter such childish regrets; and, more than that, I am a mean selfish cur to *have* a regret. Come, come, we can't eat; let us go round the Point and see the waves reddened by the beacon that gives you back to the world you were born to embellish."

Helen said she would go directly. Her languid reply contrasted strangely with his excitement. She played with her supper, and wasted time in an unusual way, until he told her plump she was not really eating, he could not wait, he must go and see how the beacon was burning.

"Oh, very well," said she; and they went down to the beach.

She took his crutch and gave it to him. This little thing cut him to the heart. It was the first time she had accompanied him so far as that without offering herself to be his crutch. He sighed deeply as he put the crutch under his arm; but he was too proud to complain, only he laid it all on the approaching steamboat.

The subtle creature by his side heard the sigh, and smiled sadly at being misunderstood—but what man could understand her? They hardly spoke till they reached the Point. The waves glittered in the moonlight; there was no red light on the water.

"Why, what is this?" said Hazel. "You can't have lighted the bonfire in eight places, as I told you."

She folded her arms and stood before him in an attitude of defiance; all but her melting eye.

"I have not lighted it at all," said she.

Hazel stood aghast. "What have I done?" he cried. "Duty, manhood, everything demanded that I should light that beacon, and I trusted it to you."

Helen's attitude of defiance melted away: she began to cower, and hid her blushing face in her hands. Then she looked up imploringly. Then she uttered a wild and eloquent cry, and fled from him like the wind.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THAT cloud was really the smoke of the Springbok, which had mounted into air so thin that it could rise no higher. The boat was returning full of heavy hearts from a fruitless search. The life was gone out of the ship; the father was deeply dejected, and the crew could no longer feign the hope they did not feel.

At 10h. 15m. the dreary monotony of this cruise was broken by the man at the mast-head.

"On deck there!"

"Hullo!"

"The schooner on our weather bow!"

"Well, what of her?"

"She has luffed."

"Well, what o' that?"

"She has altered her course."

"How many points?"

"She was sailing S. E., and now her head is N. E."

"That is curious."

General Rolleston, who had come and listened with a grain of hope, now sighed and turned away.

The captain exclaimed kindly that the man was quite right to draw his captain's attention to the fact of a trading-vessel altering her course. "There is a sea-grammar, general," said he; "and when one seaman sees another violate it he concludes there is some reason or other. Now, Jack, what d'ye make of her?"

"I can't make much of her; she don't seem to know her own mind, that is all. At ten o'clock she was bound for Valparaiso or the Island. But now she has come about and is beating to windward."

"Bound for Easter Island?"

"I dunno."

"Keep your eye on her."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Captain Moreland told General Rolleston that very few ships went to Easter Island, which lies in a lovely climate, but is a miserable place; and he was telling the general that it is inhabited by savages of a low order, who half worship the relics of masonry left by their more civilized predecessors, when Jack hailed the deck again.

"Well," said the captain.

"I think she is bound for the Springbok."

Time confirmed the conjecture; the schooner, having made a short board to the N. E., came about and made a long board due west, which was as near as she could lie to the wind. On this Captain Moreland laid the steamboat's head due north. This brought the vessels rapidly together.

When they were about two miles distant, the stranger slackened sail and hove to, hoisting Stars and Stripes at her mizzen. The Union Jack went up the shrouds of the Springbok directly, and she pursued her course, but gradually slackened her steam.

General Rolleston walked the deck in great agitation, and now indulged in wild hopes, which Captain Moreland thought it best to discourage at once.

"Ah, sir," he said; "don't you run into the other extreme, and imagine he has come on our business. It is at sea as it is ashore: if a man goes out of his course to speak to you, it is for his own sake, not yours. This Yankee has got men sick with scurvy, and is come for lime-juice. Or his water is out. Or—hallo, savages aboard."

It was too true. The schooner had a cargo of savages, male and female; the males were nearly naked, but the females, strange to say, were dressed to the throat in ample robes, with broad and flowing skirts, and had little coronets on their heads. As soon as the schooner hove to, the fiddle had struck up, and the savages were now dancing in parties of four; the men doing a sort of monkey hornpipe in quick pace, with their hands nearly touching the ground; the women, on the contrary, erect and queenly, swept about in slow rhythm, with most graceful and coquettish movements of the arms and hands, and bewitching smiles.

The steamboat came alongside, but at a certain distance to avoid all chance of collision; and the crew clustered at the side and cheered the savages dancing. The poor general was forgotten at the merry sight.

Presently a negro in white cotton, with a face blacker than the savages, stepped forward and hoisted a board, on which was printed very large, ARE YOU

Having allowed this a moment to sink into the mind, he reversed the board and showed these words, also printed large. THE SPRINGBOK?

There was a thrilling murmur on board; and, after a pause of surprise, the question was answered by a loud cheer and waving of hats.

The reply was perfectly understood; almost immediately a boat was lowered by some novel machinery, and pulled toward the steamer. There were two men in it; the skipper and the negro. The skipper came up the side of the Springbok. He was loosely dressed in some light drab-colored stuff and a huge straw hat; a man with a long Puritanical head, a nose inclined to be aquiline, a face bronzed by weather and heat, thin, resolute lips, and a square chin. But for a certain breadth between his keen gray eyes, which revealed more intellect than Cromwell's Ironsides were encumbered with, he might have passed for one of that hard-praying, harder-hitting fraternity.

He came on deck, just touched his hat, as if to brush away a fly, and, removing an enormous cigar from his mouth, said, "Wal, and so this is the Springbok. Spry little boat she is; how many knots can ye get out of her now? Not that I am curious."

"About twelve knots."

"And when the steam's off the bile, how many can you sail? Not that it is my business."

"Eight or nine. What *is* your business?"

"Hum! You have been over *some* water looking for that gal. Where do ye hail from last?"

"The Society Islands. Did you board me to hear me my catechism?"

"No, I am not one of your prying sort. Where are ye bound for now?"

"I am bound for Easter Island."

"Have you heard anything of the gal?"

"No."

"And when do ye expec' to go back to England as wise as ye came?"

"Never while this ship can swim," cried Moreland angrily, to hide his despondency from this stranger. "And now it is my turn, I think. What schooner is this? By whom commanded, and whither bound?"

"The Julia Dodd; Joshua Fullalove; bound for Juan Fernandez with the raw material of civilization—look at the varmint skippin'—and a printing-press; an' that's the instrument of civilization, I rather think."

"Well, sir; and why in Heaven's name did you change your course?"

"Wal, I reckon I changed it—to tell you a lie."

"To tell us a lie!"

"Aye; the darndest eternal lie that ever came out of a man's mouth. Fust, there's an unknown island somewheres about. That's a kinder flourish beforehand. On that island there's an English gal wrecked."

Exclamations burst forth on every side at this.

"And she is so tarnation 'cute she is flying ducks all over creation with a writing tied to their legs, telling the tale and setting down the longitude. There, if that isn't a buster, I hope I may never live to tell another."

"God bless you, sir," cried the general. "Where is the island?"

"What island?"

"The island where my child is wrecked."

"What, are you the gal's father?" said Joshua, with a sudden touch of feeling.

"I am, sir. Pray withhold nothing from me you know."

"Why, cunnle," said the Yankee soothingly; "don't I tell you it's a buster? However, the lie is none o' mine. It's that old cuss Skinflint set it afloat; he is always poisoning these peaceful waters."

Rolleston asked eagerly who Skinflint was, and where he could be found.

"Wal, he is a sorter sea Jack-of-all-trades, etarnally cruising about to buy gratis—those he buys of call it stealing. Got a rotten old cutter, manned by his wife and family. They get coal out of me for fur, and sell the coal at double my price; they kill seals and dress the skins aboard; kill fish and salt 'em aboard. Ye know when that fam'ly is at sea by the smell that pervades the briny deep an' heralds their approach. Yesterday the air smelt awful: so I said to Vespasian here, 'I think that sea-skunk is out, for there's something a pisoning the cerulean waves an' succumambient air.' We hadn't sailed not fifty miles more before we run agin him.

"Their clothes were drying all about the riggin'. Hails me, the varmint does. Vesp and I, we work the printing-press together, an' so order him to looward, not to taint our Otaheitans, that stink of ile at home, but I had 'em biled before I'd buy 'em, an' now they're vilets. 'Wal now, Skinflint,' says I; 'I reckon you're come to bring me that harpoon o' mine you stole last time you was at my island?' 'I never saw your harpoon,' says he, 'I want to know have you come across the Springbok?' 'Mebbe I have,' says I; 'why do you ask?' 'Got news for her,' says he; 'and can't find her nowheres.' So then we set to and fenced a bit; and this old varmint, to put me off the truth, told me the buster. A month ago or more he was boarded—by a duck.

"And this yar duck had a writing tied to his leg, and this yar writing said an English gal was wrecked on an island, and put down the very longitude. 'Show me that duck,' says I ironical. 'D'ye take us for fools?' says he; 'we ate the duck for supper.' 'That was like ye,' says I; 'if an angel brought your pardon down from heights celestial, you'd roast him and sell his feathers for swan's-down; mebbe ye ate the writing? I know y' are a hungry lot.' The writing is in my cabin,' says he. 'Show it me,' says I, 'an' mebbe I'll believe ye.' No, the cuss would only show it to the Springbok; 'There's a reward,' says he. 'What's the price of a soul aboard your cutter?' I asked him. 'Have you parted with yours, as you want to buy one?' says he. 'Not one as would carry me right slick away to everlasting blazes,' says I.

So then we said good morning, and he bore away for Valparaiso.

"Presently I saw your smoke, and that you would never overhaul old Stink-amalee on that track; so I came about. Now I tell ye that old cuss knows where the gal is, and mebbe got her tied hand and fut in his cabin. An' I'm kinder sot on English gals; they put me in mind of butter and honey. Why, my schooner is named after one. So now, Cunnle, clap on steam for Valparaiso, and you'll soon overhaul the old stink-pot: you may know him by the brown patch in his jib-sail, the ontidy varmint.

"Pull out your purse and bid him to drop lying about ducks and geese, and tell you the truth; he knows where your gal is, I swan. Wal, ye needn't smother me." For by this time he was the center of a throng, all pushing and driving to catch his words.

Captain Moreland begged him to step down into his cabin, and there the general thanked him with great warmth and agitation for his humanity. "We will follow your advice at once," he said. "Is there anything I can offer you, without offense?"

"Wal," drawled the Yankee, "I guess not. Business and sentiment won't mix nohow. Business took me to the island, sentiment brought me here. I'll take a shake-hand all round; and if y' have got live fowls to spare, I'll be obliged to you for a couple. Ye see I'm colonizing that darned island: an' sowing it with grain, an' Otaheitans, an' niggers, an' Irishmen, an' all the cream o' creation; an' I'd be glad of a couple o' Dorkins to crow the lazy varmints up."

This very moderate request was heartily complied with, and the acclamation and cheers of the crew followed this strange character to his schooner, at which his eye glistened and twinkled with quiet satisfaction, but he made it a point of honor not to move a muscle.

Before he could get under way, the Springbok took a circuit, and, passing within a hundred yards of him, fired a gun to leeward by way of compliment, set a cloud of canvas, and tore through the water at her highest speed. Outside the port of Valparaiso she fell in with Skinflint, and found him not quite so black as he was painted. The old fellow showed some parental feeling, produced the bag at once to General Rolleston, and assured him a wearied duck had come on board, and his wife had detached the writing.

They took in coal, and then ran westward once more, every heart beating high with confident hope.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE Springbok arrived in due course at longitude 103 deg. 31 min., but saw no island. This was dispiriting; but still Captain Moreland did not despair.

He asked General Rolleston to examine the writing carefully, and tell him was that Miss Rolleston's handwriting.

The general shook his head sadly.

"No," said he; "it is nothing like my child's hand."

"Why, all the better," said Captain Moreland; "the lady has got somebody about her who knows a thing or two. The man that could catch wild ducks and turn 'em into postmen could hit on the longitude somehow; and he doesn't pretend to be exact in the latitude."

Upon this he ran northward 400 miles; which took him three days; for they stopped at night.

No island.

He then ran south 500 miles, stopping at night.

No island.

Then he took the vessel zigzag.

Just before sunset one lovely day, the man at the mast-head sang out:

"On deck there!"

"Hullo!"

"Something in sight on our weather-bow."

"What is it?"

"Looks like a mast. No. Don't know what it is."

"Point."

The sailor pointed with his finger.

Captain Moreland ordered the ship's course to be altered accordingly. By this time General Rolleston was on deck. The ship ran two miles on the new course; and all this time the topman's glass was leveled, and the crew climbed about the rigging all eyes and ears.

At last the clear hail came down.

"I can make it out now, sir."

"What is it?"

"It is a palm tree."

The captain jumped on a gun, and waved his hat grandly, and instantly the vessel rang with a lusty cheer; and, for once, sailors gabbled like washerwomen.

They ran till they saw the island in the moonlight, and the giant palm, black and sculptured out of the violet sky; then they set the lead going, and it warned them not to come too close. They anchored off the west coast.

At daybreak they moved slowly on, still sounding as they went; and, rounding the West Point, General Rolleston saw written on the guanoed rocks in large letters:

AN ENGLISH LADY WRECKED HERE.

HASTE TO HER RESCUE.

He and Moreland shook hands; and how their eyes glistened!

Presently there was a stranger inscription still upon the rocks—a rough outline of the island on an enormous scale, showing the coastline, the reefs, the shallow water, and the deep water.

"Ease her! Stop her!"

The captain studied this original chart with his glass, and crept slowly on for the west passage.

But warned by the soundings marked on the rock, he did not attempt to go through the passage, but came to an anchor, and lowered his boat.

The sailors were all on the *qui vive* to land, but the captain, to their infinite surprise, told them only three persons would land that morning—himself, his son, and General Rolleston.

The fact is, this honest captain had got a misgiving, founded on a general view of human nature. He expected to find the girl with two or three sailors, one of them united to her by some nautical ceremony, duly witnessed, but such as a *military* officer of distinction could hardly be expected to approve. He got into the boat in a curious state of delight, dashed with uncomfortable suspense; and they rowed gently for the west passage.

As for General Rolleston, now it was he needed all his fortitude. Suppose the lady was not Helen! After all, the chances were against her being there. Suppose she was dead and buried in that island! Suppose that fatal disease, with which she had sailed, had been accelerated by hardships, and Providence permitted him only to receive her last sigh. All these misgivings crowded on him the moment he drew so near the object which had looked all brightness so long as it was unattainable. He sat pale and brave in the boat; but his doubts and fears were greater than his hope.

They rounded Telegraph Point, and in a moment Paradise Bay burst on them, and Hazel's boat within a hundred yards of them. It was half-tide. They beached the boat, and General Rolleston landed. Captain Moreland grasped his hand and said, "Call us if it is all right."

General Rolleston returned the pressure of that honest hand, and marched up the beach just as if he was going into action.

He came to the boat. It had an awning over the stern, and was clearly used as a sleeping-place. A series of wooden pipes standing on uprights led from this up to the cliff. The pipes were in fact mere sections of the sago tree with the soft pith driven out. As this was manifestly a tube of communication, General Rolleston followed it until he came to a sort of veranda with a cave opening on it; he entered the cave, and was dazzled by its most unexpected beauty. He seemed to be in a gigantic nautilus.

Roof and sides, and the very chimney, were one blaze of mother-of-pearl. But, after the first start, brighter to him was an old shawl he saw on a nail, for that showed it was a woman's abode. He tore down the old shawl and carried it to the light. He recognized it as Helen's. Her rugs were in a corner; he rushed in, and felt them all over with trembling hands. They were still warm, though she had left her bed some time. He came out wild with joy, and shouted to Moreland, "She is alive! She is alive! She is alive!" Then fell on his knees and thanked God.

A cry came down to him from above: he looked up as he knelt, and there was a female figure dressed in white, stretching out its hands as if it would fly down to him. Its eyes gleamed; he knew them all that way off. He stretched out his

hands as eloquently, and then he got up to meet her; but the stout soldier's limbs were stiffer than of old; and he got up so slowly that ere he could take a step there came flying to him with little screams and inarticulate cries, no living skeleton, nor consumptive young lady, but a grand creature, tanned here and there, rosy as the morn, and full of lusty vigor; a body all health, strength, and beauty, a soul all love. She flung herself all over him in a moment, with cries of love unspeakable; and then it was, "Oh, my darling, my darling! Oh, my own, own! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Oh, oh, oh, oh! Is it you? Is it? Can it? Papa! Papa!" Then little convulsive hands patting him and feeling his beard and shoulders; then a sudden hail of violent kisses on his head, his eyes, his arms, his hands, his knees. Then the stout soldier, broken down by this, and sobbing for joy. "Oh, my child! My flesh and blood! Oh, oh, oh!" Then all manhood melted away except paternity; and a father turned mother, and clinging, kissing, and rocking to and fro with his child, and both crying for joy as if their hearts would burst.

A sight for angels to look down at and rejoice.

But what mortal pen could paint it?

CHAPTER XLIX.

THEY gave a long time to pure joy before either of them cared to put questions or compare notes. But at last he asked her, "Who is on the island besides you?"

"Oh," said she, "only my guardian angel. Poor Mr. Welch died the first week we were here."

He parted the hair on her brow and kissed it tenderly.

"And who is your guardian angel?"

"Why, you are now, my own papa; and well you have proved it. To think of your being the one to come, at your age!"

"Well, never mind me. Who has taken such care of my child? This the sick girl they frightened me about!"

"Indeed, papa, I *was* a dying girl. My very hand was wasted. Look at it now; brown as a berry, but so plump; you owe that to him; and, papa, I can walk twenty miles without fatigue: and so strong I could take you up in my arms and carry you, I know. But I am content to eat you." (A shower of kisses.) "I hope you will like him."

"My own Helen. Ah, I am a happy old man this day. What is his name?"

"Mr. Hazel. He is a clergyman. Oh, papa, I hope you *will* like him, for he has saved my life more than once; and then he has been so generous, so delicate, so patient; for I used him very ill at first; and you will find my character as much improved as my health; and all owing to Mr. Hazel."

"Well, I shall be glad to see this paragon and shake him by the hand. You may imagine what I feel to any one that is kind to my darling. An old gentleman? About my age?"

"Oh, no, papa."

"Hum!"

"If he had been old I should not be here, for he has had to fight for me against cruel men with knives, and work like a horse. He built me a hut, and made this cave, and almost killed himself in my service. Poor Mr. Hazel!"

"How old is he?"

"Dearest papa I never asked him that, but I think he is four or five years older than me, and a hundred years better than I shall ever be, I am afraid. What is the matter, darling?"

"Nothing, child, nothing."

"Don't tell me. Can't I read your dear face?"

"Come, let me read yours. Look me in the face now, full."

He took her by the shoulders firmly, but not the least roughly, and looked straight into her hazel eyes. She blushed at this ordeal—blushed scarlet; but her eyes, pure as Heaven, faced his fairly, though with a puzzled look.

He concluded this paternal inspection by kissing her on the brow. "I was an old fool," he muttered.

"What do you say, dear papa?"

"Nothing, nothing. Kiss me again. Well, love, you had better find this guardian angel of yours, that I may take him by the hand and give him a father's blessing and make him some little return by carrying him home to England along with my darling."

"I'll call him, papa. Where can he be gone, I wonder?"

She ran out to the terrace and called:

"Mr. Hazel! Mr. Hazel! I don't see him; but he can't be far off. Mr. Hazel!"

Then she came back and made her father sit down, and she sat at his knee, beaming with delight.

"Ah, papa," said she, "it was you who loved me best in England. It was you that came to look for me."

"No," said he, "there are others there that love you as well in their way. Poor Wardlaw! On his sick-bed for you, cut down like a flower the moment he heard you were lost in the Proserpine. Ah, and I have broken faith."

"That is a story," said Helen; "you couldn't."

"For a moment, I mean; I promised the dear old man—he furnished the ship, the men, and the money to find you."

"Well, but what did you promise him?" said Helen, blushing and interrupting hastily, for she could not bear the turn matters were taking.

"Oh, only to give you the second kiss from Arthur. Come, better late than never." She knelt before him, and put out her forehead instead of her lips. "There," said the general, "that kiss is from Arthur Wardlaw, your intended. Why, who the deuce is this?"

A young man was standing wonder-struck at the entrance, and had heard the general's last words; they went through him like a knife. General Rolleston stared at him.

Helen uttered an ejaculation of pleasure, and said. "This is my dear father, and he wants to thank you——"

"I don't understand this," said the general. "I thought you told me there was nobody on the island but you and your guardian angel. Did you count this poor fellow for nobody? Why, he did you a good turn once."

"Oh, papa!" said Helen reproachfully. "Why, this *is* my guardian angel. This is Mr. Hazel."

The general looked from one to another in amazement, then he said to Helen, "This your Mr. Hazel?"

"Yes, papa."

"Why, you don't mean to tell me you don't know this man?"

"Know him, papa! Why, of course I know Mr. Hazel; know him and revere him beyond all the world except you."

The general lost patience. "Are you out of your senses?" said he. "This man here is no Hazel. Why, this is James Seaton—our gardener—a ticket-of-leave man."

CHAPTER L.

At this fearful insult Helen drew back from her father with a cry of dismay, and then moved toward Hazel with her hands extended, as if to guard him from another blow, and at the same time deprecate his resentment. But then she saw his dejected attitude; and she stood confounded, looking from one to the other.

"I knew him in a moment by his beard," said the general coolly.

"Ah!" cried Helen, and stood transfixed. She glared at Hazel and his beard with dilating eyes, and began to tremble.

Then she crept back to her father and held him tight; but still looked over her shoulder at Hazel with dilating eyes and paling cheek.

As for Hazel, his deportment all this time went far toward convicting him; he leaned against the side of the cave, and hung his head in silence; and his face was ashy pale. When General Rolleston saw his deep distress, and the sudden terror and repugnance the revelation seemed to create in his daughter's mind, he felt sorry he had gone so far, and said: "Well, well; it is not for me to judge you harshly; for you have laid me under a deep obligation; and, after all, I can see good reasons why you should conceal your name from other people. But you ought to have told my daughter the truth."

Helen interrupted him; or, rather, she seemed unconscious he was speaking. She had never for an instant taken her eye off the culprit; and now she spoke to him:

"Who, and what, are you, sir?"

"My name is Robert Penfold."

"Penfold! Seaton!" cried Helen. "Alias upon alias!" And she turned to her father in despair. Then to Hazel again. "Are you what papa says?"

"I am."

"Oh, papa! papa!" cried Helen, "then there is no truth nor honesty in all the world!" And she turned her back on Robert Penfold, and cried and sobbed upon her father's breast.

General Rolleston, whose own heart was fortified, took a shallow view of the situation; and, moreover, Helen's face was hidden on his bosom; and what he saw was Hazel's manly and intelligent countenance pale and dragged with agony and shame.

"Come, come," he said gently, "don't cry about it; it is not your fault; and don't be too hard on the man. You told me he had saved your life."

"Would he had not!" said the sobbing girl.

"There, Seaton," said the general. "Now you see the consequences of deceit; it wipes out the deepest obligations." He resumed, in a different tone, "But not with me. This is a woman: but I am a man, and know how a bad man could have abused the situation in which I found you two."

"Not worse than he has done," cried Helen.

"What do you tell me, girl!" said General Rolleston, beginning to tremble.

"What could he do worse than to steal my esteem and veneration, and drag my heart's best feelings in the dirt? He seemed all truth; and he is all a lie; the world is all a lie; would I could leave it this moment!"

"This is all romantic nonsense," said General Rolleston, beginning to be angry. "You are a little fool, and in your ignorance and innocence have no idea how well this young fellow has behaved on the whole. I tell you what; in spite of this one fault, I should like to shake him by the hand. I will, too; and then admonish him afterward."

"You shall not. You shall not," cried Helen, seizing him almost violently by the arm. "You take him by the hand! A monster! How dare you steal into my esteem? How dare you be a miracle of goodness, self-denial, learning, and every virtue that a lady might worship and thank God for, when all the time you are a vile, convicted——"

"I'll thank you not to say that word," said Hazel firmly.

"I'll call you what you are, if I choose," said Helen defiantly. But for all that she did not do it. She said piteously, "What offense had I ever given you? What crime had I ever committed, that you must make me the victim of this diabolical deceit? Oh, sir, what powers of mind you have wasted to achieve this victory over a poor unoffending girl! What was your motive? What good could come of it to you? He won't speak to me. He is not even penitent. Sullen and obstinate! He shall be taken to England, and well punished for it. Papa, it is your duty."

"Helen," said the general, "You ladies are rather too fond of hitting a man when he is down. And you speak daggers, as the saying is; and then wish you had bitten your tongue off sooner. You are my child, but you are also a British subject; and, if you charge me on my duty to take this man to England and have him imprisoned, I must. But, before you go to that length, you had better hear the whole story."

"Sir," said Robert Penfold quietly, "I will go back to prison this minute, if she wishes it."

"How dare you interrupt papa?" said Helen haughtily, but with a great sob.

"Come, come," said the general, "be quiet, both of you, and let me say my say." (To Robert.) "You had better turn your head away, for I am a straightforward man, and I'm going to show her you are not a villain, but a madman. This Robert Penfold wrote me a letter, imploring me to find him some honest employment, however menial. That looked well, and I made him my gardener. He was a capital gardener; but one fine day he caught sight of you. *You* are a very lovely girl, though you don't seem to know it; and *he* is a madman; and he fell in love with you."

Helen uttered an ejaculation of great surprise. The general resumed:

"He can only have seen you at a distance, or you would recognize him; but (really it is laughable) he saw you somehow, though you did not see him, and—well, his insanity hurt himself, and did not hurt you. You remember how he suspected burglars, and watched night after night under your window. That was out of love for you. His insanity

took the form of fidelity and humble devotion. He got a wound for his pains, poor fellow! and you made Arthur Wardlaw get him a clerk's place."

"Arthur Wardlaw!" cried Seaton. "Was it to him I owed it?" and he groaned aloud.

Said Helen: "He hates poor Arthur, his benefactor." Then to Penfold: "If you are that James Seaton, you received a letter from me."

"I did," said Penfold; and, putting his hand in his bosom, he drew out a letter and showed it her.

"Let me see it," said Helen.

"Oh, no! don't take this from me, too," said he piteously.

General Rolleston continued. "The day you sailed he disappeared; and I am afraid not without some wild idea of being in the same ship with you. This was very reprehensible. Do you hear, young man? But what is the consequence? You get shipwrecked together, and the young madman takes such care of you that I find you well and hearty, and calling him your guardian angel. And—another thing to his credit—he has set his wits to work to restore you to the world.

"These ducks, one of which brings me here? Of course it was he who contrived that, not you. Young man, you must learn to look things in the face; this young lady is not of your sphere, to begin; and, in the next place, she is engaged to Mr. Arthur Wardlaw; and I am come out in his steamboat to take her to him. And as for you, Helen, take my advice; think what most convicts are, compared to this one. Shut your eyes entirely to his folly, as I shall; and let you and I think only of his good deeds, and so make him all the return we can. You and I will go on board the steamboat directly; and, when we are there, we can tell Moreland there is somebody else on the island." He then turned to Penfold, and said: "My daughter and I will keep in the after-part of the vessel, and anybody that likes can leave the ship at Valparaiso. Helen, I know it is wrong; but what can I do?—I am so happy. You are alive and well. How can I punish or afflict a human creature to-day? And, above all, how can I crush this unhappy young man, without whom I should never have seen you again in this world? My dear lost child!"

And he held her at arm's length and gazed at her, and then drew her to his bosom; and for him Robert Penfold ceased to exist, except as a man that had saved his daughter.

"Papa," said Helen, after a long pause, "just make him tell why he could not trust to me. Why he passed himself off to me for a clergyman."

"I am a clergyman," said Robert Penfold.

"Oh!" said Helen, shocked to find him so hardened, as she thought. She lifted her hands to heaven, and the tears streamed from her eyes. "Well, sir," said she faintly, "I see I cannot reach your conscience. One question more and then I have done with you forever. Why in all these months that we have been alone, and that you have shown me the nature, I don't say of an honest man, but of an angel—yes, papa, of an angel—why could you not show me one humble virtue, sincerity? It belongs to a man. Why could you not say, 'I have committed one crime in my life, but repented forever; judge by this confession, and by what you have seen of me, whether I shall ever commit another. Take me as I am, and esteem me as a penitent and more worthy man; but I will not deceive you and pass for a paragon.' Why could you not say as much as this to me? If you loved me, why deceive me so cruelly?"

These words, uttered no longer harshly, but in a mournful, faint, despairing voice, produced an effect the speaker little expected. Robert Penfold made two attempts to speak, but though he opened his mouth, and his lips quivered, he could get no word out. He began to choke with emotion; and, though he shed no tears, the convulsion that goes with weeping in weaker natures overpowered him in a way that was almost terrible.

"Confound it!" said General Rolleston, "this is monstrous of you, Helen; it is barbarous. You are not like your poor mother."

She was pale and trembling, and the tears flowing; but she showed her native obstinacy. She said hoarsely: "Papa, you are blind. He *must* answer me. He knows he must!"

"I must," said Robert Penfold, gasping still. Then he manned himself by a mighty effort, and repeated with dignity, "I will." There was a pause while the young man still struggled for composure and self-command.

"Was I not often on the point of telling you my sad story? Then is it fair to say that I should never have told it to you? But, O Miss Rolleston, you don't know what agony it may be to an unfortunate man to tell the truth. There are accusations so terrible, so *defiling,* that, when a man has proved them false, they still stick to him and soil him. Such an accusation I labor under, and a judge and jury have branded me. I feared the prejudices of the world. I dreaded to see your face alter to me. Yes, I trembled, and hesitated, and asked myself whether a man is bound to repeat a foul slander against himself, even when thirteen shallow men have said it, and made the lie law."

"There," said General Rolleston, "I thought how it would be, Helen; now we shall have the old story; he is innocent; I never knew a convict that wasn't if he found a fool to listen to him. I decline to hear another word. The boat is waiting, and we can't stay to hear you justify a felony."

"I AM NOT A FELON. I AM A MARTYR."

CHAPTER LI.

ROBERT PENFOLD drew himself up to his full height, and uttered these strange words with a sad majesty that was very imposing. But General Rolleston, steeled by experience of convicts, their plausibility, and their histrionic powers, was staggered only for a moment. He deigned no reply; but told Helen Captain Moreland was waiting for her, and she had better go on board at once.

She stood like a statue.

"No, papa, I'll not turn my back on him till I know whether he is a felon or a martyr."

"My poor child, has he caught you at once with a clever phrase? A judge and a jury have settled that."

Robert Penfold sighed patiently. But from that moment he ignored General Rolleston, and looked to Helen only. And she fixed her eyes upon his face with a tenacity and an intensity of observation that surpassed anything he had ever seen in his life. It dazzled him; but it did not dismay him.

"Miss Rolleston," said he, "I am a clergyman, and a private tutor at Oxford. One of my pupils was—Arthur Wardlaw. I took an interest in him because my father, Michael Penfold, was in Wardlaw's employ. This Arthur Wardlaw mimicked one of the college officers publicly and offensively, and was about to be expelled, and that would have ruined his immediate prospects: for his father is just, but stern. I fought hard for him, and, being myself popular with the authorities, I got him off. He was grateful, or seemed to be, and we became greater friends than ever. We confided in each other.

"He told me he was in debt in Oxford, and much alarmed lest it should reach his father's ears, and lose him the promised partnership. I told him I was desirous to buy a small living near Oxford, which was then vacant; but I had only saved £400, and the price was £1,000; I had no means of raising the balance. Then he said, 'Borrow £2,000 of my father; give me fourteen hundred of it, and take your own time to repay the £600. I shall be my father's partner in a month or two,' said he; 'you can pay us back in instalments.' I thought this very kind of him. I did not want the living for myself, but to give my dear father certain comforts and country air every week.

"Well, I came to London about this business; and a stranger called on me, and said he came from Mr. Arthur Wardlaw, who was not well enough to come himself. He produced a note of hand for £2,000, signed John Wardlaw, and made me indorse it, and told me where to get it cashed; he would come next day for Arthur Wardlaw's share of the money. Well, I suspected no ill; would you? I went and got the note discounted, and locked the money up. It was not my money; the greater part was Arthur Wardlaw's. That same evening a policeman called, and asked several questions, which of course I answered. He then got me out of the house on

some pretence, and arrested me as a forger."

"Oh!" cried Helen.

"I forgot the clergyman; I was a gentleman, and a man, insulted, and I knocked the officer down directly. But his myrmidons overpowered me. I was tried at the Central Criminal Court on two charges. First, the Crown (as they call the attorney that draws the indictment) charged me with forging the note of hand; and then with not forging it, but passing it, well knowing that somebody else had forged it. Well, Undercliff, the expert, swore positively that the forged note was not written by me; and the Crown, as they call it, was defeated on that charge. But being proved a liar in a court of justice did not abash my accuser; the second charge was pressed with equal confidence.

"The note, you are to understand, was forged. That admits of no doubt; and I passed it. The question was whether I had passed it knowing it to be forged. How was that to be determined? And here it was that my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, destroyed me. Of course, as soon as I was put in prison, I wrote and sent to Arthur Wardlaw. Would you believe it? he would not come to me. He would not even write. Then, as the time drew near, I feared he was a traitor. I treated him like one. I told my solicitor to drag him into court as my witness, and *make* him tell the truth.

"The clerk went down accordingly, and found he kept his door always locked; but the clerk outwitted him, and served him with the subpœna in his bedroom, before he could crawl under the bed. But he baffled us at last; he never appeared in the witness-box; and when my counsel asked the court to imprison him, his father swore he could not come: he was dying and all out of sympathy with me. Fine sympathy! that closed the lips, and concealed the truth; one syllable of which would have saved his friend and benefactor from a calamity worse than death.

"I believe his sickness and his death were lies like himself. For want of one word from Arthur Wardlaw to explain that I had every reason to expect a note of hand from him, the jury condemned me. They were twelve honest but shallow men—invited to go inside another man's bosom and guess what was there. They guessed that I knew and understood a thing which to this hour I neither know nor understand, by God!"

He paused a moment, then he resumed:

"These twelve men, after much hesitation, condemned me; but recommended me to mercy. Mercy! What mercy did I deserve? Either I was innocent, or hanging was too good for me. No; in their hearts they doubted my guilt; and their doubt took that timid form instead of acquitting me. I was amazed at the verdict, and asked leave to tell the judge why Arthur Wardlaw had defied the court, and absented himself as my witness. Had the judge listened for one minute, he would have seen I was innocent. But no. I was in England, where the mouth of the accused is stopped, if he is fool enough to employ counsel. The judge stopped my mouth, as your father just now tried to stop it; and they branded me as a felon.

"I'll say no more; my patience is exhausted by wrongs and insults. I am as honest a man as ever breathed; and the place where we stand is mine, for I made it. Leave it and me this moment. Go to England and leave me where the animals, more reasonable than you, have the sense to see my real character. I'll not sail in the same ship with any man, nor any woman either, who can look me in the face, and take me for a felon."

He swelled and cowered with the just wrath of an honest man driven to bay; and his eyes shot black lightning. He was sublime.

Helen cowered; but her spirited old father turned red, and said haughtily:

"We take you at your word, and leave you, you insolent vagabond! Follow me this instant, Helen!"

And he marched out of the cavern in a fury.

But, instead of following him, Helen stood stock-still, and cowered, and cowered till she seemed sinking forward to the ground, and she got hold of Robert Penfold's hand, and kissed it, and moaned over it.

"Martyr! Martyr!" she whispered, and still kissed his hand, like a slave of-

fering her master pity, and asking pardon. "James Seaton, I love you for your madness and your devotion to her whom you had only seen at a distance. Ah! that was love! John Hazel, I love you for all that has passed between us. What can any other man be to me?—or woman to you? But, most of all, I love *you,* Robert Penfold—my hero and my martyr. When I am told to your face that you are a felon, then to your face I say you are my idol, my hero, and my martyr. Love! the word is too tame, too common. I worship you, I adore you! How noble you are now you forgive me! for you do forgive me, Robert; you must, you shall. No; you will not send your Helen away from you for her one fault so soon repented! Show me you forgive me; show me you love me still, almost as much as I love you. He is crying. Oh, my darling, my darling, my darling!" And she was on his neck in a moment, with tears and tender kisses.

A groan, or rather, we might say, a snort of fury, interrupted the most blissful moment either of these young creatures had ever known. It came from General Rolleston, now white with wrath and horror.

"You villain!" he cried.

Helen threw herself upon him, and put her hand before his mouth.

"Not a word more, or I shall forget I am your daughter. No one is to blame but I. I love him. I made him love me. He has been trying hard not to love me so much. But I am a woman; and could not deny myself the glory and the joy of being loved better than woman was ever loved before. Kill me, if you like; insult me, if you will: but not a word against him, or I give him my hand, and we live and die together on this island. O papa! he has often saved that life you value so; and I have saved his. He is all the world to me. Have pity on your child. Have pity on him who carries my heart in his bosom."

She flung herself on her knees, and strained him tight, and implored him, with head thrown back, and little clutching hands, and eloquent eyes.

Ah! it is hard to resist the voice and look and clinging of a man's own flesh and blood. Children are so strong—upon their knees: their dear faces, bright copies of our own, are just the height of our hearts then.

The old man was staggered, was almost melted.

"Give me a moment to think," said he, in a broken voice. "This blow takes my breath away."

Helen rose, and laid her head upon her father's shoulder, and still pleaded for her love by her soft touch and her tears that now flowed freely.

He turned to Penfold with all the dignity of age and station. "Mr. Penfold," said he, with grave politeness, "after what my daughter has said, I must treat you as a man of honor, or I must insult her. Well, then, I expect you to show me you are what she thinks you, and are not what a court of justice has proclaimed you. Sir, this young lady is engaged with her own free will to a gentleman who is universally esteemed, and has never been accused *to his face* of any unworthy act.

"Relying on her plighted word, the Wardlaws have fitted out a steamer and searched the Pacific, and found her. Can you, as a man of honor, advise her to stay here and compromise her own honor in every way? Ought she to break faith with her betrothed on account of vague accusations made behind his back?"

"It was only in self-defense I accused Mr. Arthur Wardlaw," said Robert Penfold.

General Rolleston resumed:

"You said just now there are accusations which soil a man. If you were in my place, would you let your daughter marry a man of honor, who had unfortunately been found guilty of a felony?"

Robert groaned and hesitated, but he said, "No."

"Then what is to be done? She must either keep her plighted word, or else break it. For whom? For a gentleman she esteems and loves, but cannot marry. A leper may be a saint; but I would rather bury my child than marry her to a leper. A convict may be a saint; but I'll kill her with my own hand sooner than she shall marry a convict: and in your heart and conscience you cannot blame me. Were you a father, you

would do the same. What then remains for her and me but to keep faith? and what can you do better than leave her, and carry away her everlasting esteem and her father's gratitude?

"It is no use being good by halves, or bad by halves. You must either be a selfish villain, and urge her to abandon all shame, and live here on this island with you forever, or you must be a brave and honest man, and bow to a parting that is inevitable. Consider, sir; your eloquence and her pity have betrayed this young lady into a confession that separates you.

"Her enforced residence here with you has been innocent. It would be innocent no longer, now she has been so mad as to own she loves you. And I tell you frankly, if, after that confession, you insist on going on board the steamer with her, I must take you; humanity requires it; but, if I do, I shall hand you over to the law as a convict escaped before his time. Perhaps I ought to do so as it is; but that is not certain. I don't know to what country this island belongs.

"I may have no right to capture you in strange dominions; but an English ship is England—and if you set foot on the Springbok you are lost. Now, then, you are a man of honor; you love my child truly, and not selfishly; you have behaved nobly until to-day; go one step farther on the right road; call worldly honor and the God whose vows you have taken, sir, to your aid, and do your duty."

"O man, man!" cried Robert Penfold, "you ask more of me than flesh and blood can bear. What shall I say? What shall I do?"

Helen replied calmly: "Take my hand, and let us die together, since we cannot live together, with honor."

General Rolleston groaned. "For this, then, I have traversed one ocean, and searched another, and found my child. I am nothing to her—nothing. Oh, who would be a father!" He sat down, oppressed with shame and grief, and bowed his head in manly but pathetic silence.

"O papa, papa!" cried Helen, "forgive your ungrateful child!" And she kneeled and sobbed, with her forehead on his knees.

Then Robert Penfold, in the midst of his own agony, found room in that great heart of his for pity. He knelt down himself, and prayed for help in this bitter trial. He rose haggard with the struggle, but languid and resigned, like one whose death warrant has been read.

"Sir," said he, "there is but one way. You must take her home; and I shall stay here."

"Leave you all alone on this island!" said Helen. "Never! If you stay here, I shall stay to comfort you."

"I decline that offer. I am beyond the reach of comfort."

"Think what you do, Robert," said Helen, with unnatural calmness.

"If you have no pity on yourself, have pity on us. Would you rob me of the very life you have taken such pains to save? My poor father will carry nothing to England but my dead body. Long before we reach that country I loved so well, and now hate for its stupidity and cruelty to you, my soul will have flown back to this island to watch over you, Robert. You bid me abandon you to solitude and despair. Neither of you two love me half as much as I love you both."

General Rolleston sighed deeply. "If I thought that——" said he. Then, in a faint voice, "My own courage fails me now. I look into my heart, and see that my child's life is dearer to me than all the world. She was dying, they say. Suppose I send Moreland to the Continent for a clergyman, and marry you. Then you can live on this island forever. Only you must let me live here, too; for I could never show my face again in England after acting so dishonorably. It will be a miserable end of a life passed in honor; but I suppose it will not be for long. Shame can kill as quickly as disappointed love."

"Robert, Robert!" cried Helen, in agony.

The martyr saw that he was master of the situation, and must be either base or very noble—there was no middle way. He leaned his head on his hands, and thought with all his might.

"Hush!" said Helen. "He is wiser than we are. Let him speak."

"If my life depended on yours, would you not live?"

"You know I would."

"When I was wrecked on White Water Island, you played the man. Not one woman in a thousand could have launched a boat, and sailed it with a boat-hook for a mast, and——"

Helen interrupted him. "It was nothing; I loved you. I love you better now."

"I believe it, and therefore I ask you to rise above your sex once more, and play the man for me. This time it is not my life you are to rescue, but that which is more precious still: my good name."

"Ah! that would be worth living for!" cried Helen.

"You will find it very hard to do; but not harder for a woman than to launch a boat, and sail her without a mast. See my father, Michael Penfold. See Undercliff, the expert. See the solicitor, the counsel. Sift the whole story; and, above all, find out why Arthur Wardlaw dared not enter the witness-box. Be obstinate as a man; be supple as a woman; and don't talk of dying when there is a friend to be rescued from dishonor by living and working."

".Die! while I can rescue you from death or dishonor! I will not be so base. Ah, Robert, how well you know me!"

"Yes, I do know you, Helen. I believe that great soul of yours will keep your body strong to do this brave work for him you love, and who loves you. And as for me, I am man enough to live for years upon this island, if you will only promise me two things."

"I promise, then."

"Never to die, and never to marry Arthur Wardlaw, until you have reversed that lying sentence which has blasted me. Lay your hand on your father's head, and promise me that."

Helen laid her hand upon her father's head, and said: "I pledge my honor not to die, if life is possible, and never to marry any man, until I have reversed that lying sentence which has blasted the angel I love."

"And I pledge myself to help her," said General Rolleston warmly, "for now I *know* you are a man of honor. I have too often been deceived by eloquence to listen much to that. But now you have proved by your actions what you are. You pass a forged check, knowing it to be forged! I'd stake my salvation it's a lie. There's my hand. God comfort you! God reward you, my noble fellow!"

"I hope he will, sir," sobbed Robert Penfold. "You are her father; and you take my hand; perhaps that will be sweet to think of by and by; but no joy can enter my heart now; it is broken. Take her away at once, sir. Flesh is weak. My powers of endurance are exhausted."

General Rolleston acted promptly on this advice. He rolled up her rugs, and the things she had made, and Robert had the courage to take them down to the boat. Then he came back, and the general took her bag to the boat.

All this time the girl herself sat wringing her hands in anguish, and not a tear. It was beyond that now. As he passed Robert, the general said: "Take leave of her alone. I will come for her in five minutes. You see how sure I feel you are a man of honor."

When Robert went in, she rose and tottered to him, and fell on his neck. She saw it was the death-bed of their love, and she kissed his eyes, and clung to him. They moaned over each other, and clung to each other in mute despair.

The general came back, and he and Robert took Helen, shivering and fainting, to the boat. As the boat put off, she awoke from her stupor, and put out her hands to Robert with one piercing cry.

They were parted.

(To be Concluded.)

CELEBRITY.

By Wood Levette Wilson.

EMERGENCIES oft make men great
By shift of war or stroke of state;
But oftentimes a minor call
Shows them most pitiably small.

"HER GRACE."

By Elizabeth Day.

IN which susceptible man is utilized to the heart's content of a certain fair lady.

THE fit of her black gown was a shade too perfect—and then the jeweled buckles; the thick pearl comb, below the knot in her hair; the heavy rings on the hand which held its glove, and the huge single diamond in the clasp at her throat!

I decided that she was either more or less than a lady. On the whole I was inclined to let her suffer by comparison with the American girl in the other corner of the compartment, until, just before the train pulled out of the Padua station, her cavalier appeared. Then I seemed to get an inkling of the truth.

The man was in immaculate lancer's uniform—pale bluish gray, with stripes and epaulets. The Grand Cross of St. Andrew blazed above lesser orders beneath his cloak as it fell aside. Yet he offered her a glass of Cinciano and a bundle of papers and he took the seat facing her, not with devotion, not with respect, but with obsequious humility. She accepted his service in an absent-minded way, and buried herself in the *Monde et Ville* column of the *Figaro*.

Presently she called the officer's attention to an item over which she waxed indignant.

"*Sont-ils gagas ces gens?*" she cried; "I suppose this ends the whole affair!" and then she caught my eye fixed furtively upon her, and she checked herself and returned to the paper. But a moment later, thanks to the polished window glass, I saw that, under cover of the *Figaro,* and of my interest in the scenery, she was looking at me again. She was, in fact, studying me closely. From head to foot of my person no detail escaped her pondering gaze. She was passing me in review. I wondered at so intense an interest, even a cursory interest. I was, obviously enough, an Englishman, and that a mere glance at my tweeds and sticks and boxes should not satisfy casual curiosity rather puzzled me.

Love is far from being the only passion that reflects itself. I felt an answering curiosity working within my own breast. As the brakes squeaked in the Venice station I knew that I had become inquisitive to a degree. I brushed past a courier, who was hurrying toward the compartment, and got a *Figaro* from the news-stand by the gate. I scanned the *Monde et Ville.*

Italian names were few. The General Lucco was at Nice. The singer D'Acosta had left Paris. Madame de Centomille had awarded the pigeon-shooting prizes at Pau. I rejected one suggestion after another until I reached the following:

> . . . . . The Dowager Duchess of M—— has left the Quirinal and is said to be traveling incognita with a small suite. Is she bound for the Dolomites or for the Scottish Highlands on this occasion? At all events the duchess leaves behind her, as usual, the discretion of her royal cousins, and bears with her, as usual, the heart of his highness, her stepson.

"She didn't look like a dowager," I reflected, "nor like a widow, for that matter. But she did look like a 'personage' traveling incog." I turned from the news-stand, and watched her sweep down to the quay. "And very much," I continued to myself, "like one who might bear away the heart of his highness, her stepson."

I had reached my own hotel before the conviction flashed upon me that the jewels which I had regarded as questionable were a part of the regalia of the House of Savoy.

The whole adventure struck me as too trivial to be worthy of mention in my daily and dutiful epistle to Miss Evelyn Blashford, of Masden Park.

II.

In the afternoon, wishing to unburden my mind of a commission, I betook myself to the finger-bowl department of the biggest glass factory on the Canal.

Across a table loaded with fragile glitter, stood the "Duchess of M——" surrounded by a little court of obsequious salesmen. She was dressed as before, but a white cloth cloak hung loosely from her shoulders. The colonel of lancers had been replaced by two younger officers.

"It's too flat, it is too deep, it has no gold band," she was busily objecting to proffered samples of champagne glasses. "No, you have not the time to make them: I wish them to-night. Surely among all these——" she included the whole sparkling room in a wide gesture and arrested her arm in mid-air as her glance fell upon me, awaiting my turn on the other side of the counter. A puzzled instant of trying to place a familiar face, and then I saw, to my dismay, that she thought she ought to pretend to recognize me.

"Good morning," she said in English, with carefully graded cordiality. The meeting was evidently to be so casual that I could not feel called upon to explain. Yet as I came around the table and took her hand I felt like an impostor.

"Good morning, madame," I replied cheerfully, but her finger flew to her lips.

"D'Albina," she whispered.

"As usual," I hazarded.

"Will you help me to choose some glasses?" she asked, returning to the tray held by the manager. "I should trust so unhesitatingly to your taste in such matters."

"Ah, madame, it is like you to say that," I declared. I was distractedly wondering whether she was simply trying to cover her confusion, or whether she really took me for some particular acquaintance. If the latter, I felt that I had complicated the situation by showing that I knew who she was. In any case, I hoped that she would keep to questions as universal as questions of taste. "I fear I have not the ability you impute," I finally disclaimed.

"You have never failed me yet," insisted the lady. I coughed hastily and bent my attention upon the glasses.

"Doesn't it all depend on the kind of champagne?" I suggested. "If they are for Château YQuem—surely the most sparkling, the most intoxicating, the nearest to pure nectar of them all—I should say the glasses with the fluted border——"

"I wonder why?" she murmured, and slid her eyes at me cornerwise.

"But," I continued, "if they are for Veuve Clicquot, you should have the engraved band and twisted stem."

"You may send the glasses with the fluted border," she said, still looking at me.

"They shall be delivered at once, madame," replied the manager, also looking at me, and backing away to execute the order.

Madame d'Albina turned cordially to me.

"I thank you for helping me to a decision," she said. "My launch is at the door. Where may I set you down?"

"Oh, pardon me," I gasped, "but I——"

"Your own errand? I see," she bowed. "We can perfectly well await your pleasure."

I searched the pigeon-holes of memory for terms of royal etiquette. One was not invited, of course, but commanded to dine at Windsor. Did the same laws prevail in Italy, and on electric launches? Would my refusal be a social breach?

"Not that! But the honor!" I cried, and she laughed as if the protest were a useless form. I could only follow her to the door with a guilty memory of my duties to Miss Evelyn Blashford, of Masden Park.

III.

The launch lay flush with the step, steadied by sailors in fatigue dress of spotless duck.

The lady chose my hand and stepped aboard.

"Monsieur, I present the Count of Bellari and the Captain Ulysse Russo,

and messieurs his lieutenants," she said, in the spicy tongue of diplomacy which glosses over some omissions of names. The officers saluted and she drew me to the seat of honor. The sailors pushed off, the launch breathed deeply and glided forward, its little screw beating the dark water, its pennants and awnings a-flutter.

"Whither?" asked the lady, inclining to me.

"Oh! but, madame," I protested, "please set me down anywhere."

"Well——" she hesitated. "We were going to the Lido. But we can turn back up the Canal if your hotel——"

"By no means!" I exclaimed, before I realized that I was thus committing myself still more deeply. One of the lieutenants gave an order to the steersman and we throbbed merrily out into the open lagoon. Madame craned her neck a little to watch the island city left behind us.

"How dull the Riva looks," was presently her comment on the opalescent outline. "Not a soul in town! The Quadri will be a desert. But at least no serenade this time. Of course, when I am here for a perfect rest, they know better than to suspect that I am here at all! Look at those ducks of red sails coming over the bar! And I haven't sent my offering to the fishermen's fund. Remind me, Bellari. I hope there is something very nice in that tea-basket, captain. I hope there are pickles. Don't you adore pickles, monsieur?" She appealed to me again, and then she leaned back and crossed her hands as if giving me the chair.

I was as uncomfortable as I could remember ever to have been. Would not an awful moment of awakening come? Would it not dawn upon her where she had really seen me? And what could I do then? Yet I did not see at what point I might have escaped. And surely now, explanation would seem gratuitous rudeness. My only excuse had been the saving to her of an awkward situation.

"Pickles? If I may paraphrase 'Cyrano,' a perfect pickle is the tail of the 'q' in Epicure."

"You must have been head boy in spelling," laughed the duchess.

"No, in philosophy," I corrected; but my echo to her laugh was a painful affair. A new thought had risen to smite me. The colonel of lancers who had attended her on the train—was it not possible that he might turn up at any moment? He would be sure to recognize me.

"Philosophy! Ah, me, how fine a thing!" she cried; "but it's words, words, words! And the sum of it is 'never mind'!"

"Quite right, too," I added.

"Oh! I dare say it is. Never mind! Never mind if you have to eat and dance and talk and dress too much and too often. There are still some left who believe that they have too little of all these things. And I tremble lest we should have no pickles after all. We are nearly there. It is growing warmer. Bellari, you may take my cloak. And see, over there, where the water is ruffled! No, not that way—there, toward the fishing fleet. A school of sole! And their pursuers close on their fins!"

She chattered on in the pleasant mélange of tongues which is often imitated, but which comes naturally only to the polyglot Bible and to the high-born Italian. I watched her face with a sickening sense of imminent disenchantment. When the moment came for my uncloaking, at the end of the third act, what would be the *dénoucment?* Would one of the young officers run me through, or would they give me to the sailors to be sewn up in Monte Cristo's sack? At least there would be no appeal. I felt that I was trespassing in high places. I was committing something more serious, by several shades, than intrusion.

"Madame," I exclaimed suddenly, feeling that the possibility of exposure was outweighing the certainty of confession, "I must entreat you when we land at the Lido to let me leave you—I—I must explain——"

"Gather ye roses—roses," she hummed softly, and then she leaned, ever so slightly, toward me and turned her head. "You were going to say?" she asked genially with lifted brows.

And so the balance swung violently the other way. The certain confession became more difficult to face than the possible exposure.

"For me, I ride," I answered.

The duchess looked beyond me to the descending sun and I watched its sparkle

in the big single diamond in the clasp at her throat. Then her eyes came traveling back to mine. In them played another sparkle, quickly veiled.

"Already?" she whispered.

"Why not live out that moral, and enjoy the moment," I demanded. "All your philosophy has come to this!"

A sailor scrambled past us and threw out the buffers, and the launch plumped gently against the Lido wharf.

"Bellari!" cried the duchess, springing ashore, "show them where I always have tea. I mean to walk slowly. Have it quite ready when I get there."

The officers moved into the middle distance with an alacrity which might have suggested habit. The sailors brought up the rear with the basket. I was to all intents alone with the lady.

"Am I—do you wish me—shall I follow them?" I asked, hesitating.

She scanned me as deliberately as if she had been passing judgment on a statue.

"Yes," she said.

I suppose my face fell, but I started forward briskly, for at every step the suite was widening the distance between us.

"Monsieur!" called the duchess.

I wheeled about.

She stood motionless, the close black gown heightening the cloudy darkness of her hair, the jewels repeating the light of her extraordinary eyes. I came back a step toward her, and then she smiled.

"With me," she said, and, in the whirl and circling of my senses, I entirely forgot Miss Evelyn Blashford, of Masden Park.

IV.

"WELL?" inquired the duchess.

"I decline to accept the burden of proof," I rejoined.

"We have not been introduced," sighed the duchess.

"On the other hand," I suggested, "we are both traveling incog."

"Then you know who I am?" she cried. She showed no surprise, however, at my declaration concerning myself. So I replied:

"And you, too, know who I am."

"True," she admitted. "But I fear that you know altogether too much."

"Enough, I hope, to be of service," I murmured.

"Yes, that is just it," the duchess said, and sighed again.

"Discretion seems to be at a premium," I ventured. "If there is something troubling you—something which requires a little diplomacy, a little discretion, a little convenient density——"

"Oh," she cried, "I hoped you would do it!"

"I will," I promised rashly enough.

"Then listen," she went on, in lowered tones. "I will be absolutely frank. I have changed my mind just a trifle—it is nothing particular. And I want you to take a message—to a—to the person concerned—something about a"—her voice was all but inaudible—"a sort of treaty."

"I understand perfectly," I assured her.

When a woman says that she is going to be absolutely frank, a man is naturally on his guard. I knew that something unusually dark was to be dealt with. And, although the lady's request was far from lucid, who would be so unreasonable as to expect state secrets to be hauled into the light of common day?

"The reward—the reward," whispered the duchess, and she blushed and looked down. I was not born yesterday.

"I am no tale-bearer," I said virtuously. "But simply to carry a message—and then to abide by the consequences."

"That is it!" she cried. "And then the parcel! It is rather valuable, that parcel!" She bent as if to whisper again, and her shoulder touched my sleeve.

"Isn't it always prudent," I suggested, "that the messenger should not know too much about the contents of a parcel?"

"You are good!" she went on. "But the worst of it all is this."

"Let us begin with this, then," said I.

"The note must go to-night," faltered the duchess.

"The seven o'clock express for Rome," I calculated at once.

"It is not for Rome," she sighed.

The duchess' reputation for intrigue was international; and we all know that the affairs of many cities are influenced from the Quirinal.

"The *wagon-lit* by Mont-Cenis?" I continued.

"The note is for Venice," confessed the lady, brightening.

"*Simplicitas!*" I cried, and held out my hand.

"I will drop you at the—the place after tea," whispered the duchess hastily, for, as we climbed over the top of a dune, the Adriatic wrinkled before us, and the little ducal court was waiting for the tea to steep.

I mistook mine for nectar.

An Englishman is so seldom concerned in thrilling affairs of intrigue, that the most indirect connection with them turns his head. For the moment I had forgotten the existence of a letter which lay, unstamped, in my inner pocket, and bore the address of Miss Evelyn Blashford, Masden Park.

V.

THE hour we spent on the Lido had been nicely chosen for the preservation of concealed identities. The first of the afternoon invasion of gondolas was beginning to land at the dock as we pushed off. The launch made a wide circle, avoided the little steamer and the flotilla, and coursed as if headed for the Public Gardens. Then she ran at half speed, close inshore, toward the Riva.

Three or four schooner yachts swung at their moorings. All were neatly in line, immaculate in aspect; but the last was the largest, the whitest, and the only one whose owner's pennant floated at the mast. She was also the latest arrival, if one could judge by the sailors scrubbing her bows.

"A yacht which has just arrived lies ahead," said one of the lieutenants.

"Bring up by her steps," replied the duchess.

As we turned her stern I read "The Pippa," in gold letters a foot high.

"The Pippa!" I cried, rising. "Why she's——"

"It is here," the duchess said, touching my sleeve. "You will be discretion itself."

She thrust a letter and a packet into my hand. One of our sailors caught the steps and offered me his shoulder.

"Deliver the letter," whispered the duchess hurriedly. "Come to me for dinner at the Hotel de Rome. Get yourself ashore somehow. Bring me an answer!"

I found myself on the swaying steps of the yacht. The launch slipped away.

"It is my brother's boat!" I called. "And he's aboard!"

But the duchess failed to hear. She smiled and touched her finger to her lips. I glanced at the letter in my hand. Sure enough—it was addressed to "Lord Robert Glynridden, aboard the Pippa."

I mounted the steps.

To his credit be it said, that Hawkins, coming to see who was invading, betrayed little surprise when his face, peering over the taffrail, met mine ten inches away. For an instant he gasped. When he actually recognized me he ceased to be astonished. Hawkins is used to the family's ways.

"Beg pardon, your grace," he said. "His lordship is in the saloon."

"Good evening, captain," I replied. "Is he expecting any one?" For I did not know what new developments might arise.

"I think he has been a sort of looking for your grace at each port this trip," he replied. I took a leaf from his book and declined to be surprised. It was well that when I walked into the saloon my facial muscles were under control.

Robert sat at a spindle-legged writing table, piled with telegrams. On the arm of his chair, both her hands in one of his, was perched a girl whose back was toward me. As I entered she sprang up and turned around. It was my fiancée, Miss Evelyn Blashford, of Masden Park.

VI.

A CONSIDERABLE silence ensued. Robert rose ponderously. I put my hand in my breast pocket. Evelyn shrieked. Hawkins came to the door.

"That is all!" cried Robert, and Hawkins' head disappeared.

"It is only a letter," I explained. "Two of them—one for each of you, in fact." I drew them both out, and laid them on the pile of telegrams.

"I have always thought——" began Robert in his parliamentary manner.

"*You* are perfectly excusable," I interrupted him. "It is the lady's conduct that appears to me questionable. As for her taste, she doubtless mistook you for me. We are a handsome pair of twins, Robert."

"You never cared for me," cried this modern Eve.

"I may assume that this—this elopement——" I stammered.

"Not at all. Honeymoon," corrected Robert. "We were married at St. Marylebone's a week before we started."

"Took place soon after I left England?" I inquired.

"We wrote to you, and we cabled. Your bankers had no instructions. It was three weeks ago. We saw you one day at Nice."

"Ah, yes!" I murmured. "I have been on the Riviera until yesterday." But I did not care to go deeply into the question of which day at Nice. "Then you came all the way by sea?"

"Didn't you know? Then how did you find us?" exclaimed Evelyn. And then I remembered the letter from the duchess.

"I met the Duchess of M——," I replied. "You are going in for politics, Bob!"

"Who is the Duchess of M——?" cried Evelyn.

"She happens to be the fat old stepmother of the thin old prince we met at Pau," replied Robert, "but I can't see what she has to do with us!"

I stared, I am afraid, but I instantly tried to take my cue from Bob.

"She thought she owed you some sort of—er—apology, or something. She asked me to give you that note. You'd better read it."

"As for yours, Eve—Lady Glynridden," I went on, "it is absurdly addressed, and its phrases are such—in fact it would be an impertinence——"

I tore it up.

"I left your others in a trunk at home," she sobbed. "And your ring, too. I didn't know where to send them."

Bob glared at me over the sheet he held.

"Who gave you this?" he demanded.

"The lady herself," I replied. "She waited, I take it, until she found a messenger she could trust." I let my chest expand a trifle. Bob thrust the paper under my eyes. It was a clipping from a morning paper, and I read:

> The yacht Pippa sailed from Monaco for Venice on Sunday. The yacht bears a master who is variously reported as seeking and as fleeing his brother and rival; and a mistress and bride, formerly known as Miss E—— B——, of M—— Park.

VII.

"You hadn't seen this before?" queried Bob.

"Never!" I replied. "Why should I be hunting through the silly papers for society notes? I never read such things!"

"Then where——" began Bob.

"There is a parcel, too," I suggested, and produced it.

Bob was entirely mystified, and as we all three fumbled with the strings I wondered if the duchess had not mistaken her errand. But when we had pulled off the wrappings, Evelyn held up a velvet case, and I saw the hot blood rush to my brother's face before she had raised the lid.

"Is the duchess—has she dark eyes?" asked Bob suddenly.

"Very," I replied.

"And hair? It is gray, perhaps, a yellowish gray?"

"It is like black silk," I murmured.

"Diana herself," he whispered. "You are in luck, my boy!"

"Diana! Not your old friend? Not D'Acosta?" I cried.

He nodded.

"But I've heard her sing."

"And didn't recognize her? She is a good actress!"

Evelyn held up a diamond crescent against her fair hair, and looked around for a mirror.

"It is lovely!" Bob assured her. "And it is yours, dear."

"But where did it come from?" she wondered.

"From a good source, and by a trusty messenger," said Bob.

"Did the—the duchess know who I was?" I asked.

"She knew you were an Englishman, of course, and you are like me, confoundedly like me—she might easily know you were the duke."

"While I knew she was the duchess!" I exclaimed.

"More's the pity! She ought to be one. And, by Jupiter, that could be remedied!"

I took a hand of Bob and Evelyn in each of mine.

"It's all right, old boy," I growled, "if she loved you best!" I kissed Evelyn's hand—her stupid, good, flabby, little hand. "Bob," I said, "the duchess told me to bring back an answer."

"You can tell her I sent you," he replied. Could it be possible that I saw envy in his eye?

And my own heart bounded upward as I reflected that there was no longer any such person as my fiancée, Miss Evelyn Blashford, of Masden Park.

BUGLES AND BUTTERFLIES.*

By J. Aubrey Tyson.

A story of army life wherein Love and War march to the music of battles.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

LIEUTENANT FORBES, of the 23d U. S. Cavalry, in Manila, and his friend Captain Longaker, are leading an expedition to bring in Pacheco, a Filipino leader, who is hiding farther down the coast.

Longaker has previously received an appointment to General Purdy's staff, which has been withdrawn to give him this hazardous command. He feels that some inimical personal motive is behind it, as his colonel, Secor, disapproves of his friendship with Miss Secor, and an old enemy of his, Florence Endicott, has lately made her appearance.

On the transport bearing them down the coast, Forbes and Longaker learn that Lieutenant Tappan a few weeks previously had landed a similar expedition under Forrester, and that the detachment is supposed to have been destroyed. Hardly has he made this explanation when they intercept a heliograph, apparently from Forrester, with a warning to beware of Devoges, who is to be their guide, and the information that Miss Secor and Mrs. Endicott are prisoners of Pacheco.

Longaker examines his orders and concludes that they have been tampered with, as there is an injunction to report to Carrero, the head of a native constabulary, which he does not think genuine.

Forbes, overhearing Devoges' instructions to his subordinate, Perigo, which corroborate his fears of treachery, manages to be delayed with part of the soldiers, and after Devoges and Longaker are well on their way, captures Perigo's camp, and overtaking Longaker, makes his guide their prisoner. Soon after they fall in with Sanchez, a messenger from Forrester. Learning that Forrester and his men have been captured and are on their way by one of two roads to Carrero's headquaters, the company divides; Devoges continuing with Forbes. He manages to escape and warn Carrero, and in pursuing him, Forbes rushes alone into the hostile camp. Longaker and the others arrive just in time to save his life, and with them is Martinez, Flora Endicott's brother, who is shot in the struggle.

Returning on the transport, Mrs. Endicott discovers that Forbes has some valuable papers which she is certain hold some incriminating evidence against her. She persuades him that they are merely personal letters to Carrero, and he at last promises that they shall be returned to her unread.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HONOR OF THE SERVICE.

TWICE only did Forbes and Mrs. Endicott meet in the course of the forty hours that followed their interview. On both these occasions the lieutenant gravely saluted the beautiful widow and passed on without giving her an opportunity to engage him in conversation. Most of his time was spent in his stateroom.

Longaker was so engrossed with his thoughts of Miss Secor, with whom he now spent several hours each day, that he failed to notice the moodiness of Forbes until a few hours before the Bojeador entered the harbor of Manila.

*Began April All-Story Magazine. Single copies, 10 cents.

His recognition of this change was due to a remark made by Miss Secor, who was sitting beside him under an awning at the stern. Turning to him abruptly, she said:

"Captain, what is the matter with your friend, Lieutenant Forbes? The doctor tells me that his wound is giving him little trouble. He seldom comes out on deck, however, and when I do chance to meet him he seems so moody that I am almost afraid to speak. Is he always so?"

"Why, no," Longaker answered thoughtfully. "The truth is, I have always found him almost provokingly complacent—light-hearted when the rest of us are grave, and chaffing those who are wont to take life too seriously. But now that you have spoken of the matter, it does occur to me that a change has come over the old boy."

As he spoke, his heart smote him a little, for he suddenly remembered that since coming aboard the Bojeador his devotion to the young woman at his side had caused him to see comparatively little of his old friend.

"I wonder what it is!" he mused.

As he glanced carelessly toward Miss Secor, he saw that she was looking at him in a quizzical manner that suggested that she was tempted to speak of something, but hesitated to do so.

"What is it, dear?" asked Longaker, speaking with an affectionate familiarity which was only about twenty-four hours' old.

Harriet looked away.

"I've been thinking——" she began, and stopped.

Longaker looked at her earnestly. After a little pause the young woman went on:

"Have you noticed that a strange change has come over Mrs. Endicott, as well?"

"I've noticed that she is not with you as much as she was during the first few hours we were on the ship. But I supposed—well, I thought that perhaps she meant to be kind to me. She has been a most considerate chaperon."

Harriet colored as she smiled and shook her head.

"It is something more than that, I fear. Our friend, Mrs. Endicott, seems to be doing a great deal of thinking nowadays, and there are times when it is plain that she doesn't care to be disturbed. I know you will think it a silly question, but—well, do you believe it possible that Mrs. Endicott and Lieutenant Forbes have quarreled?"

"Quarreled—Forbes and Mrs. Endicott? Why, my dear girl, what is there that they could possibly have quarreled about?"

But Harriet observed that as Longaker spoke he suddenly straightened himself in his chair. A startled look came into his eyes, and as he gazed out over the sea the color faded slowly from his cheeks.

At length turning to her again, he asked abruptly:

"What makes you think they've quarreled?"

Harriet laughed nervously and shook her head.

"I have no good reason to give for my suspicion, I'm afraid, but just as Mrs. Endicott and I were coming out on deck after luncheon to-day we saw Lieutenant Forbes standing by the rail. Hearing our voices, he glanced quickly over his shoulder.

"As he saw us, all the color seemed to leave his face; then, bruskly saluting, he turned on his heel and walked down a companionway near which he had been standing. I thought his conduct was somewhat extraordinary, and I was about to make it the subject of some remark to Mrs. Endicott when I saw that she had grown as red as he had grown pale.

"There was a strange look in her eyes also, and when I saw this it occurred to me that, under the circumstances, it might be just as well if I made no comment on the peculiar conduct of Lieutenant Crosby Forbes."

With knit brows Longaker continued to gaze thoughtfully across the water. Harriet laughed quietly as she added:

"I have heard papa say that Lieutenant Forbes was a woman-hater. Is it true?"

"He's too good a fellow to hate anybody, but he gets freakish notions sometimes," Longaker answered moodily.

Both lapsed into silence. Harriet was the first to speak, but her words had to do with another subject. For the first

time since she had known him, Longaker answered absently.

The young woman was a sufficiently keen observer to perceive that her companion, for some reason or other, had taken very seriously what she had said concerning Forbes, and she rightly assumed that, if left to himself, he might make an effort to solve the mystery. Accordingly she rose, and, under the pretext of seeking Mrs. Endicott, left him.

Longaker accompanied the young woman to the companionway; then he went to the stateroom which he shared with Forbes. He found his friend puffing fiercely at his pipe, tugging at his mustache, and staring through the open port. Longaker laid a hand on his arm.

"Forbes, old man, what has come over you in the last few hours?" he asked. "You scarcely seem yourself."

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders, but did not answer.

"Is your wound troubling you?"

Forbes nodded.

"Yes, lad—yes, I think it is the wound," he answered gruffly.

It was apparent that the lieutenant was in no mood for conversation. Longaker turned toward the door, then hesitated. At length he seated himself on one of the berths.

"Forbes," he said abruptly, "you haven't had a quarrel with Mrs. Endicott, I hope. There is something——"

The lieutenant turned quickly, and a dark flush overspread his features.

"A quarrel—with Mrs. Endicott!" he exclaimed angrily. "Why, lad, are you mad? Only women, weak men, and children quarrel with women. Why do you ask such a question of me? But, perhaps, like me, you are not feeling quite yourself to-day."

Longaker rose.

"I beg your pardon, Forbes," he said coldly. "I didn't mean to put it just that way. But knowing that you suspect her of some——"

"I suspect her of nothing, sir," Forbes replied, with dignity.

Longaker gazed with an expression of astonishment at his friend.

"Well, in view of what you said about the keys——"

"Damn the keys! There's mine."

And as he spoke Forbes hurled through the open port the stateroom key he had retained.

"As you please," Longaker said quietly.

Then taking out his key-ring he detached from it the key Forbes had given to him, and following his companion's example, he flung it into the sea. This done, he calmly turned on his heel and left the room.

Three hours later the Bojeador steamed into the moonlit harbor of Manila.

The gunboat was scarcely in the bay, however, when it became apparent that its arrival had caused considerable excitement on shore. No sooner had it signaled its identity, than the signal station began to display an extraordinary degree of activity. As a result the following conversation ensued:

"Whom have you aboard?"

"Longaker's and Forrester's commands, with Harriet Secor, Mrs. Endicott, and Pacheco."

"Were the ladies Pacheco's prisoners?"

"Prisoners of Carrero and Pacheco."

"On east coast?"

"Yes."

"Where is Carrero?"

"Escaped."

"All well?"

"Forrester and Pacheco wounded. Others well."

Then the distant flag-ship of the naval squadron got its signals into action.

"Congratulations, Bojeador," it said.

"Thanks," responded the Bojeador.

As the gunboat drew nearer the town several launches approached. The first contained three newspaper correspondents. From these the men on the Bojeador learned that warships had been cruising up and down the west coast in a vain attempt to find the Freda, which was supposed to have gone in that direction. The second launch was from the flag-ship. The sixth or seventh had Colonel Secor as a passenger.

Forbes, sitting moodily in his stateroom, did not see his colonel board the ship, and, with every fiber in his manly frame trembling, clasp his beautiful daughter in his arms.

He did not see the grateful father turn with tear-filled eyes to the white-faced Longaker, and, in faltering ac-

cents, address him as "my son." For many minutes Lieutenant Forbes, sitting in his solitude, seemed forgotten by all the world.

He heard many footsteps and eager, happy voices above him and around him, but in that animated spectacle he had no part.

At length the door was swung back violently. For an instant only did Longaker appear on the threshold, then a strong, eager arm pushed him back, and Colonel Secor rushed into the room.

The man with the bandaged head rose, saluted respectfully, stroked his tawny mustache and waited.

Despite his rush into the room and the fact that his features were trembling with emotion, the colonel stopped abruptly; then, without speaking, he turned and closed the door in the faces of those who stood without.

"It was what I might have expected of you, Forbes," the colonel said in a broken voice as he advanced and took both of the lieutenant's hands.

"I told you that lad Longaker would do it," Forbes replied composedly.

The colonel laughed—a low, mirthless laugh, that had still an insinuating ring of jubilation in it.

"Longaker is a brave lad and he's loyal, as most brave men are," the colonel answered. "And so he's told me all, but he was obliged to tell it quickly. There are some things, however, that you are better qualified to tell than he."

The colonel paused and glanced apprehensively toward the door. Then, in a lower voice he said:

"Where is Carrero?"

"I doubt whether he is far from the place at which we left him."

"We must get him, Forbes—we must get him. He has the honor of our service in his grip."

"His grip is loosening, colonel."

And as he spoke Forbes tapped with his foot the wooden box that lay under his berth.

"What's that?" asked Secor sharply.

"A little booty that I found in the quarters vacated by Señor Carrero—that is all. I'm taking it to General Purdy."

The colonel's face grew pallid.

"You mean——"

"I have not examined it, colonel, but I'm sure there is nothing in it that should cause concern to any man of the Twenty-Third Cavalry."

"But——"

"No man other than ourselves knows that it is here. We will take it to General Purdy together."

A few minutes later Harriet Secor, about to take her place in the boat that waited to take her to the shore, turned to the colonel.

"Are you not coming with me, papa?" she asked half-reproachfully.

"No, dear. Captain Longaker has acquitted himself so creditably as your escort that I am content to entrust you to his care until he lands you safely in Manila."

Harriet blushingly turned to Longaker and took the hand that he extended to her. The colonel walked away.

"Come, Mrs. Endicott," Harriet cried, as she saw the companion of her misadventure standing near.

Longaker touched Mrs. Endicott on the shoulder and said in a voice that reached no other ears than hers:

"Pardon me, madame, but Colonel Secor begs the honor of your company in the boat that is to take us to the shore."

So Flora Endicott waited for the last boat from the Bojeador.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW A DEBT WAS PAID.

In an anteroom in the headquarters of General Purdy sat Flora Endicott. It was nearly midnight, and friends who were thronging to her hotel to offer congratulations marveled greatly that the fair widow did not appear.

At the outer door of the anteroom stood the general's orderly, who, in accordance with his orders, denied admission to every one who called to see the general.

Twice or thrice the pale-faced woman attempted to relieve the strain to which she was subjected by the perusal of magazines that lay on a table beside her, but such efforts were vain. Pictures and print seemed as blurred as her thoughts.

At length the door of the general's private office opened and Colonel Secor appeared on the threshold.

"Will you step in, please, Mrs. Endicott?" he said in a voice that quavered strangely.

The woman rose and swayed slightly as she walked through the door, which was immediately closed behind her.

At a table in the middle of the room sat General Purdy, the grizzled veteran of many a hard-fought campaign—a soldier of the school of Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan.

The table was littered with many papers, but as Mrs. Endicott entered, the general swept these aside with a movement of one of his arms, and placed in front of him a badly battered black tin despatch box.

In front of the table stood Lieutenant Crosby Forbes, pale as death. His left hand, clenched, rested on his hip. The fingers of his right were toying nervously with his mustache.

"Be seated, madame," said Colonel Secor as he placed a chair near the table.

As Mrs. Endicott sat down, she glanced at the face of Forbes. She fancied she read there the story of a defeated purpose.

"Mrs. Endicott," General Purdy began coldly, "Lieutenant Forbes has just placed in my hands this despatch box, which was found by him in a hut formerly occupied by Juan Carrero.

"The character of this man, and the potent influence which he enjoys among certain enemies of our government, are, doubtless, sufficiently well-known to you to make it unnecessary for me to describe them. You are the widow of an American officer, and, as such, enjoy the respect of the American army."

"I hope that I may always enjoy it, general," Mrs. Endicott faltered.

"I hope so, with all my heart," replied the general. "But it appears that you have been singularly—though innocently—indiscreet, for you have been engaged in correspondence with an enemy from whom we have much to fear. Lieutenant Forbes has explained the unfortunate circumstances under which these letters were written.

"Reasonable as this explanation appears to be, I must tell you frankly that the circumstances, in accordance with rules of the service, should be made the subject of a rigid investigation. You must understand, therefore, that the return of these papers to you will constitute a most irregular proceeding—a proceeding that cannot be excused by the explanation that has been given."

He paused and looked thoughtfully at the box before him.

"This box has been obtained under exceptional circumstances by an exceptionally brave man—a man who holds his integrity more sacred than his life," the general went on.

"He is a man who has done much for the flag and has received little. He has made a most extraordinary request. In the case of any other officer of the service, such a request would be regarded as too absurd to be considered. I have decided, however, to grant it to Crosby Forbes. You saw Carrero put the papers in the box, I'm told. Were they together?"

"Yes," Mrs. Endicott answered faintly. "There were six or seven of them—four in my handwriting—the others forgeries. They were tied together."

"Forbes," said the general, "get a candle."

An unlighted candle was standing on the mantel. Forbes lighted it.

"Now, madame, take from this box the packet of which you speak, then identify it and give the letters to Lieutenant Forbes, who will oblige us by burning them over that tray."

As he spoke, General Purdy raised the lid of the box.

The packet in question, being the last that Carrero had handled, was at the top of the pile of papers. Mrs. Endicott clutched it with trembling fingers, then, breaking the string that bound it, she glanced over the written sheets.

She compressed her lips, nodded slightly, then handed the papers to Forbes, who, taking them calmly, held them one by one to the candle flame till all were consumed.

When this was done, General Purdy closed the box and rose.

"Lieutenant Forbes, the United States Army has paid its debt to you, so far as this expedition is concerned," he said coldly. "There is nothing more to be said now, I think, so we will excuse you in order that you may find Mrs. Endicott a carriage. I am sorry,

madame, that your efforts to save your brother were vain."

Forbes exchanged formal salutes with the general and colonel, then, turning abruptly, led the way to the door. In the anteroom, he bowed and offered his arm to the woman who had meekly followed him.

A carriage, ordered by Forbes an hour before, was waiting at the door. He helped his companion into it. Still standing on the curb, he closed the door.

"Good night," he said, and was about to step back when, through the open window, he met her eyes. He saw that she had held out her hand to him. He hesitated, then his bronzed fingers closed around it loosely.

She did not speak, but as her hand lay in his he felt it tighten its grasp. How small and warm it seemed in his saber-calloused palm! And what mysterious current was it that flowed out of it and set him trembling like a coward? Were these the eyes which, soft and lustrous now, had in days long gone gleamed upon him with the light of a proud woman's anger?

Breathing heavily, he turned his face from hers, but it was in vain that he weakly attempted to free his hand.

"God help me, then!" he blurted out, and, turning slowly, he once more stood erect and looked into her eyes.

Then, opening the door of the carriage, he stepped in gravely.

During that ride to the hotel he held her hand in his. Neither of them spoke, but when, upon arriving in front of the hotel, he huskily bade her good night a second time, he was filled with an indefinable wonder that in the darkness of the vehicle their lips should have met, and he felt as a man might feel who suddenly awakes to find himself amid the fairylike environments of a star.

Like one in a dream he walked from one end of the Escolta to the other until, at last, he realized that he literally was a man without a home. Since receiving his commission he had no regiment of his own, and since his return to Manila he had not thought to secure quarters for the night. Accordingly he now directed his steps to a hotel and engaged a room. But he did not sleep, and by seven o'clock he was out again.

After breakfast he went for a stroll. Suddenly he realized that he was gazing at Mrs. Endicott's hotel. He promptly started off in another direction. At the expiration of ten minutes he was back again. Shaking his head gravely at this evidence of his folly, he started off to the camp to find Longaker. The captain, relieved of duty for the day, apparently had gone to pay his respects to Miss Secor. Shortly afterward, Forbes, tugging at his mustache, found that he was again gazing abstractedly at Mrs. Endicott's hotel.

Then he set off to look for Colonel Secor. He found him with Longaker. Both were very serious, so Forbes was tempted to beat a retreat. They would not have it so, however, and after a brief visit to the colonel's tent, the three men repaired to the military club. There Forbes found that during his absence he had been admitted to the privilege of membership.

At a table in a quiet corner of one of the club rooms Captain Longaker and Lieutenant Forbes at length found themselves alone.

"Well, old man," said Longaker, with a smile, "I am willing cheerfully to admit that all the glory of the expedition against Pacheco is yours. But the honor belongs to me."

A puzzled expression overspread the face of Forbes as he looked at his friend.

"Tut, tut, lad!" he muttered impatiently. "The glory goes with the honor, and all is yours, I assure you. But why make the distinction?"

"My reward is the hand of the colonel's daughter. The colonel this morning gave his consent to our marriage."

Forbes gravely reached out and grasped the hand of his friend.

"Good!" he said; then he added thoughtfully: "But did he explain——"

"Everything," Longaker answered cheerfully. "He tells me that for some time prior to my appointment on General Purdy's staff, official documents had been stolen from staff officers. I was appointed to the staff under peculiar conditions, for it was for no other purpose than to make me a subject for the working out of a scheme for the detection of two persons under suspicion. It

seems that the man who was responsible for the leaks in General Purdy's office was his orderly—your old and trusted comrade, Sam Crawford."

Forbes started.

"Sam Crawford! No, no, lad—surely——"

"The person who took the papers from my pocket and substituted others was one of a band of Chinamen employed by Carrero."

"Why were you placed in charge of the expedition?"

"The colonel was good enough to say that it was because I had the confidence of himself and the general."

"But why had the colonel forbidden you to visit his daughter?"

"He saw that the affair was serious—something he had not suspected before. He did not want his daughter to become the wife of a man who, being a ranker, might find it difficult to advance in the service."

"His change of heart does him honor," Forbes said soberly. "I did not believe——"

He stopped as he saw by a change that came over the face of his companion that something else had attracted his attention. Longaker rose and saluted.

Turning his head, he saw that General Purdy was approaching the table.

"Permit me to congratulate you, captain, on your engagement to Miss Secor," he said, extending his hand. "The young lady is one of the most charming and amiable that I have ever known. I am glad to learn that she has won the heart of such a brave soldier and gallant gentleman as Captain Longaker."

As the general turned away from the blushing captain, he nodded curtly to Forbes, then passed on.

Conscious of the fact that his old friend had been slighted, the color left Longaker's cheeks, and he turned to Forbes with an expression of sympathy and surprise.

"It's all right, lad," the lieutenant said wearily; then, quoting General Purdy's words, he added: "The United States Army has paid its debt to me, so far as this expedition is concerned. I am content, lad—quite content."

But Longaker, thinking he referred to his commission, looked at the lieutenant's shoulder straps, and sadly shook his head.

CHAPTER XXV.

"THE BRAVEST MAN IN THE ARMY."

AFTER congratulating Longaker, General Purdy left the club and went to his office. There was a large batch of mail on his desk and he had scarcely got through more than half of this when Colonel Secor was announced and promptly admitted.

"Well, colonel, thanks to your command, the Carrero specter has been pretty well exorcised," he said, with an affectation of cheerfulness.

"For the time being, at least," Secor answered moodily.

General Purdy looked up apprehensively from the letters before him.

"You think he will trouble us again?"

"Yes, general, and despite your pretended satisfaction as a result of what has been done by Longaker and Forbes, you share my opinion."

"You are right, Secor," the general sighed. "The stolen papers have been recovered, and as a result of the discovery of Carrero's accomplices we have been able to file down his claws and teeth. But I'm sorely afraid they will grow again. While he's up among the mountains, however, it seems to be idle to send an expedition against him. With all the natives friendly to him, he will be able to elude us. Hello—what's this!"

The general had just torn open an envelope addressed to himself only to find therein a second envelope bearing the following inscription:

TO THE BRAVEST MAN IN THE ARMY.

He looked at it curiously for several moments, then he handed it to the colonel.

"What do you make of that, Secor?" he asked, with a puzzled smile.

"Humph!" exclaimed the colonel as, turning the envelope over, he saw that it was sealed. "How did you come by this?"

"I just took it out of this envelope

which was addressed to me. The sender apparently wants me to place that one in the hands of 'the bravest man in the army.' Some crank has sent it, I suppose. This is only a sample of a lot of freak communications that come to me nowadays. By the way, has a day been set for the marriage of your daughter and Longaker?"

But the colonel, looking thoughtfully at the letter, only murmured:

"'The bravest man in the army,' eh?" He chuckled softly, then he added: "That's rather a nice question, general—one that had never occurred to me. Who the deuce is the bravest man in the army?"

"Hang me if I know, Secor," the general answered, smiling gravely. "For my part I should conscientiously sidestep any attempt to make me commit myself. If a poll of the army in the Philippines was taken, the volunteers probably would be a unit in voting for Funston. The regulars would give the designation to Lawton."

"You won't open the letter, then?"

"I open it? The devil—no! Why should I open it? Plainly it isn't intended for me. I do my duty as I see it, but, somehow, opportunities to perform really heroic deeds never have come my way.

"No, Secor, if that envelope gets to the person for whom it is intended, I'll have to pass it further along the line. But stop! As colonel of the 'Fighting Twenty-Third,' you might open it yourself."

The colonel smiled as, shaking his head, he laid the envelope on the general's desk.

"No, no, it's not for me," he said. "I have the bravest regiment in the army, but, despite the affection that I know they have for me, I'm sure my boys would not pronounce me the bravest man."

"But if you have the bravest regiment, it is altogether probable that the bravest man in the army is in it."

"Well, let's see! There's Crosby Forbes, who——"

"True, true," Purdy muttered. "I didn't think of Forbes."

"No one ever does until some one is wanted to lead a forlorn hope and Crosby Forbes gets the job," the colonel said.

"I don't like the part he had in the return of those papers to Mrs. Endicott," growled the general.

"Nor do I," said Secor thoughtfully as General Purdy dropped the envelope into one of the drawers of the desk.

In the course of the week that followed his return from the north comparatively little was seen of Crosby Forbes. As he was now unattached and on waiting orders, all his time was his own.

During the day he spent most of his time in his room, reading or smoking beside his hotel window. Twice or thrice he was seen on the Luneta in the evening—always alone, and somewhat disposed to give short answers to all who manifested an inclination to draw him into conversation.

Frequently, after the evening crowds on the Luneta had dispersed, he was to be seen on the Escolta, stalking moodily from one end of that thoroughfare to the other, and on one occasion Longaker, leaving the club shortly before midnight, saw the lieutenant, too absorbed by his thoughts to notice his approach, stroking his mustache and gazing meditatively toward the darkened windows of the room occupied by Mrs. Endicott. But during all these days Forbes and the widow had not met, nor had any communication passed between them.

At length, on the eighth day following his return to Manila, Lieutenant Forbes received from General Purdy an order attaching him to a troop of the Thirty-First Cavalry.

Forbes had cherished the hope that he would be assigned to the old Twenty-Third, but he was too good a soldier to allow the order to depress him. His disappointment left him with the single sigh that he breathed. Indeed, his regret was made less keen by the fact that the troop to which he had been assigned was to leave Manila on the next day for active service against the insurgents in Mindanao.

Immediately after receiving this assignment, he donned, for the first time, his new uniform and set out in the direction of Mrs. Endicott's hotel.

Twice he walked past the entrance to the building; then with a fierce coun-

tenance and a palpitating heart he went boldly in and bade an attendant take his name to Mrs. Endicott.

He was not kept waiting long. The attendant led him to Mrs. Endicott's sitting-room, where the widow herself awaited him.

Mrs. Endicott was standing near a window as he entered. She was very pale, but a little flush overspread her face as he crossed the threshold and closed the door behind him. Though she smiled faintly, she neither spoke nor offered him her hand.

Forbes dropped his hat on a chair and slowly crossed the floor to where she stood.

"I am going away for a little while," he said simply. "I thought I'd like to see you before I leave."

An expression of alarm flitted across her face.

"You are going away?" she exclaimed, in accents of surprise.

Half-mechanically, she held out her hands to him. He took them and held them in his grasp. She was looking at him with puzzled, anxious eyes.

"Yes," he answered. "I've been assigned to a troop of the Thirty-First which leaves for the island of Mindanao to-morrow."

"For Mindanao!" she murmured, then an expression of relief crossed her face and she added, half-unconsciously: "Ah, I am glad you are going to Mindanao."

She saw a stricken look come suddenly to the clear blue eyes of Forbes, who, bowing slightly, said:

"I am glad to learn, madam, that my departure gives you so much——"

"Stop!" she exclaimed, growing even paler than she was before. "You have misunderstood me. I am sorry that it is necessary for you to leave Manila. But since you must go, I am glad that it is to the south rather than to the north that you are going."

Something in the suddenly changed attitude of the woman before him, caused Forbes to look at her with puzzled eyes.

"You thought I was going back to the north?" he asked.

Mrs. Endicott hesitated.

"You do not know him as well as I do," she said quietly. "I felt sure that his challenge was only given to lead you into one of his snares."

The fingers of Forbes, stroking one of the ends of his mustache, stopped suddenly.

"His challenge!" he repeated.

His eyes, looking into hers, had the effect of searchlights now.

The color rushed to her face, then faded away as suddenly as it had come.

"You did not know?" she gasped.

"I know of no challenge having been addressed to me," Forbes answered. "Pardon, me, please, if I ask you to explain."

Mrs. Endicott hesitated; then, in a low voice, she said:

"I have been misinformed. A piece of idle gossip reached me. It——"

"A piece of gossip! Well?"

"It is too absurd to mention now," Mrs. Endicott said, with an effort. "Please don't let us refer to it again. I'm glad—very glad that you have come to see me before you go. I thought——"

As she laid a hand on his arm his fingers closed over it.

"And what was the nature of this —gossip?" Forbes persisted, in a tone which, though kindly, had in it a note of firmness that was not to be mistaken.

"I have asked you——" she began.

"A challenge from some one in the north?" Forbes mused aloud. "It was from Carrero?"

Again she hesitated, then moving from him, she said coldly:

"No."

Forbes, whose face was now as white as her own, followed her, and as she stood by the window he gently touched her arm.

"Madam, you are not telling me the truth," he said, with grave bluntness.

She faced him quickly with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes.

"Do you believe that I——" she began indignantly.

"When I saw you last I told you that I believed in you," he answered simply.

Her eyes fell before his gaze.

"Have you forgotten that it was Carrero who killed your brother?" he went on.

She shuddered slightly.

"No," she answered weakly. "But I know that Carrero was the most famous

duelist in the Spanish army, and that it is not always on his skill as a duelist that he relies. He would not hesitate to use a challenge to draw an enemy into a snare from which escape would be impossible."

"You admit, then, that you have heard that Carrero has challenged me?"

Mrs. Endicott was silent. Perceiving that she did not intend to answer him, Forbes, after a pause, said moodily:

"I am to understand, then, madam, that nothing that I have done recently has been sufficient to cause you to overcome your old dislike for me?"

His words appeared to startle her. Flushing deeply, she looked at him reproachfully.

"You cannot believe that now," she said.

"When you came to me on the Bojeador, you told me that your honor was in my hands," Forbes replied. "It is you who hold my honor now."

"If he had challenged you, you would have known of it. It is not a challenge otherwise."

"Come, madam, we are quibbling," retorted Forbes impatiently. "It is just possible that the challenge has miscarried. You, apparently, have reason to believe that it was sent. Surely, you do not want me, who have guaranteed your good faith, to believe that you still are in communication with our enemies!"

Once more she moved away from him. As she came to the door of her sleeping apartment, she hesitated and looked as if she were about to speak, then, with bowed head, she crossed the threshold and disappeared. In a few moments she returned.

"I received this letter by post day before yesterday," she explained, as she held an envelope toward him.

"Shall I read it?" Forbes asked bruskly.

She shrugged her shoulders helplessly, and he drew the letter from the envelope. It read as follows:

SENORA ENDICOTT:

I congratulate you on having a champion whose love of life is so strong that he fears to jeopardize it. And so he will live to serve you many years, unless, indeed, he comes under the whip which I use to scourge to death such of my dogs as I find lacking in spirit.

It is edifying to learn that the bravest man in the army is so discreet that he thinks it best to ignore a challenge that I have sent him in General Purdy's care—a challenge that would result in his death or in that of the enemy from whom the American army has most to fear. If he had some of your Spanish blood, all would be so different, would it not?

(Signed) JUAN ANTONIO CARRERO.

As Forbes read the letter, the flush on his face grew gradually darker. When he finished he raised his eyes to those of Mrs. Endicott, who had been watching him nervously.

"You have had this letter two days," he said. "Why did you not tell me of it?"

"I did not know that you had not heard from him," she faltered.

The eyes of Forbes flashed ominously.

"And you thought I would choose to ignore it?" he asked bitterly.

"I—I did not want you to go," she faltered.

"But——"

Something that he saw in her eyes caused the color to leave his cheeks. With a trembling hand, he reached for his hat, and left the room.

Fifteen minutes later he was at headquarters.

"Is the general in?" he demanded of the orderly.

"Yes; but he is engaged with Colonel Secor," the man replied, looking wonderingly at the grim, pale face and glowing eyes of the visitor.

"Tell him I want to see him—now," Forbes commanded fiercely.

The words were heard by the general himself, who had opened the door to speak to the orderly.

The brow of the general darkened and he was about to give utterance to an angry reprimand, when Forbes said stolidly:

"I must see you at once, sir."

"Must!" the general repeated, and hesitated.

"Well, come in then. Let us see what it is that has so ruffled you as to make you forget yourself."

As Forbes followed General Purdy into the room he curtly saluted Secor, who was about to leave.

"Wait, Secor," Purdy called. "Here's one of your old men who has some sort of an explanation to make. Now, Forbes, what is it?"

"I've been given to understand that an important letter was recently addressed to me in your care," Forbes began. "I have come to see why it was not given to me."

"A letter for you—in my care?" Purdy repeated. "I have received none, sir. What reason have you for believing that I have had anything to do with any of your correspondence?"

"You have received no letter for me, general?" Forbes asked, looking at his superior officer with cold, searching eyes.

General Purdy grew pale with indignation.

"The devil! Haven't I told you 'no'?" he thundered. "Is it not enough? What has put it into your head that any letters intended for you should be sent in my care? You've been in the service long enough to know that a departmental commander is not in the habit of——"

"A moment, general!"

The speaker was Colonel Secor, who had been gazing apprehensively at Forbes. He now went to Purdy's side and addressed to him a few words that were too quietly spoken to reach the ears of the lieutenant.

"Oh, you mean——" began Purdy irritably, and looked curiously at Forbes; then addressing the lieutenant, he said more calmly:

"Colonel Secor reminds me that some fool did send a letter in my care, about a week ago."

He fumbled in one of the drawers of the desk, then drew out an envelope.

"Here it is," he went on. "Look at it, then tell me if it is intended for you."

Forbes examined the envelope critically. Purdy marked his hesitation and smiled grimly.

"If you are the bravest man in the army, why, open it," he said.

Still Forbes hesitated.

"Do you know of any one who has a better right to the title?" Forbes demanded as he fixed his gaze on the general.

The smile faded from Purdy's lips, but he made no answer.

"I know of none," said Secor, half-defiantly.

"Nor do I," said Crosby Forbes.

And, thus speaking, he broke the seal.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"LOVE, HONOR, AND OBEY."

As Forbes drew out the letter and proceeded to read it, Purdy and Secor exchanged glances of amusement. But when they looked toward the lieutenant again they saw a strange change stealing over his face.

Both reflected that this soldier who now stood before them was no man to be swayed by ordinary emotions. What, then, meant this angry rush of blood to his features—the light of satisfaction that was creeping into his eyes—this look of grimness that was settling over all—the apparently involuntary slight bow that followed the reading of the mysterious epistle?

"You see, sir, the letter was for me," Forbes said calmly as he handed it to General Purdy. The general took it and read aloud:

TO THE BRAVEST MAN IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY:

SIR:

If the death of Carrero is of sufficient importance to your service to warrant you in taking the trouble and risk involved in effecting it, he will give you such an opportunity. This opportunity will only be offered on the following conditions:

First: Armed only with an army revolver, you will land alone at the place at which the Longaker expedition was landed.

Second: The vessel taking you to this place will retire to a distance of five nautical miles and there remain for a period of two hours.

Third: Upon the appearance of Carrero on the beach you and he shall take positions at sixty paces and, when each shall have pronounced the word "ready," both shall proceed to fire at will, in any manner and from any position they may select. Each shall be restricted, however, to the use of one large-caliber revolver.

Fourth: It is understood that, if any person other than yourself assume the title which belongs to you and by which you are addressed in this letter, he shall be shot by ambushed friends of Carrero. If others land besides yourself the offer here made is to be regarded as canceled.

Fifth: If you succeed in killing Carrero in accordance with the conditions above named, you shall be permitted to take away his body on the vessel that takes you to the scene of combat. Otherwise your body will be buried beside that of Señor Perigo. In any event, a boat from your vessel will be permitted to land in order that the vessel's commander may learn the result of the duel.

This offer will remain open for a period of ten days.

Under no conditions need you fear capture or foul play if the above-mentioned conditions are adhered to.

On the honor of
JUAN ANTONIO CARRERO.

When he had finished reading the letter, General Purdy laid it on the desk in front of him and, removing his glasses, looked thoughtfully toward the window. Both he and Colonel Secor had grown pallid.

At length the general turned again to Forbes, who was calmly stroking his mustache.

"Well, Forbes, what do you propose to do?" the general asked in a low, husky voice.

"I have been ordered to join the Thirty-First, which leaves for Mindanao tomorrow," Forbes replied.

The general nodded gravely.

"I should like a leave of absence," Forbes went on. "In the course of that affair up north I got a wound on the head, and——"

"You will make that application in writing, lieutenant," said the general as he made place for Forbes at his desk.

Forbes sat down and wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper which the general placed before him.

"And there's one thing more," he said as he rose. "The Bejeador is a little slow, but Tappan is a good fellow, so I guess we can make it do—if she starts to-day."

"I'll see if it can be arranged," the general answered.

The arrangement was soon effected. Tappan undertook to have the gunboat's coal bunkers filled in time to enable him to start at six.

Having received this assurance, Forbes returned to Mrs. Endicott's hotel, and was there received by the widow.

"Well, I'm back," he said as he took her hands.

"You have seen General Purdy?" Mrs. Endicott asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes."

"And——"

"There has been a change in my plans," he explained. "We start at six to-night."

"For Mindanao?"

"For the north."

"You are going to meet Carrero, then!" Mrs. Endicott exclaimed breathlessly.

"Yes."

"But you are wounded!" she exclaimed. "Surely, there are others who——"

"The wound has healed. Carrero has challenged me to a duel on the beach from which we were taken by the Bojeador."

"A duel! That is unfair. Wounded as you are, you are no match for Juan Carrero. As a duelist he had no equal in the Spanish army."

"As a swordsman he might outmatch me. But he has been generous in making his choice of weapons. With an army revolver in my hand, my chance is as good as any Señor Carrero may have. But it was not of this I came to speak."

As he saw the expression of anxiety deepen on the face of the beautiful woman before him, his eyes grew brighter.

As naturally as if they had been friends for many years, he drew one of her arms through his and led her to a sofa. There, still retaining her hand, he seated himself beside her.

"I've not been quite myself for the last few days, my dear," he began in a tone that was almost paternal. "Something seems to have come over me since I got these shoulder-straps—something that has made a different man of me. Whether it has been for the better or the worse, I'm unable to tell."

"Do you think the shoulder-straps are responsible for the change?" Mrs. Endicott asked, smiling sadly.

"Perhaps not. And yet, now I come to think of it, I am inclined to believe that it is more probable that the change is due to that cut Pacheco gave me on the head. The question is, did that cut let a fool in or out?"

As Mrs. Endicott laughed softly the color came back to her cheeks.

"No one ever accused you of having a foolish head, lieutenant," she said.

During the pause that followed, Forbes abstractedly stroked the hand he held. Then he said:

"Mrs. Endicott, we were both of us a bit excited when we left General Purdy on—on that night, and when people are excited they sometimes do foolish things."

The color deepened on Mrs. Endicott's face, and Forbes felt her imprisoned hand feebly struggling for freedom.

"But it has been my experience that when people do foolish things, they want to forget such acts as soon as possible, and as I have no desire to forget what passed between us in the carriage that night, I—well, it has occurred to me that it might not have been so foolish, after all."

"I'm afraid my part in it was—unwomanly and very foolish," Mrs. Endicott faltered and, freeing her hand, she rose and walked quickly to the table.

"Oh!" Forbes exclaimed, in the low voice of one to whom an unpleasant truth suddenly has been made clear. "Then, madam, I pray God that you may soon forget it."

He, too, rose, and, with burning cheeks, started toward the chair on which he had placed his hat.

Then a hand fell on his arm, and a soft, laughing voice, replied:

"And I will pray, sir, that your prayer may not be answered."

He looked into her shining eyes, and halted.

Once more he took her arm and led her to the sofa.

"Come, we'll never understand one another if we go about it a woman's way," he said, half-angrily.

"A woman's way is to go straight to the subject," she retorted laughingly.

"And then jump over it," Forbes added gloomily.

"Is it not more graceful than crawling under?"

"It is better to lift it out of the way," said Forbes.

Laughing lightly, she was about to speak again, but Forbes interrupted.

"The subject on which I want to speak is very serious, and I have not long to stay."

The laughter faded from her face and eyes.

"As soon as I am done with Carrero, I shall return to Manila," he said. "It rests with you to say whether or not we meet as strangers—as we might have met two weeks ago."

"As strangers!" she exclaimed softly. "We can never meet as strangers now."

"As old acquaintances then," he said.

"As friends," she corrected gently. "There must always be friendship between us after this."

"There might be a stronger tie," said Forbes. "Let us speak more plainly, madam. When we left General Purdy together you felt under a sense of obligation toward me. You felt that I had saved your honor, and your sense of gratitude took a form that I had never expected. While you may not have been so unjust as to believe that I acted from a selfish motive, you felt that your affection should constitute my reward."

Mrs. Endicott rose quickly, with eyes and cheeks aflame.

"Do you think me so weak as that?" she demanded breathlessly.

"A woman cannot buy back even her honor with her affection. When we left General Purdy I was free—free of all that I ever had to fear. You had acted as a brave soldier—nothing more, for in the American army a brave soldier is always chivalrous at heart. You had not sought my love. You had avoided me. More than that, you told me you believed I possessed unwomanly qualities."

"For that frankness I have now to ask your pardon," said Forbes, with emotion.

"But, after all, you believed in me, I am grateful for your confidence, but—well, that was not all. We were not strangers when we met in the hut in which I was a prisoner of Carrero.

"Ten years ago you, as my enemy, won my respect. I became the wife of a man who, though he was a loving husband, was a moral weakling. You know the story, else I should not speak of it now. But, while he lived, you were often in my thoughts.

"Unknown to you, I followed your career. Though you had been my enemy, I was proud to reflect that we had

met. You were the soul of honor, and when I saw you standing before General Purdy, pleading my cause—the cause of a woman who had distrusted you—do you think I was vain enough to imagine that my affections would reward you?"

Placing her hands on his shoulders, she looked into his eyes, and continued:

"How you came to be sitting with me in the carriage is not quite clear to me, even now. What followed—the pressure of your hands—the touch of your lips—the expression in your eyes as you left me—seems like a dream. Until then I did not know that—that I loved you."

Forbes' fingers closed around the hands that lay on his hard-won shoulder-straps.

"I'm just a plain soldier—a ranker, who one day may attain the dignity that a major's rank can give—no more," he cautioned. "Hitherto I have had no other object in my life than to love my country, honor its flag, and obey the commands of my superior officers."

"To love, honor, and obey is a woman's motto," she said.

"But when a chap is only a lieutenant——"

"I do not think it would be so difficult, even then," she murmured, as he folded her in his arms.

* * * * *

Two months later Bandmaster Kumpel, standing on the Luneta, shook his head sorrowfully as the last notes of a rival band died away.

"Too slow—too slow," he muttered. "Kaldt always conducts as if——"

He stopped as he felt a tap on one of his shoulders.

"What is that they just played, Kumpel?"

"Ah, my dear Forbes, it's you!" exclaimed the delighted bandmaster, grasping the other's hand. "Why, Kaldt's band's been playing 'I Dreamt That I Dwelt in Marble Halls.' But—ha, ha, ha—what a strange question for you to ask! it isn't military music."

"For all that, it's rather good, I should say," Forbes replied.

"You like it—you! Ha, ha, ha. But— bless my soul, that's a major's uniform you're wearing!"

"Yes," said Forbes. "My first commission was a long while coming, but since then—ah me, the old boys are dropping out these days, Kumpel!"

And Forbes sighed heavily.

"And you're still in the Twenty-Third Cavalry?"

"Oh, yes. Longaker's our lieutenant-colonel now. My wife and his are out driving. I was to meet them here at seven. I'm half an hour ahead of time, I find."

Kumpel shook his head thoughtfully.

"It is difficult to think of you, of all men in the world, as a married man," said Kumpel.

"I have found that it is the unexpected that happens in love as well as war," Forbes answered solemnly. "I used to think—— Hello, Mrs. Forbes is also ahead of time, I see."

Without offering an apology, he quickly made his way to where the smiling woman, who was formerly Mrs. Endicott, was beckoning to him from a carriage.

"Who's the officer you were talking with just now?" asked one of Kumpel's cronies, who came up just then.

The bandmaster threw out his chest as he answered:

"That is Major Crosby Forbes, of the 'Fighting Twenty-Third!'"

A look of admiring wonder overspread the other's face.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "The man who killed Carrero!"

"And the bravest man in the army," Kumpel added.

"Yes," his friend assented, in a tone of conviction. "Yes, he is all of that."

(The End.)

BETWEEN.

By Grace H. Boutelle.

LIFE means to us a thousand different things;
The highest meaning is the one we miss;
And yet a warning voice unceasing sings,
"Life is eternity's parenthesis."

THE HOUR OF FULFILMENT.

By Alice Garland Steele.

A LITTLE love story in which the silver lining to the dark cloud makes its appearance.

THE first things that Celia noticed when she came in that afternoon were the roses, scattered in pink, droopy confusion on an edge of the teakwood cabinet. She knew they were his roses, and a little pang contracted her heart as her glance strayed from them to her sister, lounging in a wicker chair with eyes half-closed and the usual irresponsible smile on her full red lips.

"Isabelle! How could you leave them so—without water?"

She spoke quickly, the reproach in her tone sounding sharp through the silence; it was almost as if she had come upon him, neglected, uncared-for—as he surely would be in the days to come!

"What a fuss you make."

The musical voice, with its drawling charm, took the edge off the moment, softened it—as Isabelle softened everything. The girl half rose, stretching her arms above her head, widening her eyes to meet the demands of the dusk already fallen.

"You should have heard him this afternoon," she said—"Brayton, I mean—he was so serious—you can't guess, Celia. He made me feel as if I were at a church wedding—when the minister charges them, you know, and somebody sobs. I don't think I shall be married in church—I don't think I shall be married—at all!"

She ended with a quick little gasp of laughter that jarred.

Celia bent above the roses, arranging them in a thick green vase; her eyes were strained painfully, and then her face went suddenly crimson as she turned.

"I don't think you ought to play with him," she said, with an effort that lent her words something of tragedy. "You've been doing it for nearly a year, but now, with the wedding so close—with a man like Brayton—I can't bear it!"

There was a swift silence. Curiously, as if it struck her for the first time, the girl in the chair watched the other's face—sharply, almost eagerly—but the color had quickly faded, it had dropped again into its usual repression.

She bit her lips in indecision, then she spoke, and her voice carried with it a note of apology:

"Did you see about the invitations?"

The answer was rather long in coming.

"Yes, I ordered three hundred; I thought that would be enough. They promised to get them out on time."

"Thanks." The girl got up, yawning slightly, with something counterfeit about her indifference, moving with slow grace to the doorway. Standing there a moment she spoke backward, over her shoulder:

"Oh, Ned Sloane has tickets for somewhere to-night—he 'phoned just after you went out. I said I'd go; so if Brayton should come, see him for me, will you?"

"Ned Sloane!"

"Yes, Neddie," she laughed lightly. "Don't be disgruntled, Celia. Brayton would just as soon——" she checked herself. "Then it's all right?"

"I will see him, if he comes."

The low response brought the curious, searching expression again to the other's eyes, but in the growing darkness her sister's face was impossible to read—it wore a mask of shadows.

She waited a moment, then she went on up the stairs, the irresponsible smile back on her lips.

Celia, left alone, went over and stared

out of the window, seeing nothing. The doubt was forcing itself into her consciousness—the doubt of Isabelle's love for Brayton!

It wasn't the first time she had faced it; all through the backward months, marshaled before her now with their telltale happenings, she had probed and prodded for the truth, and when she had found the key that fitted all too easily, she had drawn back, holding it in nerveless, irresolute fingers, hoping somehow that the door would open of itself, or that somebody else would come and seal it up forever.

When it had opened, the vision had frightened her—three souls, beating like birds at the bars of a cage, and one was her own!

It was this knowledge that stayed with her day and night—that made waking a dream and sleep a nightmare—that it wasn't Isabelle that mattered, but Brayton—that she herself stood powerless before the altar of their sacrifice, her lips dumb, only her heart crying out in language too wild to be understood.

And in six short weeks the white mockery of a wedding would shroud them all three! It was the nearness of it that paralyzed her—she was being swept on with the rest of them toward that final happening, that last bitter hour of fulfilment!

All that her courage had dared were feeble remonstrances, half-uttered protests, that beat against Isabelle's resolution like makeshift spears upon finely wrought armor, and in the fight, parrying each blow, coming between them at every vital moment, was the specter of Brayton, striving for victory with blinded eyes.

With a nervous sob she turned, groping for a taper; the darkness was too terrible, too vivid—she sought the commonplace comfort of every trivial object the room held; she wanted to shut in the battle-field of her vision by four square walls, to feel safe again, if it were only for a moment!

Her hand trembled as she lit the lamp, but the light it shed reassured her.

With perfunctory method she laid aside her hat, smoothing her roughened hair, then she turned to the piano, straightening some disarranged music. The task calmed her somehow—when Isabelle came down again, dressed for the evening, she almost possessed her soul in quietness.

She was able to admire the beauty of feature that had won Brayton, the charm of gesture that was so typically Isabelle. At the dinner-table, under her father's business-weary eyes, she even listened, strangely calm, while they talked of the wedding, and offered suggestions for the guest-list waiting its final readjustment in a drawer up-stairs.

It was only when Ned Sloane came in, debonair, smiling, familiar, playing with the fringe of Isabelle's gown while she drew on her long gloves, that Celia grew hot with resentment again, passionate with pain.

She was torturing herself with thoughts of Brayton, with the divided allegiance he was bartering himself for, dreaming it happiness!

She heard the sound of their cab-wheels echoing long after they had left the silent street. She turned from it wearily, to find her father putting on his coat to go out.

"Do you have to?" she asked, alarmed at the thought of a possible meeting with Brayton alone, and as he nodded and the bell rang, she formulated plans for a hasty retreat.

"I can't see anybody," she called to the maid; "I am going to my room."

And then, remembering her promise to Isabelle, she paused, uncertain, and it was already too late, for Brayton, standing under the glare of the hall lamp, had caught her eyes.

Something in his face, a strange appeal, backed by ill-concealed weariness, held her as she sent him a smile over a great distance. It was something she always did—the least thing she could do to make up—an assurance of her far-off but anxious friendship.

A moment later they were sitting together in the room that held his roses, and he was feeling his way through the sudden painful reserve that held her tongue prisoner.

"Do you know," he said, "I'm rather glad to seee you alone, Celia?"

The strangeness of it surprised her eyes into a question.

He laughed apologetically.

"It seems odd, doesn't it, but I want to talk to you about Isabelle—it's so close now, the wedding, that there ought to be no—uncertainties—and yet I'm not absolutely sure that I—that she"— he fixed her sternly, "do you think I am making her altogether happy?"

"Happy?" she stammered, and then a wave of crimson flushed her cheeks and receded, leaving them white.

"Yes," he said shortly, "happy. It's an elusive word—it can mean so many things—but I've got to know, and I can't trust my own heart to tell me."

"Why?" She asked it feebly, playing for time.

He got up, moving restlessly to the cabinet, fingering a bit of ivory it held.

"Oh, I don't know—a man's heart is a poor interpreter—we're not trained to it as you women are—and I've fancied a thousand things! For the last month or two I've been in a sort of a fog, playing blind man's buff with only instinct to guide me; and through it all, I've thought somehow of your setting it straight."

Her heart was beating like a caged thing; it would be so easy to shatter the glass fabric of his faith with one blow—so easy—and so cruel!

"Set it straight!"

It was the thing she had been praying for all these months. And now that the moment had come she drew back, afraid! A loyalty to him, to Isabelle, above all, to her own womanhood, kept her silent.

"Perhaps," he said, and his voice strove to regain its lightness, "perhaps I should not have spoken of—anything. A man is expected to be strong enough to meet any sort of difficulty—and after all there *is* none, it was only that your sister's happiness—is everything."

"Not everything," she said lamely. "You forget——" and then she stopped, her lips trembling slightly, but his eyes held her, compelling her to go on. "You forget," she stammered, "your own!"

"My own?" he repeated, and his face broke into a half-smile. "Let us not stop to consider that—it is quite outside the question."

"But *why?*" she persisted, "but why?"

She sat forward, her face speaking the intensity of her desire. For the moment she forgot everything but the future of this man that she loved—and then suddenly she came to herself. He was looking at her strangely, his face paling under the stress of some inner emotion. She sat back.

"It is all right," she said. "Don't worry, Brayton. It *must* be all right! And don't lose faith in her, in yourself, or any one. I think that's the terrible thing about love—that one can lose faith and still go on—loving."

"One can't," he said.

His voice struck a high, jubilant note, and the light on his face startled her. It was as if he repressed and held back an emotion too vivid to control.

With a struggle she averted her eyes. When she looked again it had faded, and the old weariness had taken its place, but there was no longer any appeal. A sudden anxiety to end the interview, to get beyond the power of his personality, made her half rise from her chair, and as if he understood, he straightened quickly.

"I mustn't keep you," he said, "but I will remember what you have told me about not losing—faith. I think I need it, most of all, in myself!"

She raised her head, trying to think of something to say to him, but he seemed to like better her silence.

"You must forget it," he added, "this rambling talk of ours, as I shall forget—everything except my duty."

His eyes were already away from her, he seemed eager to go.

She did not hold out her hand, she could not have borne his touch just then, but he did not note the omission.

"Good night," he said, "Celia. Good night."

The next moment she heard his quick step on the pavement outside.

She still lingered. scenting the roses, her hands clasped idly in her lap. For some reason unknown to her consciousness, all the fever, the unrest of these last weeks seemed gone, and in their place was a strange calm, a self-possession that she wondered at, yet accepted with no effort to understand.

She said to herself that it must wear away, and leave her soul uncovered again to the battle—that it was only an abeyance, a momentary cessation from some-

thing that would come again with redoubled power—and yet somehow she knew that it was an atmosphere that she had reached by climbing a great height—and that always when she thought of him this hush would be on her, calming her to silence.

When Isabelle came in, long after, she was still sitting there, her hands in her lap, looking into vague distance.

"Did Brayton come?"

Isabelle, unpinning a bunch of violets, asked the question with a nervously brilliant emphasis. Celia rising, began to turn down the lights.

"Yes, he came."

"Did he say—anything?"

"No—that is, I have forgotten what he said!" And Isabelle with a long backward look, preceded her up-stairs.

Celia that night slept like a child, waking to the same calm undertone.

"He is strong," she said to herself, "he will mold her to his own image—and he will be happy because he loves her."

There was hardly a regret in her heart at the thought. After all it was his happiness that counted; not her own. She could learn to be glad for his sake!

She went down to the breakfast-room, finding it empty. Her father had gone, the maid said, and Miss Isabelle also—she had left word that she would be gone all day—that a note in the library would explain.

But it was not in the library that Celia found it—it was lying on the little cabinet beside the drooping roses.

Celia, picking up the small envelope with her name in a large hand on its white surface, was conscious of a slight surprise; it was rather more erratic than Isabelle's usual self.

When she opened it she turned quite white, staring at the few lines it held at first stupidly, then with a sharp recognition that made her start forward with a low cry. Isabelle had gone—gone—because of her—but *where!*

Recollecting herself, she walked quietly into the next room, plying the maid with guarded questions.

"How long has my sister been gone—an hour? Two? You say she had breakfast at seven—she left in a cab? It's all right, Marie—she has planned a visit to—friends; she will not be back to-night."

And then, at the girl's curious stare, she turned and went swiftly up to her own room.

Isabelle had gone—and yet all the time it was Brayton she was thinking of, wondering how to soften the blow—how to explain to him this terrible thing that brought her name—*her* name—her breath caught as she read over again the few meager lines that told it all:

> I have guessed, dear, that *you* care for him more than I ever will—you will make him happier than I ever could—so don't be foolish and make one of your usual fusses. I am leaving you free ground. Say "Thank you," like a lady, and don't worry.
>
> ISABELLE.
>
> P. S. As for Brayton, I'm sure he'll come to his senses yet. It wasn't like him to make such a mistake at the beginning—but all's well that ends well—*n'est ce pas?*
>
> I——

It told her so much—after all, nothing! Staring at it as it lay in her lap her brain tried to think out a way.

To find Isabelle before Brayton could know—to keep a perhaps needless alarm from her father—these were the only things clear to her.

With a mechanical precision she put on her hat and took her gloves and purse from the drawer; she thought only vaguely of everything, but she knew that she would need money—she might be gone all day.

She dared not admit to her own heart that she might not find her—she *must,* for Brayton's sake!

Going down-stairs again, she planned the daily routine for the household with an attention to detail that she had not thought possible; all the time she was seeing Brayton's weary face, and her sister's irresponsible smile—everything else seemed trivial and of no account.

When at last she turned to the doorway there was a high spot of color in each cheek, her hand, nervously turning the knob, opened it to meet—Brayton!

"Oh," she stammered, "you have come," and then, not daring to finish, she tried to smile at him from the usual kindly distance, holding him at bay with wavering eyes.

His face was quite expressionless, but his hand trembled slightly as he touched her arm.

"Yes," he said quietly, and led her in as he might have led a child back to the flower-scented room.

She sank with a strange feeling of faintness into a chair, yet her eyes followed him, mute questioners, as he drew the portières and came and stood a trifle away from her on the hearth rug.

For one brief moment there was silence between them, but his troubled face told her that he knew. She thought she must cry out, or find some language in which to comfort him.

The strain of it became more than she could bear—she leaned forward with a little sob.

"Brayton—she will come back — we must find her."

"I have found her, Celia."

She stood up, catching at a chair to steady herself.

"Brayton—do you mean——"

He was looking at her strangely.

"Did she tell you, Celia," he asked gently, "why she—went away?"

At the question she paled again, but she met his eyes bravely.

"It was wrong of her," she said, "wrong!"

"It was quite right—to marry him if she loved him—best."

She started — suddenly she understood.

"Brayton—oh, Brayton!"

At sight of her shamed wet eyes his hand went out to her.

"Celia, don't—it's better—so much better so."

She was sobbing just a little, but she shook her head.

"To have hurt you, Brayton—oh, it was cruel!"

"Celia, it was kind—how kind you do not know."

Through the hush that fell about them she heard him speaking, as from a great distance.

"Don't you understand? Can't you see that it was the best way—out of it? They were married last night. He told me this morning that he had always loved her, and now I know she loved him. I should have done my duty—always remember that—but through it all it has been you—that counted!"

She didn't try to understand. She listened as in a dream, fearing to wake.

"Just at first it was her grace—her beauty—but afterward when you had shown me what you were, Celia, then I knew the difference. You spoke to me a language she did not know; you urged me higher, and I was glad to climb for your sake; and then, when I found that I had grown to love you, I shut my heart and dared not listen, until that doubt came to me of her! I should have gone on—knowing you, it was the only way—to make her as happy as I could, to do my best in everything. But, as it is, can't you understand that I am glad?"

She bent her head, hiding her wet eyes from him till he compelled her to look up again.

"Celia, could you learn to care for me—some time—in the end?"

And suddenly her heart found voice: "Oh, Brayton, I *have* cared—from the beginning!"

A COMMUTATION OF SENTENCE.

By D. Z. Doty.

MISCHIEVOUS Cupid, once upon a day,
While looking for a target for his dart,
Caught sight of me, and then to my dismay
Aimed straight and true and pierced me to the heart.

His wanton cruelty I swore he'd rue.
I tried him; judge and jury both was I;
And "guilty" was the verdict stern but true;
Without delay I sentenced him to die.

But all my bitter wrath was changed to joy,
When my sweetheart, appealing, took his part,
And now he's "up for life"—the roguish boy,
Imprisoned here forever in my heart!

DEBTOR TO THE ESTATE.

By Marie Belden James.

IN which it is proven that the departed exert an unconscious influence upon the living.

A TATTERED flag on the flag-pole of the Financier's Club hung limply at half-mast. Down in Chrystie Street a fire-engine building was being draped in rusty black and from the door-post of an ancient dwelling in Fourth Street fluttered a bit of crape.

By these tokens the passing throng learned that old Bridgman was dead at last.

In the close little office, thirteen flights above the street, where old Bridgman and his one clerk had transacted business for twenty years, Sloan & Jackson, lawyers for the estate, sat and smoked and turned over papers and laughed easily together. They had sent Sedley home—Sedley, who had been old Bridgman's only assistant, and who had been scolded and abused and had his pay ground down to nothing while his employer got rich. They had sent him home because the tears kept filling his weak, red eyes, and dropping among the papers, and because he choked when Sloan laughed at old Bridgman's office coat hanging stiffly behind the door.

Jackson flung a pile of bills and an account book into the dusty drawer, and lay back in his chair.

"Cunning old devil," he said, lazily drawing figures in the air with his cigar. "How did he do it? That's what I want to know. Look at the names on that list. All dead-beats. They never paid any one else, but old Bridgman collected in full every month. How did he do it?"

Sloan looked up from the paper he was scanning.

"If Bridgman ever collected from Dave Ulussenbaum, he was a wonder," he answered. "I didn't think Dave ever paid any one in his life except that Italian fruit-seller who——"

"Dave *did* pay old Bridgman though," interrupted Jackson, "his name's down in that account book as often as ten times and every time the bill's been receipted. How the devil did Bridgman do it?"

Sloan turned around in old Bridgman's chair and brought his feet gracefully into position upon the desk.

"Well, here's where Bridgman's estate is likely to lose, then," he said, "for Ulussenbaum owed the old fellow about eight hundred, and I don't see how we are ever going to collect it."

"Sure enough," exclaimed Jackson, moving his chair back out of the glare from the setting sun.

"I remember. His was a bill for eight hundred dollars and it was one of those bills old Bridgman had made out, with a dunning letter. He signed them all ready to send out before he died. I let Sedley fix them up and get them off last night before he got too sniffly."

"I hope you watched old Sedley do it, then," returned Sloan, "for he's about as big a fool as there is on top of the green earth."

"Well, I told him to add a postscript to each letter saying that old Bridgman was dead and telling the debtor to settle with us. He couldn't well get that twisted."

"I don't know," said Sloan, "he is a most amazing chump. Why, one day I was siting here talking to old Bridgman and Sedley comes up and says in that scared little voice of his, 'If you please, Mr. Bridgman, what shall I say in this letter to Mr. Arlington?' Bridgman yells out, 'Say something or nothing, and that pretty quick.' Sedley went off and, in a minute, back he comes with

the letter for the old chap's signature. And what do you suppose he had written? Well, sir, the letter read: 'Dear Mr. Arlington—Something or nothing, and that pretty quick. Yours, etc.'"

"What did the old boy do?" inquired Jackson, laughing.

"Do? Cussed Sedley and wrote a letter himself. Told me he always made out the bills himself because the poor little fool couldn't. I asked him why he kept such an ass around, and he grunted and said, 'An ass that *knows* he's an ass is a damn sight better than an ass that thinks every other fellow's an ass.' I came away."

Jackson laughed, but thought it best to let the story stand without comment.

"Sure, I don't know why he did keep the fellow," he said, after a moment, "Sedley didn't even write a good hand after he took to imitating old Bridgman's writing. Their scribble looks a lot alike, except that Sedley must water his ink—look how faint it is beside the other in that book. Makes it last longer, probably."

"Well," said Sloan, untwisting the curtain cord, preparatory to letting the shade fly up to the top, "when Ulussenbaum knows Bridgman's dead, all Sedley's tears aren't going to make him pay up. He's paid just one bill in his life that I ever heard of besides Bridgman's, and that was to an Italian fruit-seller who made him think he was being haunted. I don't know where a tough one like Dave got such a fear of ghosts. He'd face down any man or woman on earth, but I saw him fall on his knees and beg for mercy one night when a little kid in a white dress unexpectedly stepped out of a gate he couldn't locate. So the Italian had him when he brought on his ghosts, and Dave planked down and paid up."

Sloan paused and glanced around the rapidly darkening room. During the last few minutes the light, which floated in through the window, had become more and more somber, so that now only a few golden rays streaked the sky.

"Don't you think——" he began, but he was interrupted by a sound as of a timid, hesitating tap at the door. For a moment the two men remained silent, looking at each other. They were not expecting company just then. Presently Jackson spoke, almost in a whisper.

"Do you suppose that's Sedley coming back?"

Very quietly Sloan removed his feet from the desk and closed the cigar-box. He regarded Jackson with eyes suddenly wide.

"Do you suppose it's——"

The door was pushed open from without and a heavy face, coarse and brutal, but frightfully pale, beneath stiff black spikes of hair, looked into the room. A pair of clouded, terrified eyes searched every corner before the tall, thick-set figure advanced and closed the door. Then they saw a man standing just within the room, speechless and trembling nervously. In a moment Sloan recognized him.

"Well, Mr. Ulussenbaum," said Sloan, though not quite in his natural tone, "what can we do for you?"

Again the cloudy black eyes, which seemed to harmonize strangely with the smoky darkness of the room, wandered over the little office. Then the pale lips moved quiveringly.

"Old Br—Mr. Bridgman ain't here, is he?" asked a harsh, cracked voice.

"No, Mr. Ulussenbaum," replied Jackson smoothly. "Doubtless you haven't heard that Mr. Bridgman is dead."

"Oh, yes, I have. I heard it. *I* heard it," muttered the man rapidly and hoarsely. "I know he's dead—but—are you sure he's not—— My God, what's that?"

In his nervous scrutiny of the room he had half-turned and caught sight of the coat Sloan had laughed at, hanging limply against the door. With a hysterical, choking cry, he staggered away and flung down a letter on the rickety table.

"There," he gasped, wildly thrusting his hands into his pockets and bringing them out filled with gold pieces, "there's the bill and here's the cash."

He began feverishly throwing the gold upon the table.

"In full, do you hear, in full. Don't come near me. I'm paying you, I tell you, every cent. And interest if you want it. There. Don't touch me." And the man heaped gold on the table in desperate haste.

During these strange actions Sloan quietly rose and got between the actor and the door, so that when Ulussenbaum had thrown down the last eagle and turned to go, he found he could not pass out. For a moment he glared wildly and then lunged forward.

"Just one minute, sir," said Sloan coolly, steadying the other with an outstretched hand. "I only want to give you a receipt for this. A mere formality——"

The door, which had not shut quite tight was blown forward a little by a slight draft, and the coat, hanging there, swung softly to and fro. Ulussenbaum's eyes dwelt on it for a moment, fascinated, then he thrust out his powerful hands and dashed Sloan to one side.

"Damn you, don't keep me here," he was shrieking in a whisper. "I don't want no receipt. Devils! Devils! Let me get out." With one stride from the table to the door, he rushed from the room and ran precipitately down the stairs.

For a moment, after the sounds had died away, Sloan and Jackson stood gazing at each other through the darkness, across the gold-strewn desk. Then Sloan silently struck a match and lighted the smoky little oil lamp. Both men looked cautiously around the room before they chose fresh cigars and sat down, still in silence. After a while Jackson spoke deliberately.

"What the devil was it?" he asked.

Sloan shook his head.

"Where's the bill?" he asked. "Did Ulussenbaum leave it here? It might explain——"

"Of course," returned Jackson, sitting up quickly, "that will show. He left it—under the money there somewhere."

Together they gathered up the scattered gold pieces and piled them neatly to one side. They did not touch the paper underneath until all were collected and counted. Then Sloan unfolded the document and they looked it over together.

It was the bill, just as they had last seen it—David Ulussenbaum, debtor to J. H. Bridgman, the items plainly written out, and the legend, "Please settle at once," above Bridgman's well-known signature. But, below, in a hand very like Bridgman's, but feebler and weaker at every turn, written with a scratchier pen and fainter ink, was a postscript:

> P. S.—Since writing the above I have died. Settle with Sloan & Jackson at my office.

THE PRACTICAL JOKER.

By Helen Rowland.

WHEN a real bright young man is jocular by nature you can't tell what he'll do.

YOU should see Broadway, as Danny Endicott saw it on a radiant afternoon in May—after five years of exile. It did not seem like Broadway to Danny; it was more like a bit of heaven paved with gold and filled with archangels in pompadours and ruffled skirts and top-hats.

The smell of roasting peanuts and the odors wafted to him from the trays of the violet-sellers and the rose-venders were like celestial incense, and the cries of the shoe-string men and the newsboys were divine melody to his hungry ears.

Hungry? Well, have you ever had the feeling of getting back to New York after a long, weary exile among savages, where you have been building bridges and growing rich—and forgetting a girl? That was what Danny had been doing in those five years.

At least, he had been building famous bridges and getting abnormally rich, and—except at nights, when he took out her photograph and read over

her polite little notes, very much the worse for wear by now, and tied them up and put them back under his pillow again—he had been forgetting the girl.

It was with a queer feeling in his throat and at the pit of his stomach that Danny glanced under the flowered hat of every slender, frilly looking girl who passed. He *might* meet Maud—right here—and he wanted to see her first and to be prepared.

He had made an ass of himself, he knew, but he didn't want Maud to know that he was still making an ass of himself.

The women in turn stared at Danny; for besides being a little out of the ordinary, with his bronzed face and his foreign clothes, his broad shoulders and clean-cut profile were worth looking at. And the shoe-string men and the violet-sellers made a personal appeal to him, as he passed, because he looked rich and happy and "easy."

He wanted to buy a bunch of lilacs and go along Broadway inhaling their subtle fragrance. He wanted to buy the glittering things he saw in the shop windows. He wanted to buy everything—the books, the flowers, the jewels, the lights, the shops—all Union Square—all Broadway! And then suddenly a vender, bolder and more impertinent than the rest, pushed a bunch of pink roses under Danny's nose and the joy went out of his heart.

He remembered that he was really a sad and blighted being and—that he did not like pink roses.

It is queer how a song, or a perfume, or a flower can carry certain sensations with it that a man is never able to get rid of all his life long. Pink roses and the girl and Danny's exile were all very much connected in his mind; and if he had been out in the heathen country he might have done things to that particular flower-seller.

But it was not possible to be sad for long, even though Danny knew he had reason to be sad every minute. The sight of the Flatiron Building put the pink roses out of his head.

That remarkable piece of architecture had risen during his absence, and every stone in the marvelous structure called out to his heart. He stood off on the other side of the street and craned his neck and squinted his eyes at it. He forgot to look under the hats of the frilly girls who passed him, holding down their frills in a mad battle with the Flatiron breezes.

He forgot the time of day and that he was hungry, and that he had been going to his club. He forgot everything, until, in the midst of a flight of speculations, he was suddenly brought to earth by the touch of a hand on his coat-sleeve.

Danny turned with a sudden start and a little shiver. It *might* be Maud. But it was only a man, the last man he should have expected to see in this mercantile quarter of the town and the one farthest away from his thoughts at that or any other moment: in short, little Billy Trent, better known as clubman, arbiter of fashions, and harmless practical joker.

"By all that's unholy!" was Billy's comment, "Danny Endicott's ghost! For the love of the Lord come up to Sully's and have a drink with me."

For the fraction of an instant, Danny did not recognize Trent. When he did, he put out his hand and the two hands met in a grip that only man-friendship understands.

Five minutes later they were walking up Broadway, side by side, and Billy's tongue was wagging in a delightful ripple of gossip that rejoiced his hearer's ears.

Danny gloated inwardly. Here was the man of all men who could tell him about Maud. If anybody knew where to find her and what she had been doing all this time Billy Trent did. It was not for nothing that he had been dubbed "The Afternoon News" in those other days.

But, in the midst of his rejoicing and in spite of his eagerness to listen to Trent's gossip, Danny could not help noticing how remarkably the little man had altered. Billy was scarcely a semblance of the dapper, pert, glass-of-fashion and ornament-of-teas, whose ties and gloves and hats had been accepted as gospel in his set five years ago.

Indeed, he was almost seedy, and Danny observed with growing surprise that his coat was out of date and that his collar had a bend in it and a spot

on it that would have tried the soul of Billy Trent of the old days.

But his talk rippled on, as of yore, in pleasant ways, and by the time they were entering the gorgeous, gilded portal of Sully's Danny knew everything about everybody in New York—except Maud. It was with tingling nerves that he had listened for the sound of her name, but, strangely enough, so far, she was the one person Billy had neglected to mention in his harangue.

It came at last—when they were seated at a cool, white-clothed table, just inside one of Sully's most fascinating windows, where a green box, overflowing with red and gold nasturtiums, almost touched Danny's elbow.

"Do you know, old chap," Billy began somewhat slowly as he flicked the end of his cigar and gazed thoughtfully into the glass of cracked ice and whisky in front of him, "I've wanted to see you for five years. Sometimes I thought I never should see you again, and then I've felt like a cad. There was a joke——" Billy hesitated. "I played it on you, and I've always been a bit off my feed about it."

Billy bit the end of his cigar while Danny looked at him wonderingly.

"You see," he continued, after a moment, "I'm something of a fool. Always turning fool practical jokes on my friends. Never could resist one—but," and Billy looked hard at Danny. "I never intentionally did a man a mean trick in my life."

"Blurt it out," remarked Danny encouragingly, leaning back luxuriously against the cushions of his chair and joyously sipping his first highball.

"Well," continued Billy, "you remember Maud Carleton——"

Ah! Danny caught his breath and swallowed quickly the mouthful of iced whisky he had just sipped.

"Well," went on Billy, "the joke was on her too."

Danny felt his fingers itching. He wanted to get up and choke the rest of it out of Billy. He was so slow.

"It happened the day before you left for Africa," continued Trent. "I just chanced in Farley's, the florist's, that morning. The place was crowded and I had to sit down on a blame stool and wait for a lot of women to get through ordering and making change. While I sat there I noticed two particularly handsome boxes of flowers tied up and ready to be delivered lying on the counter beside me. Half mechanically, I glanced at the cards on top of them and then the devil put it into my head that it would be a good joke to change those cards.

"One of the boxes was addressed to Essie Bentley, the little dancer, who created such a stir that winter. It was a small box and looked like violets. The other was addressed to Maud and looked as though it ought to hold American beauties. I changed the cards," added Billy laconically.

Danny drew a long breath and the club furniture went round before his eyes.

"Well?" he said. "Go on."

"Well," continued Billy, "I married Maud."

"You—what?"

"I married Maud, you know. Say, old man, it looks beastly, but I swear by all that's holy that I never knew you had proposed to her or even cared for her, except in the ordinary way until she told me you had tricked her. It seems that the night before you sailed for Africa, was it not, she was to give you her answer. If it was 'yes' she was to wear your flowers. She got the flowers—Essie's violets—and wore them. Then you sailed away without a word. A month later I proposed to her—and she married me—for spite, I suppose."

Billy looked wistfully at Danny, who put his hand over his eyes to wipe out the revolving furniture and the dancing glasses. When, a moment later, he opened them, he blinked at the light and asked quietly:

"Have you told Maud?"

"No," replied Billy; "didn't dare. Just as soon she'd hate you, anyway. You're so damn good-looking, you know."

Then he added, gazing wistfully out of the window, "Maud doesn't seem to care much—for me and my jokes."

"I wish you'd told her," said Danny softly.

Billy's eyes brightened up.

"Say," he said with childlike inspira-

tion, "why don't you come home with me to dinner to-night and tell her yourself? Then we'd be square."

Dinner! With Maud! So soon!

Danny put out his hand and Billy laid his in it and again the grip of man-friendship passed between them.

"I'll come, Billy," he said, "and we'll tell her together—perhaps. Anyway, it's good of you to let me see her again. I'd—*like* to see her."

It was nearly half past six when Danny in a cab with Billy beside him rolled up through Central Park toward Harlem.

"By the by," remarked Billy, "we'll have to apologize for appearances. I lost my good thing with Barnett & Barnett last year and Uncle Ezra seems to have registered a vow in heaven not to die and 'leave me all.' So Maud and I have to pinch a bit—one servant and all that, but I guess you'll understand."

Understand! Why, Danny could dine with Maud off tinware and a pine table and feel that he was sitting opposite a queen.

Hadn't he sat opposite her photograph—the frail presentment of a slender, delicate girl with big eyes and a pretty retroussé nose and subtle waving hair—night after night in a dirty tent, beside a dirty box table, with dirty niggers howling outside? And hadn't he felt as if he were sitting before a shrine?

It was not until they had passed the confines of the great wide park with its hills of green and its beautiful trees and its avenues lined with carriages filled with lovely women and were rolling through Harlem itself that Danny began to notice that New York was not really Fairyland.

He had never been in Harlem more than twice in his life, and its narrow streets filled with swarming children and crowded in by tall, ugly flat-houses struck him as incongruous with the idea of Maud. He shuddered a bit as Billy stopped the cab in front of a dingy apartment-house and they got out and walked up to its entrance between a line of staring urchins.

He caught himself mentally inquiring, if Billy and Maud had to "pinch," why they should do it here. Why didn't they do it in a cool, flowery little cottage?

He had always pictured himself and Maud in a cool little apartment, with cool green walls and soft rugs and a window filled with flowering plants and a piano—at which Maud, in a long, white, flowing thing, sat and sang——

The voice of an irate janitor broke in upon Danny's dream at this point with insistent loudness. An altercation in Dutch was in full blast in the basement it was quite evident, and Danny was only thankful that he did not know what they were saying, for it was very plain that the conversation was not for Christian ears.

Billy slipped his key into the latch and Danny followed him gropingly up two flights of narrow, dark stairs. At the top of the first flight the all-embracing smell of boiled cabbage met them with a rush, and Danny marveled that Billy did not even seem to notice it.

The halls were very dark and very eerie and Danny stumbled against something in the passage. A woman in a pink kimono poked a frowsy head out of a door and then as hurriedly withdrew it.

At the top of the second flight they stopped for breath, and then Billy went forward and rang his own door-bell timidly. There was a sound of scurrying feet, a dog began to bark as though the beggars had in reality come to town and, at this, an infant in the back of the apartment awoke and added its protesting yells to the general clamor.

In the midst of the confusion a door was flung open and a wide shaft of light streamed out into the hallway. Silhouetted against it Danny could see the dusky form of a sloppy, colored servant-girl, who let her master and himself in with a perceptible sniff. It was perfectly evident that unexpected guests to dinner were not what she had stipulated for, when she had hired herself to Billy's wife.

The door banged behind them and Danny found himself in a dingy little apartment about the width of a good slice of cheese.

He drew a long breath and stood still in the middle of the room for fully two minutes after Billy had excused himself. Then he sat down mechanically in a creaky chair and looked about.

Maud—in this! He could not have

believed it. Never in the wildest flights of his imagination had he pictured a more perfect revenge on the girl who, he thought, had thrown him over.

He looked at the walls. They were not green and cool, but red and dingy. There was a picture over the mantelpiece—a good one too—but it hung crookedly from its nail, as though it resented its surroundings and was trying to get down.

And there was a piano in one corner of the slice of cheese—a piano littered with the strangest assortment of débris he had ever seen. A half-filled nursing-bottle hung by a string from one of its hinges. A dilapidated doll in a shocking state of semi-toilette lay stretched across its keys, while a red toy automobile crowned its once polished top, now dingy with the unmistakable imprint of sticky fingers.

Danny closed his eyes and thought with bitter resentment of Billy. That he should have brought *her* to this.

His heart went out in infinite pity to Maud—and then a pair of tawdry portières opened and, before Danny could transport himself to earth again, three round-headed, round-eyed children stood staring at him in unabashed silence.

Danny looked at them for a moment in blank astonishment. Then he nodded mechanically and the oldest, a tiny girl in pertly starched skirts, came toward him.

"Mama'll be in in a minute," she announced briskly. "She's taking care of the baby, because papa said you'd come to dinner and 'Liz'beth had to put on a clean tablecloff."

"Se *ith* not," interposed the next in succession, a moon-faced, pudgy-nosed boy, the image of Billy. "Se'th fixing her hair—an' se'th awful mad!"

Danny opened his mouth to speak, but the conversation was abruptly interrupted. There was a swish of feminine draperies, the sound of a woman's voice and the portières parted.

Danny almost choked over his cigarette. He wanted to run. He wanted to laugh. He wanted to scream.

A short, fat, dumpling-faced woman in a burnt-orange tea-gown and a mountain of strange-looking hair dropped the curtains and—*waddled* into the room.

Maud! Danny clutched at his chair and blinked. Then he rose and did the most decent thing he had ever done in his life—he greeted the metamorphosis of Maud with the best assumption of a broken-hearted look he could muster.

But he was not sorry that she received him coldly and handed him only two fingers to shake. He sat down and shut his eyes again, while Maud hunted about for an unlittered chair.

Maud—fat! Maud in a burnt-orange tea-gown. Maud with a double chin and dyed hair. For her hair *had* changed color—Danny knew it—and not of its own accord either.

Oh, the pity of it! Where were the old sweet eyes? Danny looked and saw that they were almost hidden in a mass of fat lids.

Where was the silvery voice that had sung to him on those nights? Could this affected nervous cackle be its ghost?

Where was the slender little hand he had held? Not where those podgy fingers played with that burnt-orange drapery, surely!

He felt a sudden revulsion take place within him. His ardent pity, so recently bestowed on Maud, went over to Billy in a single leap, and he wanted to drag his old friend out and buy him another drink.

And he had thought that it was the *spirit* of Maud which he had worshiped and which had come to him and spurred him on to better deeds out there in that wilderness. Why, she never could have had a spirit, or it must have been smothered long ago in that awful mass of flesh.

Nobody can ever describe the agonies of that dinner as Danny suffered them—the tough steak and the cold demitasse; the baby pounding the cloth with his spoon in deafening rage; the awful three demanding and expostulating; the punishment of the moon-faced boy and his protesting yells on being sent away from the table; Maud's attempts at intelligent conversation between the interruptions; and, worst of all, Maud's mountain of tinted hair.

When at length, with a sickening feeling, Danny tore himself away on the flimsiest excuse, it was without having uttered one word to Maud about the

past, or his flowers, or Billy's joke, or anything that could stir up the least reminiscence of sentiment.

Joke! Danny sat back in his cab and laughed—laughed loud and long and miserably. With the feeling of a man who has had a tooth drawn or taken a bitter dose of medicine and is better for it he slipped the key into the door of his bachelor apartment and entered its quiet, restful precincts with a devout sigh of gratitude.

That night, as he took from the drawer of his desk a bundle of old letters and a faded photograph and touched a match to them, he leaned back amid the luxurious pillows of his Morris chair and laughed again.

"Billy, old fellow," he chuckled softly, "I think the joke's on you."

A MOUNTAIN ERROR.

By Raymond S. Spears.

"BE sure you're right, then go ahead," was an unknown motto to those herein mentioned.

"HOW did you-all come to git shot-up down in Tazewell County, Anderson?" Marion Legere asked a pale, weakly mountain man. "'Peahs to me like I hearn as it was an accident?"

Anderson shifted his position, grimacing with pain as he did so. He glanced over at the washstand on which were stacked the fourteen revolvers belonging to the eleven occupants of the hotel room, and began:

"I'll tell you, gentlemen, jes' how hit was. Hit shore wasn't meant—hit was jes' a mistake, like Marion said. They didn't no moh intend to shoot me than to kill any man in the worl'. They's jes' as good people down in that paht of Tennessee as they is up heah 'round Speedville.

"I was goin' down the road along the Clinch in Tazewell. Father'd got killed when I was twelve years old, and mother an' me an' the otheh children had a hawd, mean time. I learned then what it was to deal with rich men. I've had a man wuth $4,500 measure out cohn into a bushel basket an' scoop out the middle, an' pile hit up 'round the edges so's 'twould look even up and full. We hadn't no pig, an' we couldn't git no sugar to put down apple-butter—I tell you, gentlemen, we knowed honger an' despair, an' all 'cause a man had to murder my ole dad. Yasseh! Murder him—shoot him right down in cold blood! I'd a killed that man, but I didn't have no thousand dollars to git lawyers to defend me.

"Well, when I growed up so's I could work, I hired out. I hoed in gardens, in the middle of the day, when a man ain' supposed to work in the sun. I worked hawd, an' we managed to keep ourselves alive. I ust to go looking foh work all oveh. That's what I was doin' that time I got shot-up. I was lookin' foh work 'way down in Tazewell.

"I'd be'n out a week, an' neveh a day's work had I found. Peahed like they wa'n't none nowhar foh me. I went from house to house, on foot, all day long. Many's the house I whooped to, them days. One night I started oveh the mountain tow'd the Holston, wheh theh's richer men. It was late in the eve'nin'. I 'lowed I'd git to stay oveh the ridge somewhah, but I wasn't acquainted. I didn't know whah I was, you mout say.

"I walked along till hit come candlelight, then hit come dark. Peahed like theh wa'n't no open houses theh. In one, a woman was sick, an' took bad. In anotheh they was full up. One or two was 'fraid, foh theh'd be'n some fussin' lately—I knowed how they felt. I respected them foh hit. I was a strangeh, an' foh all they knowed I mout of be'n

a detective, an' hit wa'n't policy to take in strangehs, so I walked on, whistling.

"Hit was the fall of the yeah. The leaves was on the groun'. The turkey moon was up, an' shinin' right brightly on the bridle-path whah I was a-kickin' up the leaves. Um-m. Hit war a lonely, plumb ghos'ly trail. Sometimes I could see things movin' off into the laurels. I hurried on. The nex' house, somebody'd said, theh was a cleveh, lib'rel man who'd shore keep me. His name was Campbell—Squire Campbell.

"I come along the side of a little ridge, a spur out of the mountain, the moon bein' beyant the rise of ground. Away down to my left theh was a little run pourin' oveh the rocks. As I walked along, all of a sudden I hearn a gun clickin', an' then some moh. Gawd, gentlemen, hit was a skeery, hateful sound! I looked quick up that hillside. Law! Law! I knowed they was makin' a mistake! I knowed hit, even when the bullets and buckshot came pourin' down on me.

"They didn't seem to hurt much. They kind of caved me in, heah an' theah, an' as one place loosed up I staggered one way an' then anotheh. Finally, staggerin' back, I fell on my knees an' forward on my hands—facin' 'em, by Gawd; facin' every one! Still the shots kept comin'. I could see them men standin' up thar, jes' murderin' me. I tell you, gentlemen, I got to feelin' right down murderin' mad — mean, fightin' mad. Yasseh! I knowed hit war a mistake—I hadn't done no man theh, or anywhere, any harm—in all that country. I neveh knowed a soul. But theh they was shootin' an' shootin', and the fiah was drappin' out their guns onto the leaves.

"I don't b'lieve in shootin' any man from the bresh, 'specially at night, when you cayn't tell fer certain. But I was a strangeh an'—well, gentlemen, I jes' had to shoot, shot-up as I was. I jes' shore had to shoot!"

"You shore had!" somebody exclaimed.

"Theh they was—I could count 'em, standin' with their backs to the sky, between me an' the moon. They was maddenin', so big an' black, still shootin' down, an' me like a stuck hog on the groun'. More'n fohty shots they'd fiahed when I drawed mah gun—hit war dad's ole 45. Gawd, hit felt good in my grip as I shoved hit up toward 'em. I was that weak I had to kind of hold myself, squatted down like an' ole bullfrog. Yasseh, hit war plumb laughable, jes' like a big bullfrog.

"Theh was one man right against the face of the full moon. I could see the barrel of mah gun an' I got hit right thar. When I pulled, he jes' throwed his haid up an' fell back out of sight in the low laurels. I could see the otheh men against the sky an' I shot—shot—shot. Two moh backed up an' then rolled in the dry leaves—jes' like hogs rootin' foh acorns, hit sounded! Then the otheh two started to run away—I 'low they'd shot their shoots all up, but I didn't kyah. I kept shootin'.

"I don' know's I ought to have done it, seein's they'd made a mistake, but I jes' couldn't he'p shootin'. I seen one's back oveh the laurels, as he run, stoopin' low. I held ahead an' some under. Afteh I pulled I seen him staggerin' an' rollin' as he run. Directly I hearn him fall on yon side the ridge. He died nex' day, poh man. I couldn't a holped hit—I couldn't be sartin they hadn't wanted to rob me. Anyhow, I 'lowed they'd killed me——"

"You done jes' right!" Legere exclaimed. "They hadn't no right to make sech a mistake — an' you a strangeh, too!"

"They shore hadn't!" several muttered. Anderson continued:

"Well, theh I was in the road. I was plumb sick an' almighty oncomf'table. I laid theh a long while, sprawlin' on mah back. Then I growed cold. I s'pose hit was the blood gittin' aout of me. I thought hit war the frost, so I rolled oveh an' crept along the road like a hog, on all fours. I kept gittin' hurtiner an' hurtiner, but I knowed I jes' gotter keep goin' or die of that cold. After I'd gone about two whoops—hit seemed seven mile!—I come to a clearin', an' I got to the yard fence. Lawd! how the dawgs did come aout at me! I whooped, an' a man asted:

"'You-all mixed up with that shootin'?'

"I knowed if I said I was, he'd be skeert up, an' not take me in. I 'lowed I'd drawp right down an' freeze to death if he didn't, so I lied to him. I said I'd come down the mountain an' hadn't hearn no shoots.

"'Come in!' he said to me.

"I clumb the fence, pulled my clothes aroun' me, an' walked right up to the house. I wabbled some, but he neveh noticed. He showed me mah bed, an' I laid on hit all night, awake, an' suffren' Gawd knows what. When hit come mohnin', he seen how 'twas, an' took cyah of me, yasseh! His own brotheh couldn't of be'n took better cyah of, nosseh.

"That mohnin' theh was lots of talkin' aroun'. Men an' women folks come in an' went aout. They whuspered an' whuspered, till pretty soon some one said, kind of loud, hit war a mistake, an' anotheh said hit wasn't—tryin' me, you see. They thought I mout have hawd feelin's. I said I reckoned hit must of be'n a mistake, foh I hadn't an enemy in the world that I knowed.

"Along late in the evenin' a man come in. Everybody fell quiet an' still when he come. He had hisn's gun an' he looked at everybody there, sharp an' keen. Then he come oveh to me, sidlin' along the wall, so's not to have his back toward any man. Then he said to me:

"'I hope you-all ain' got no hawd feelin's toward we-uns, strangeh! We didn't know you-all—we 'lowed you-all was a plumb mean man of ouh acquaintance; we shore did. Will you-all accept ouh 'pology? Will you-all shake han's with me?'

"We shook, an' then he said they was waitin' foh anotheh man what had done some meanness. He said he didn't blame me foh shootin' back. 'I 'low you-all's even,' he said, 'four on us! Gawd!'

"Yasseh, gentlemen, he 'pologized like a man. That's what I call plumb honohable!"

"Hit shore was," a man from Kyle's Ford remarked. "How many times was you hit, Andy?"

"Theh's three buckshot in mah hip, an' foh bullets hit me scatterin'."

"Sho, hit war plumb regrettable, Andy. Them men hadn't orter be'n so keerless."

"They shore hadn't," Legere remarked.

IN THE HOUSE OF MADAME LEBRUN.

By Barkley Francis.

Note.—Madame Lebrun is the fictitious name of a lady who actually existed, and who disappeared from Paris soon after the first disclosures in the famous Dreyfus case.

HIS overcoat collar turned up about his ears, and his big slouch hat pulled far down over his eyes, a man, early one evening in January, crossed the Luxembourg gardens in Paris at a brisk pace, until he came to a blind path that runs nearly parallel with the Boulevard St. Michel. Into this path he turned at a more moderate pace, and began softly to whistle the strains of "The Marseillaise." The whistling produced an instantaneous effect upon a woman who was strolling along the boulevard. She was dressed in black, and a heavy black veil concealed her face. She came to a sudden stop.

The man in the gardens continued his walk until a great iron fence blocked his further progress; then, turning abruptly, he started to retrace his steps. Soon he saw the woman in black approaching. Just as they met she let fall a handkerchief. The man stooped quickly, seized the delicate bit of lace, and, bowing with what seemed exaggerated politeness, handed it to her with the words:

"I am glad to meet the House R."

"From the House G.?" The voice was winningly sweet.

"Yes, madame."

"Very good. Let us go."

A little farther down the path they entered an arbor. No sooner had they seated themselves than the man handed the woman a letter. As she hurriedly read it, her daintily gloved hand trembled. Opening her coat, she thrust the letter into her bodice. The *gendarme* who passed smiled knowingly, thinking, no doubt, that love was as strong in winter as in summer. Leaving the arbor, the man and woman parted at the entrance to the blind path, he to walk in the direction of the Avenue de Luxembourg, whence he came, and she to return to the Boulevard St. Michel, where she ordered the driver of a cab to take her to the Northern Depot.

Upon reaching this great railway station, after a drive of a little more than two miles, the woman in black mingled with the crowd in the waiting-room until she was approached by a man who had been keenly but unostentatiously scrutinizing the arriving and departing passengers. His attitude was one of great respect. Finally they approached each other and she whispered something in his ear. In this whispered conversation, as well as in the one held by the woman with the man in the arbor, the name of Colonel Palabot was several times mentioned.

Leaving the station on the side opposite to that from which she had entered, the woman in black passed through the little street that led to the Rue Lafayette. There she ordered a cab driver to take her to the Place de la Concorde. Remaining in the cab upon her arrival at this splendid square, she told the driver to wait. He grinned like an ape when, a few minutes later, he saw drawing near a dapper young man who wore the hood of his military cape pulled down over his eyes. No, the driver was not in the least astonished when the young officer entered the cab.

"A colonel!" he muttered. "And she is an aristocrat, or I do not know how an aristocrat carries herself."

What the driver did not know was that the young officer was a member of the general staff of the army. It is this staff that plans the fortifications upon which France relies.

The order was now to drive across the Seine and along the Boulevard St. Germain. At the entrance to a little side street in the Faubourg St. Germain, the colonel and the lady alighted, and the cab was dismissed. Presently, in the little side street, they stood before a door embedded in a high brick wall. Taking a key from her pocket, the lady opened the door and admitted herself and the colonel into a garden, at the rear of which was a large old-fashioned house picturesquely overhung by trees.

A strange feature of the house was that all its windows were guarded by heavy iron shutters. The colonel smiled when he saw the shutters—he could guess why they were there. Soon two bloodhounds came bounding up to his companion. She patted them affectionately, and, turning to the colonel, said:

"These are my most valued and *faithful* servants."

If the colonel noted the emphasis the woman in black put upon the word "faithful," he gave no sign; and when she took from her pocket a second key and opened the door of the house, he followed her, without comment, into a little anteroom furnished with rare taste. As she started to remove her coat, he made a motion to assist her; but she held up her hand and said:

"Help yourself, and don't bother about me, Monsieur le Colonel."

"Madame's wishes are my laws," replied the young colonel, taking off his cape.

By the time he had hung it up, his companion had removed her coat, bonnet, and veil; and, when he turned around, it was to look into a pair of big gray eyes, and a young and beautiful face lighted by a singularly innocent and confiding smile. With a graceful wave of her hand, the beautiful young woman opened a door that led into a large room, the most conspicuous furnishings of which were a great mahogany cabinet, which stood against the wall, and a large flat-topped desk, of the style of Louis XIV, which stood in the middle of the floor.

"If you please, Monsieur Palabot," said madame, "enter."

"I thank you," said the colonel.

Turning on more electric lights, ma-

dame invited her guest to sit down while she transacted a little business that demanded immediate attention. The colonel took a seat near the blazing logs in the open fireplace as she went to her desk and pressed a button on the under side of it. In a moment the portières that hung over a door at the farther side of the room were thrust aside, and a giant Algerian entered.

"Call my secretaries," said madame.

The Algerian bowed and departed. A little later two middle-aged men, whose bearing, despite their civil dress, was unmistakably military, took seats on either side of their fair employer's desk. Meanwhile madame had unlocked and swung back the heavy doors of the great cabinet, disclosing hundreds of documents reposing in pigeonholes labeled with the names of the various countries of the world. From a lower shelf in the cabinet she took a portfolio, and, returning to her desk, sat between her secretaries, giving whispered directions on the right in Russian, and on the left in German. For fifteen or twenty minutes the secretaries worked; they were then dismissed.

"Now, if you please, Monsieur Palabot," madame said, drawing up a comfortable chair for him by her desk. As the colonel seated himself therein, she handed him a box of Turkish cigarettes and added: "Please smoke for a few minutes and I will look over my correspondence."

Colonel Palabot stroked his dainty little mustache and smiled ironically. Taking a cigarette from the box, he slowly turned it over and examined the manufacturer's stamp as if it had for him great interest. With a dexterous movement, he put the cigarette in his waistcoat pocket, and, at the same time, drew out one of his own. But, quick as his action was, madame saw it, and she, too, smiled ironically.

"You prefer your own cigarettes, I see, monsieur. Will you be so good as to tell me why? These are very good Turkish cigarettes, I assure you."

"Madame undoubtedly is right. They are very good cigarettes—very good for madame, but too good for me."

"Will you kindly explain yourself, monsieur?"

Colonel Palabot leaned back in his chair, and complacently blew out several little rings of smoke. "I only mean that I have heard that in the house of Madame Lebrun there is great danger for a man who does not carefully weigh every word he speaks and watch everything he does. You see, madame, I am in a class by myself—I speak the truth."

Madame Lebrun did not smile. "Pray, reassure yourself, Monsieur le Colonel. No one need apprehend any danger from me. These cigarettes you refuse, I like very much."

"O madame! why be so heroic? If you will take one of mine—please!"

"Thank you very much, monsieur, but I think I should first prefer something to drink." Pressing the button under her desk, she again summoned the giant Algerian. "Some wine, Emil."

"For monsieur as well?" asked the swarthy servant.

"No," said madame, a sneer on her full, red lips; "monsieur has probably brought his own wine."

The giant departed with noiseless tread, and Madame Lebrun once more turned to the colonel.

"What do you think," she asked sweetly, "of the news of the House G.?"

"Why not be frank and call it the German Embassy?" said the colonel. "There is no danger here, is there?"

"Proceed, monsieur."

"Well, madame, have you heard the latest?"

"Yes, monsieur, I know the latest." She drew from her bodice the letter she had received in the Luxembourg gardens. A look of malignant hate drove the beauty from her face as she tossed the letter on the desk. "Yes, monsieur, I know the latest. And I also should like to know, monsieur, what price you received for acting as a traitor against us!"

"I?—a traitor!" cried the colonel, rising abruptly.

Deep disgust was added to the hate in Madame Lebrun's face. "You a traitor?" she sneered. "You a traitor? Why, that actually seems to astonish you! For how long is it that you have been betraying to me the military secrets of your country?"

"Yes, but—but——" stammered the colonel.

At that moment the Algerian entered with a silver tray containing some rich red wine, biscuits, and a glass. Placing the tray on a *tabouret* near his mistress' desk, he left the room as noiselessly as he had entered. Madame Lebrun poured for herself a glass of wine and gulped it down.

"And now," she said, "I ask you again how much you received for betraying me as well as betraying your country."

"Betraying you?" said the colonel in a choking whisper.

"Swine!" cried Madame Lebrun. "Utterly stupid swine! Must you stand there like a fool all night long asking questions? Think you that I do not know that yesterday you went to the enemies of Colonel Girard and sold them the proof that he, too, was using his position on the general staff to betray France's military secrets to the German embassy?"

"It—it is not true, madame."

"Liar! Read this!" She tossed in his direction the note that had lain upon her desk, and it fell at his feet.

Mechanically he picked it up. As he read it, great beads of sweat gathered upon his forehead, and he trembled from head to foot.

"And for how much?" again asked Madame Lebrun.

Colonel Palabot dropped weakly back into his chair. "Ten thousand francs."

"Ten thousand francs! So!——Monsieur le Colonel Palabot, could you not have waited for me? Were the two weeks I was absent from Paris too long for you to wait for ten thousand francs?"

"It was not—the money—alone, madame."

"What then, scoundrel?"

"Le Colonel Girard and I are—well, we have—we have the misfortune to be devoted to the same lady."

"You fool!"

"Madame's opinion is not very complimentary," said the colonel with a forced smile.

"My opinion of you!" burst out the enraged woman. "In my opinion you are nothing but"—Madame Lebrun leaned over until her pretty mouth was within an inch of her victim's ear—"nothing but a spy and a swine," she hissed.

"Madame!"

Colonel Palabot, gulping hard, struggled to recover his grip on himself. In his extremity he reached for the wine.

Madame Lebrun seized the decanter. "You wish some wine? Wait. I shall give it to you." She poured out a glassful, and, before he could collect his wits, she had tossed it full in his face.

He paused, his hands shaking violently in front of him, the red wine trickled from his face down upon his uniform. She seized the advantage to jerk open a drawer of her desk. In a trice Colonel Palabot was confronted by a handsome little revolver held in a small but steady hand.

"Sit down, monsieur."

The room rang with madame's musical laughter.

Colonel Palabot mopped his pale face with his handkerchief. The futile fury of a coward's rage gleamed in his eye, but he said nothing. When he appeared to breathe more freely, Madame Lebrun placed the revolver on the desk beside her and spoke again:

"Monsieur, I have some other information for you. Would you like to hear it now?"

"I am in your power," he glared. "Go on, if you will. Only let me say that the word *traitor* falls not becomingly from the lips of a woman like you."

The gray eyes looked steadily into his. "You mean?"

He carelessly shrugged his shoulders.

"Colonel Palabot, this is what I have to tell you: You know me as a woman who acts as a go-between for the corrupt young colonels of the general staff and the foreign representatives in Paris who are anxious to buy the secrets they can betray. And such is the reputation I bear at the embassies, where, as the Countess de Castine, I am always a welcome guest. That you know. Very good. Now listen! Here is something that you do not know." Madame drew herself up proudly. "*The woman you see before you is at the head of the spy system of France!*"

"What! You!"

"Monsieur is a shrewd guesser."

"But, woman, the information about

the French army you sell to the ambassadors?"

"Either false, or of no value."

"I—I do not understand."

"No, of course you don't. Listen to me, and you will. You can understand, can you not, that with the supposedly valuable information I give them, aided and abetted by a woman's arts such as my modesty forbids me to speak of, it is easy for me to win the confidence of the gentlemen of the embassies, make them each believe that I am his particular friend, and draw from them much real information about their own countries that is of great service to our beautiful France?"

"You give false information for real?"

"Yes, monsieur, that is my business. And it is a business that only a woman can conduct. I have power such as few people dream of. In every important city in Europe I have agents and friends that watch out for my interests. I will not say I am above selling military and political secrets of Russia to England, and then selling the secrets of England to Russia"—madame's laughter rang out gaily—"but," she went on, rising from her chair, while her cheeks flushed with enthusiasm, "to France, to my own dear, beautiful France, I have always been true."

Colonel Palabot sat staring. "But, madame," he gasped, "the information I have sold to you was certainly genuine."

Madame's little boot beat a restless tattoo on the floor. "And yet you wonder, monsieur, that I call you a traitor. Oh! you fool! Colonel Girard brought you to me because he knew that you, like some others on the general staff, could not be trusted. Sifted through me, your information has been relieved of all its value."

"And—and Girard," muttered the colonel hoarsely.

"Yes, you have betrayed an innocent man. Soon it will be heralded throughout France that Monsieur Girard is in the employ of the German embassy, and he, though innocent, will not be able to deny it—will not be able to tell that the information he sold was false. The government will protect him, but the people will clamor, and he will have to go into exile."

"My God!" groaned Colonel Palabot, who had apparently aged in an hour.

Madame Lebrun arose and leaned against the end of her desk. "The government will see that Monsieur Girard is able to live comfortably in England, and *I* shall see that the lady whom you both honor with your devotion is acquainted with the facts in the case. But as for you, Monsieur Palabot, as for you —*you* are a lost man."

Gloating over the effect of her revelation, Madame Lebrun was off her guard. The young officer sat as one whose life-force had been completely drained, and she was unprepared for the sudden, cat-like spring to which desperation lent power. Colonel Palabot got between her and her revolver. She made a frantic effort to reach the electric button. Palabot gripped her by the throat. She tried to scream, but was powerless in his grasp. He tightened his hold and her features became distorted. He bent her graceful form over backward. Murder blazed in his eyes.

"You she-devil!" he whispered. "You she-devil! I'm going to kill you! You will try to ruin me, will you? I'll muffle forever that tongue of yours."

A sound behind him like the thud of a falling body caused Palabot to glance hastily over his shoulder. Something had dropped from the top of the great cabinet. In the semi-obscurity of a far corner he saw it, and the sight suddenly checked the surging of the hot blood through his veins. It was a dark, crouching form and two great eyes that gleamed and glared with a menacing light. As he stood fascinated, there came a low growl.

Instinctively his grip on the soft flesh relaxed. Immediately there sounded through the room a piercing shriek. It was followed by another and still another. Letting fall the woman's body, Colonel Palabot, pale with terror, ran for the door through which he had entered. A black leopard glided after him.

Without noise, the portières were parted, and the giant Algerian glided into the room.

In the little ante-room the fleeing man was confronted by a burly negro who stepped quickly out from the room beyond. Almost at the same moment the

leopard leaped to his back. The Algerian was close behind. With a cry of horror, Palabot dropped on the floor. Before the great cat could injure him, however, the Algerian and the negro beat it off. "Back, Rajah! Back!" Snarling so as to display its teeth, the leopard crept away to a corner.

In her workroom, Madame Lebrun, her hands pressed to her throat, had risen to a sitting posture when the Algerian and the negro brought Palabot before her. Leaving the negro to hold the colonel, the Algerian helped her to her feet.

"Madame commands?" he asked.

She swayed unsteadily, and he took her in his arms, as he might have taken a child, and placed her in her chair.

"Some wine," she said faintly.

The wine was poured out, and she drank it.

"A cigarette, Emil."

"Yes, madame."

Soon she was taking deep inhalations of the fragrant smoke.

"Monsieur le Colonel," she said, "I believe that when you—that is, interrupted me, I was saying that you were a lost man."

In the vice-like grip of the negro, Colonel Palabot could find no words.

"I have only to add," went on Madame Lebrun, "that you are now dead to all your acquaintances in France, and never will you be seen here again. Take a cab, go home and change your uniform for civil dress. At midnight one of my agents will see you take a train at the *gare du Nord* for Cologne. In Cologne you will be met at the station, and, if all goes well, you will be started at once for Sofia or Constantinople. In either of those places you will be sure to enjoy yourself, for they are equally vile. That is all I can tell you now of your future, but you will receive further instructions later. Good-by, monsieur, and don't forget that in Paris I saved you from these."

Out of her desk madame took a pair of handcuffs, and, throwing them carelessly beside the revolver, favored the colonel with one of her innocent and confiding smiles.

The muscles of his face twitched spasmodically as Colonel Palabot stared at the shining bits of metal and stammered: "I—I thank you very much, madame."

Madame Lebrun nodded to the Algerian. "Show monsieur to the street," she said.

* * * * *

The sudden and altogether unexplained disappearance of Colonel Palabot was one of the strangest mysteries which the newspapers had to chronicle in connection with the great Girard sensation.

It was as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

"?"

By Don Mark Lemon.

THE strange story of a German officer's portrait and the fate that befell its creator.

I WAS so engrossed with my work that I failed to glance up as Dick entered the studio, and, without a word, took his place at his easel. In a little while, thinking him to be like myself, busily engaged in painting, I was surprised to hear him sigh. I looked up and found him staring at the wall, his palette and brushes undisturbed beside him.

"What's the matter—are you sick?" I inquired.

"Sick? No!"

"Then what's wrong?"

"I'm a father!"

"A father?"

"Yes," said Dick, "I'm not in a jesting mood. I'm the father of a man older than I am."

" How old?"

" About fifty."

" How old are you?"

" Twenty-two."

" Ah!"

" You know Baron von Holt?" this from Dick, eagerly.

" Assuredly! He's a masterpiece, old man."

" Baron von Holt" was the title I had given to a painting that Dick had completed the week before. It was a full-life study of a German nobleman, wholly an ideal creation of my friend's artistic genius, and a work of consummate talent. Pointing toward the room where the painting was hanging, I remarked: " The baron is at home, I believe."

" No, he isn't," and, rising from his chair, Dick began to pace up and down the room.

" How, not at home? Then where is he?"

" I don't know where he is now," came the startling reply, " but a moment ago he stood across the street, looking at the pictures in Ludlow's window."

" Who—Von Holt?"

" Yes!"

" Impossible!" I cried. " The baron is merely a painting—a work of imagination."

" Yes; and that's why I'm troubled. Baron von Holt was a work of my imagination—I will swear to that; but ten minutes ago I was following him along the street, and, only this minute, quit him across the way. There can be no mistake. It is the man in my painting, even to the details of his dress."

" Then," I said, " you have painted a type of man, and the type has turned up."

" Type? Nothing of the sort! 'Tis the same man, I tell you."

" Well, then, somewhere before in your life you have seen this man, and have painted him from memory as Von Holt."

" Never!" cried Dick, emphasizing his words with a frown; " nor did I ever see his prototype in a book. And, what's more, you of your own accord suggested and painted the scar upon the baron's cheek—the little crescent scar."

" And that scar?"

" Was on the cheek of the man I saw ten minutes ago."

" Impossible!" I exclaimed. " I never saw a scar like that in all my life."

" Pooh! you must have painted it from memory."

" But has this man the identical features of Baron von Holt—and the scar?"

" Had he sat to me for his portrait he could not resemble my painting more closely than he does; and that painting was a composition by us both, and we both could not have seen this man somewhere before, and, after forgetting him for years, have so far recalled his features as to paint them."

" Very remarkable," I said.

" But that's not all."

" Not all?"

" No! The painting of Baron von Holt——"

" Let's have a look at it," I suggested.

" Impossible."

" Has the painting been stolen?"

" Not stolen," came the astonishing reply; " the stretcher and the canvas are there in the other room, and the background of the painting remains just as I painted it, but the figure of Baron von Holt has stepped down from the canvas and has disappeared."

" You are jesting!" I cried, arising from my chair. " Or else you have painted out the figure of the baron."

" I? Would I ruin my best work?" demanded Dick passionately. " No; the figure of Von Holt has actually stepped from the canvas, and I saw this creation of our minds walking the street not twenty minutes ago."

" If *you* did not, then some one else must have erased this figure from the canvas," I protested.

" I tell you the figure has not been erased, nor has it been painted out, but it has stepped down from its place. The fact is," Dick continued, speaking almost in a whisper, " there never was a painted figure on that canvas."

" What do you mean?"

" I mean that I begin to suspect that we never painted the figure of Baron von Holt, but that the devil himself gradually appeared on the canvas as we thought we were painting—you know

the work was life-size—and now the devil himself has stepped down from the picture. If you don't like this explanation," my friend added, "you can suggest another."

"But," I questioned, "are you positive that this man whom you saw on the street is the very image of the baron? You may——"

"The image? 'Tis the same man, I tell you."

"Let's take a look at the canvas," I suggested, and Dick followed me into the little room adjoining our studio.

As my friend had asserted, the figure of Baron von Holt had left its place on the canvas, leaving an empty space where it had stood.

"Strange," I gasped, "it's your background, your canvas, your stretcher, and here's your name beneath the spot where the figure stood. The work hasn't been painted out, as far as I can judge: nor washed out, nor cut out. You say you left the baron looking at the pictures in Ludlow's?"

"Yes."

"Let's have a look at him," I suggested, and, Dick readily acquiescing, we quit the studio and crossed the street to Ludlow's art store.

A tall, military man was standing before the heavy plate-glass window, looking at the pictures within. Taking a cigar from my case, I touched his arm and begged him for a light. He turned about—and I looked straight into the face of Baron von Holt! The resemblance was so perfect that I gasped.

As he proffered me a match, I laughed nervously and remarked that I once had given a man just such a little crescent scar as he bore upon his cheek. For a moment he regarded me with half-closed eyes, then, placing a finger upon the scar, said:

"The man who gave me this scar will meet me in moonlight."

Without another word or look he turned and entered Ludlow's. Dick plucked at my arm.

"Don't you think he is the *man?*"

"I gave him that scar," I replied—*"with a paint brush!"*

We waited before the window for about five minutes, when the baron reappeared and started rapidly down the street. His right hand was thrust beneath the breast of his coat as if he grasped something he sought to conceal.

Dick did not follow the stranger, but he had gone scarcely thirty yards when a clerk rushed from the door of Ludlow's and called at the top of his voice: "Murder! Murder! Help! Murder!"

In another moment we had forgotten Baron von Holt and had entered Ludlow's. Led by the frightened clerk, we hurried to the right of the salesroom, where, behind a large screen, there lay a young woman in a pool of blood. She had been murdered.

I at once questioned the clerk as to who had been in the shop at the time of the tragedy. He replied that he and the murdered woman had been alone there. I then inquired whether some customer might not have been in the salesroom. "No," he answered, "not to my knowledge."

It seems that he had been engaged in a small room to the right, just beyond the screen, and, coming out, had stumbled upon the body of the murdered woman. Evidently, then, Baron von Holt had entered and quit the salesroom unperceived by the clerk.

On leaving the scene of the murder I took Dick's arm and we walked to a public square some distance away, and there we seated ourselves on a rustic bench. For a little while we both remained in silent thought, then Dick said:

"He did this murder."

"You mean the baron?"

"Yes."

"It seems so," I replied.

"What shall we do about it?"

"Identify Von Holt, if he is found; if not found, try to forget him."

"Shall we say anything about that painting?"

"No; it might incriminate us."

"Very well, as you say; but I feel like the father of a murderer!"

A little later we had regained our studio and Dick left me and went into the next room to see Baron von Holt. He had resolved to destroy his defaced masterpiece. Suddenly I heard a stifled cry and hurried after my friend. He was leaning against the wall, staring at the mysterious canvas.

No longer was the center of that canvas blank. The life-size figure of Von Holt had returned to its former place!

"Do you see it?" demanded Dick in a whisper.

"It must have been painted back!" I cried. "Yet there hasn't been time for that."

"Look! There are marks of blood upon the frame—the imprint of a bloody hand!"

There were such marks, and I fell back a step.

"Heavens! this painting of mine has left the canvas, committed a foul murder, and has now returned, leaving evidence of its guilt upon the frame." Poor Dick was breathing heavily and his eyes were dilated with horror.

"You don't believe that?" I asked uneasily.

"What else can I believe?"

"Dick," I demanded, "had you any thoughts of murder in your heart when you painted this work?"

"Let me think. Yes; don't you recall that I expressed a desire to stab the musician next door who was murdering an air of Bellini's? I was working on the painting at the time."

"What particular part?"

"The head."

"Perhaps your thought influenced the baron," I said.

"Faugh!" retorted Dick, "don't lay the murder of the girl at Ludlow's to me."

Then he demanded: "How do you account for the events of to-day? For my part——" here Dick suddenly paused and stared toward a corner of the room. I followed his gaze and saw a dagger, the blade of which was bloody, lying upon the floor.

"What's that?"

I went over and gingerly picked up the weapon. Could it be that this was the instrument which had been used in the murder of the unfortunate woman at Ludlow's? A sudden horror at having the thing in my hands came over me, and I let it fall to the floor.

Dick was so startled by the falling dagger that he leaned heavily against the wall. As he did so, the painting of Baron von Holt was slightly shaken and fell, face downward on the floor.

Stepping forward, I returned the canvas to its place. Another moment and I started back in utter astonishment. The figure of Von Holt, which but a moment before had looked down upon me with its sinister eyes, had left the canvas!

"Heavens, he has gone to do another murder!" cried Dick. Whereupon he rushed from the room into the hallway, thence to the street below.

Hastily locking and bolting the door of the room containing the mysterious painting and the bloody dagger, I followed my friend.

"Do you know," said Dick, as I came up with him, "when that canvas fell to the floor and the figure of Von Holt left it, I felt something brush past me and leave the room."

"Not really?" I exclaimed.

"I heard it rush down the stairway and turn to the left as we have turned. We are following it now!"

"You probably heard some lodger go down-stairs: nothing more."

"But I tell you that before I heard those footsteps on the stairs, I felt something brush past me and leave the studio."

We walked along in silence for some time, when Dick suddenly plucked at my arm and asked: "What's the meaning of that crowd?"

I looked and saw a press of people before a music store some eighty yards distant, and, out of curiosity, we hurried forward and inquired of a lad in the throng the reason of the gathering.

"Somebody killed!" the lad answered.

"Killed?"

"A murder!" It was the voice of a young fellow at our elbow. "A salesgirl in the music store has been murdered: the murderer can't be a block away. Must be the same fiend that stabbed the woman at Ludlow's. Horrible!"

Dick turned as white as a sheet, and rushed from the spot. I followed him: he was utterly unnerved.

"Old man," I said, "we'll have to return and conceal that dagger we left in the studio and burn the painting, for, you know, we are to be summoned as witnesses in the Ludlow case, and some officer might come to our rooms and dis-

cover the dagger and bloody frame. These things would be hard to explain."

"You're right," Dick agreed: "though it is hard that I must burn my best work." Then he added, half to himself: "But the murderer must die!"

We hastened back to the studio and entered the little room containing Dick's masterpiece. No longer was the canvas blank. There again stood the tall and awful figure of Baron von Holt!

"My God!" cried Dick, "he has done another murder, and has returned!" Then, looking about the floor, he muttered: "The dagger! Where is the dagger? You left it there in the corner; yet, see, it has vanished."

I looked toward the spot where I had let the dagger drop, but the bloody weapon was there no longer.

"He took it with him," Dick whispered, "and that girl at the music store was stabbed with the accursed thing."

"I locked and bolted the door," I said. "Only a spirit could have entered without forcing the lock."

"For heaven's sake, let's destroy that painting and get out of here as quickly as we can!" and Dick plucked at my coat in his impatience.

Procuring a flask of kerosene from the cupboard, I dashed its contents over the painting—first cutting the canvas almost free of the stretcher—then set the thing afire. The canvas *about* the figure of von Holt burned rapidly, but the figure itself remained intact.

Suddenly Dick threw up his hands and cried, "Look out, he is coming!" and rushed from the room.

But my friend was mistaken: his nerves had played him a sad trick. The painted figure remained immovable.

"Tut! this thing is only a piece of painted canvas," I stoutly maintained, "and it can be destroyed like any other piece of canvas."

I took the head of the figure and rolled it into a bundle, then bore it into the studio.

"Dick," I cried, "here's the baron, safe at last!"

My friend was silent, but he watched me fearfully as I wrapped the compact figure of von Holt in a quantity of newspaper and thoroughly saturated the mass with benzine.

There was a large old-fashioned fireplace in the studio, to which iron doors had been attached, making a sort of vault or furnace of it. I touched a match to one end of the bundle in my hands and dashed the inflammable stuff into the fireplace. Then I shut the iron doors and threw on the draft.

"There, Dick," I exclaimed, "if Baron von Holt be the devil, let him appear!"

The words had hardly left my lips before the doors of the fireplace swung open, and there, before us—against a lurid background of green flames—stood the tall and awful figure of Von Holt.

For an instant, while my hair all but rose on end, this terrifying figure stood on the threshold of the vault, then, dashing together the iron doors it leaped across the studio into the hallway, and disappeared.

Dick, reeling against the wall, brought me at last to my senses, and, rushing to the door and into the hallway, thence down to the street below, I sought to catch a fleeting glimpse of the baron, but in vain.

Shocked and horrified, I turned to go back to the studio when Dick clutched me by the arm and gasped: "Keep out of there! If the devil wants our studio for a hiding-place, in heaven's name let him have it to himself!"

We walked along until we came to a public square, where we sat down until dusk and discussed the mystery of Von Holt. Then, at about half past seven we retired to a café for dinner.

"This fiend is loose, and God only knows how many murders he will commit before morning!" groaned Dick. "The entire city is at his mercy!"

"Old man," I said, "I don't think that the thing which came from the fireplace was flesh and blood. I am persuaded that it was merely an hallucination."

* * * * *

"Have you heard of the murder?"

The speaker was a young man who had just entered the café. He was addressing some gentlemen at an adjoining table.

"Murder? Not another one?"

"Yes; another! This time a man."

"Three murders in a day! Then the devil is loose!"

"Richard Gregory, the great banker, was found dead in his own doorway, and that not half an hour ago."

"Murdered?"

"Stabbed through the heart like the woman at Ludlow's, and the girl in the music store."

"And the murderer?"

"Came and went like a spirit!"

"Let us get out of here," I cried.

We walked, in a dazed stupor, to the public square again. As we made for our accustomed bench, a strong wind came out of the west. In the bushes, by our bench, I thought I heard a rustle; a faint sigh, a sound as of breaking branches. The night was closing in.

Impelled by curiosity, I made for the bushes, and began to examine them closely.

Suddenly a cry from Dick startled me! I rushed to the bench. He was sitting there, as though stark in death. His arms were up, as if to defend himself from some hideous fate. I leaned over him, and, in the dim light of the moon, to my utter consternation, I beheld a dagger sticking in his breast. His arms were relaxed, and, in an instant, he fell lifeless into my arms. I plucked the weapon from his bosom; it was the dagger of Baron von Holt!

Then, faintly, there came to my mind, some words I had somewhere heard:

"The man who gave me this scar will meet me in the moonlight."

THE WORTH OF MR. BACKUS.

By John Barton Oxford.

WHEN a real up-to-date lazy man wakes up there is generally something doing.

THE night was hot and very still—so still that the buzzing of the June-bugs outside was plainly audible in the dingy little kitchen, even though the door was shut and every window tightly closed.

Lemuel Backus, having finished his supper, lighted his pipe, tilted his chair against the wall, and, settling himself luxuriously, smoked and dozed intermittently.

It was a dismal room in which he sat. The lamp, with its smoke-streaked chimney, shed a feeble light over a scene of slatternly chaos. Dirty dishes were scattered impartially over the table, the wooden sink, and the fireless stove; morsels of food strewed the dresser and the floor, while many ragged articles of wearing apparel hung from the backs of chairs or lay in a corner where they had been unceremoniously tossed. The place bore mute but eloquent witness that Mr. Backus was a man who had taken counsel of the lilies of the field.

For a time Mr. Backus smoked on placidly, but presently, lulled by the soothing influences of his ample supper, his pipe, and the somnolent droning of the June-bugs, his head sank lower and lower; the pipe fell unheeded from his mouth, and his snores would have ascended to the ceiling—had there been a ceiling. As it was, they ascended to the gaping laths, guiltless of plaster, save in small areas near the corners of the room.

Scarcely had the man in the chair begun his throaty gurgles, when, from a clump of pines behind the old shack, a group of strangely garbed figures emerged, and made their uncertain way toward the light which glimmered in the kitchen window. Half-way across the yard they halted.

The four kerosene torches, which they proceeded forthwith to ignite, cast an uncanny light over the group and their outlandish habiliments.

There were ten of them and they were swathed in long white robes of ghostly

aspect, while over the head of each was drawn a sort of cowl of black cambric with slits cut for eyeholes.

Silently they approached the back door, and a man who towered head and shoulders above the rest came forward and rapped lustily on the lintel. From within came the bang of a chair brought suddenly down on its four legs and the sound of bare feet shuffling across the floor.

A bolt was shot and Mr. Backus pulled open the door, to start in amazed incredulity at the strange spectacle which greeted his eyes. But his amazement was the matter of a moment only. After that first start of surprise he seemed to accept the whole thing as a matter of course. He leaned wearily against the lintel, as if the exertion of standing erect was too much for him, and smothered a yawn.

"Good evenin', boys," he drawled. "Comin' in?"

For answer the tall man, who was evidently the leader of the ghostly company, clapped his hands smartly, three times.

"The proclamation! Bring forth the proclamation!" he cried in stentorian tones.

Some one thrust a roll of paper into his hands. The four torch-bearers gathered close about him. Mr. Backus sank lazily on to the threshold and stretched out his feet before him. He drew a match from his trousers pocket and lighted the inevitable cob pipe, after which he surveyed the group before him with mild interest. The leader had unrolled the paper, and now he cleared his throat and began to read:

"Whereas, one Lemuel Gardner Backus, a shiftless, no-account disgrace to this town, has forsworn honest labor from this time forth forevermore, and has utterly failed to support his wife and daughter, and

"Whereas, furthermore, said Backus has not only permitted but even encouraged his wife to secure work as a scrubwoman in the neighboring city of Riverport, and has aided and abetted his daughter, who should have been kept in school, to find employment in the Riverport cotton mills; and, moreover, accepts a part of the scanty wages of each to keep his worthless soul and his shiftless body together, therefore be it

"Resolved, That we, the Royal Order of Regulators, show our own displeasure in the matter and the displeasure of all right-minded citizens of the town by riding said Lemuel G. Backus on a rail——"

Here the reader paused, and, turning about, beckoned to two shrouded figures who stood in the rear of the company. At the summons they came forward, bearing between them a heavy fence-rail, which they slammed upon the ground close to Mr. Backus' feet. He eyed it silently, but with marked displeasure.

"Got it stout enough, didn't ye?" he sneered. "Guess ye must 'a' reckoned I'm consider'ble heftier'n what I be."

The tall man waved his hand for silence and went on with the reading:

"riding said Lemuel G. Backus on a rail to Babbit's Pond and ducking him in the waters thereof."

As the reading ceased, Mr. Backus began peering about, with many sarcastic chuckles.

"Where's Babbit's Pond?" he demanded. "Didn't ye fetch that with ye, too?"

The tall man gave no heed to this bit of pleasantry. He rolled up the paper, and, taking a step forward, shook it threateningly in Mr. Backus' face.

"Lemuel Gardner Backus, you have heard the sentence which has been passed upon you," he cried. "Have you anything to say why it should not now be executed?"

Backus wriggled his toes and took a deep inhalation of smoke. "I guess some of the things you've said is about right," he said, without taking the pipe from his mouth, "but I dunno as you've got any call to come a interferin' with my affairs. I ain't never done you no harm that I know of, an' if my womenfolks are a mind to work, I cal'late that's between them an' me."

There were angry grunts from the company in the yard. Several of the masked figures started toward the man on the steps, but the tall man waved them back with an impatient gesture.

"Perhaps a warning will serve you," he said, addressing himself to Backus. "If we let you alone, will you agree in the future to make some effort to support your family?"

Backus was thoroughly angry now. He jumped to his feet with something like a snarl.

"None o' your darned business what I'll do or what I won't do," he burst out. "I cal'late I'll do about as I'm a mind to!"

The leader grunted disgustedly. "All right," he snapped. "Up with him, boys!"

The struggle was short and one-sided. Mr. Backus' feeble resistance was soon overpowered. He was dragged unceremoniously from the steps amid smothered oaths and the sound of rending fabric, and hoisted astride the rail; but, as he recovered his breath, his first admonitions were: "Careful o' this pipe. For mighty's sake don't bust it. Jest got it sweetened to my likin'."

Up went the rail to the shoulders of the willing bearers, with Backus clinging tightly to his precarious perch, and, amid many jeers and catcalls, the procession to the pond began. By the time they had reached the road, the man on the rail was squirming about in an acme of discomfort.

"Say," he called above the din of hoots, "say, this here rail of yourn is dretful sharp-aidged. Why can't one of ye go back to the house an' git a cushion?"

Naturally at this request the derisive yells were redoubled. The rail was jolted sharply several times, and Mr. Backus' wrath flared forth accordingly.

"Hey, quit that, now," he yelled, "quit that right off. There ain't no sense in half killin' of me. I'll have the law on ye for this. See'f I don't. You ain't got no right to treat a peaceable man like this, an' you're a goin' to find it out, too, before I'm done with ye!"

But this outburst was merely productive of a sharper jolting of the rail, until Mr. Backus, recognizing the proper value of discretion, held his peace and rode along in silent agony, but puffing spasmodically at the pipe he still held between his teeth.

Down the dusty road went the cavalcade, the torches flaring, the men jeering, and the unwilling Backus on his rail trying vainly for once to find a comfortable position. And thus they came at last to Babbit's Pond, where the fireflies winked in the darkness and the frogs piped shrilly.

Backus clutched the rail with both hands and set up a hoarse entreaty:

"Look here, now, don't you go to pitchin' me in there. It's mud up to your neck. You've done enough for one night. Let me git off, can't ye? For thunder's sake, boys, don't carry this thing too fur. Lemme git off now an' I won't make no trouble for ye. Say, lemme——"

"In with him," roared the leader.

The men who bore the rail ran to the bank full tilt, stopped abruptly and gave the rail a mighty jerk. They laughed long and heartily as the sprawling figure shot through the air like some huge ungainly fowl and landed with a splash and a grunt in the shallow water and the soft mud near the shore.

It was indeed a strange apparition which came crawling up the bank a moment later. The face was plastered with mud, the shock of red hair was filled with it, and muddy water oozed from his coat-sleeves and trousers. Between his teeth the stem of the pipe was still tightly clenched, although the bowl had disappeared in his unwilling dive. Spluttering and gasping he sank weakly to the ground.

The tall figure strode majestically up to him. "Lemuel Gardner Backus," came the deep voice, "the sentence which was passed upon you by the Royal Order of Regulators has now been duly executed. Hereafter see to it that you work. If we have to come again you won't get off so easy the next time."

He turned on his heel, and, motioning the others to follow, made for the road. Backus lay there for a moment, looking blankly at the retreating figures; then he darted up and sped after them.

"Say," he panted in an injured tone, "after all the fun you've had with me, you ain't goin' to leave me here like this, are ye? You'd oughter carry me home. I ain't stuck up. I'd just as leave ride back on the rail."

At this there was a chorus of guffaws. The tall man doubled up, holding his sides, while several others leaned weakly against the trees, shaking with mirth.

"You're the limit, all right," one of the torch-bearers managed to gasp.

Backus stared at them angrily. "Sure you'd oughter fetch me back," he repeated. "An' you hadn't ought to jolt the rail none neither. I never asked ye to bring me down here, did I?"

The roar that greeted this demand fairly shook the trees. Backus began a wrathful comment, but suddenly stopped short and held up his hand. Some of the crowd, thinking he meant to show fight, closed in on him; but he merely turned his head to the pond and listened intently.

"Shut up, can't you?" he cried, with more animation than they supposed he possessed.

The laughter ceased; the men on the bank listened to him. In the silence they caught the sound of distant splashing and a feeble call for help. As one man they turned and ran to the bank.

"Some one's in trouble out there," yelled the tall man. "Ain't there a boat round here somewheres?"

"Boat nothin'!" shouted another. "Help me git off these fool duds, can't you?"

"'Tain't no easy swimmin' in there," put in a third voice. "It's full o' lily pads all 'round the shore."

Even as they talked, Backus sped past them, throwing off his ragged coat as he ran. He plunged into the water and they heard his rapid strokes as he swam out toward the weakening cries.

"Git in there with the torches," shouted the leader, "far's you can. Give him light!"

It seemed an age that they waited there, making futile suggestions and trying to peer through the darkness, but, after a time, they caught sight of Backus' red head as he came swimming shoreward. Presently he reached the fringe of lily pads and the watchers on the bank held their breath. But he pushed his way through the tangle to the shallow water, and came wading in, with a boy of some fourteen years, unconscious, in his arms.

"Fishin' for pout, most likely," he panted as he laid his burden on the bank, "an' upsot the boat. Some of you fellers get holt of his thighs an' work him up an' down to git the water out of him. He ain't shipped no terrible sight of it, I guess. He'll come round all right."

He stretched himself face down upon the ground and lay there gasping for breath, while the men bent over the boy. Some one came running up with a torch and as its flickering light fell on the upturned face there was a sudden cry from the tall leader.

"Good God! It's Harry! It's my own kid!"

The men fell to work with a will, and in a few minutes the boy was breathing naturally. It was then that the tall man came over to Backus and tore the cambric covering from his face.

"Look at me, Lem," he said quietly, "I want you to know who I am."

Backus sat up and chuckled good-naturedly.

"Oh, I knew ye all right, before you took it off, John," he said, "an' I cal'late I can guess pretty nigh who all the rest of 'em are. This feller nearest here is Cy Davis, an' that one next to him I should say was Rue Miller, an' that feller with the torch over by the tree is Sam Miles. You could tell his bow legs even through that nightie he's got on."

The tall man lifted the boy in his arms, and stepping back to Backus wrung his hand.

"Lem," he said unsteadily, "I don't know how I'm ever goin' to pay you for this thing, 'specially after——"

Mr. Backus, who had propped himself comfortably with his back against a tree, interrupted with a deprecatory wave of the hand.

"It's all right, John," he said. "If you're mind to send a man to git a team an' fetch me home, we'll call it square. It's a thunderation long walk back to the house."

INCARNATION.

By Clarence Urmy.

FROM fields of amaranth and asphodel
An angel hand let drop a bud to earth;
Within a poet's heart the blossom fell,
When lo, a sweet and deathless song had birth!

THE COOK'S STRATEGY.

By George Edward Streeter.

IN which it comes about that the Army and the Navy does a swift clash, so to speak.

WHEN the long-lost and supposed-to-be-drowned son of the Widow Smith came back home the mother certainly had much to be thankful for.

She found him totally unlike the sailor boy of her constant thoughts for so many years. He did not drink or smoke; he did not swear or chew; he read no trashy novels.

It would seem as though he had spent his leisure hours in study, for he was apt at quotations from ancient and modern writers, and unlike his brethren of the craft, he did not tell his friends vulgar stories of his exploits on the deep, said nothing of flying fish or Dutchmen, and expressed an entire disbelief in the existence of the sea-serpent.

He referred to the Arctic and Antarctic Oceans as though they were his brothers, and his descriptions of icebergs made his listeners feel cold even in August. According to his own accounts he had visited all the waters mentioned in the Bible, had bathed in the Sea of Galilee, and had lost his clothes on the banks of Lake Gennesaret.

Such a devout and interesting sailor as Joseph was not often met with. Then, see how he liked church!

His mother for many years had attended the little parish chapel, in which she had been both baptized and married, and in whose burial ground the bones of her late husband were laid to rest.

But Joseph would only go to the "high" church, on account of its many services, and, seemingly, he could not be kept from matins and even-song.

When the vicar would be hastening into the sacred edifice on dark winter mornings, he would always see Joseph there ahead of him, with a pained look on his honest face at the parson's tardy arrival.

It happened that about a year after his return home, the sexton of his favorite church died, and Joseph was appointed to the position. His mother was delighted at this, as her son had become a bit restless and more than once had spoken of going back to the sea. This new occupation she considered providential.

All went well for a few months, but it seemed that from the time Joseph's duties compelled him to be at church, his piety cooled. He even neglected a part of his work, and though upbraided by the vicar, he continued on the most uneven tenor of his way.

The whole trouble lay in the fact that Joseph Smith was in love; and, as if that in itself was not bad enough, he had a rival; and that rival was none other than an ex-member of the other branch of the service—a soldier, forsooth.

Thomas Eversfield, an army pensioner, at the age of fifty found himself a widower for the second time, but quite willing to enter on a third matrimonial campaign.

His step remained firm, and the use of a little hair-dye gave him quite a youthful appearance.

His own statements of the battles he had fought did not agree by a long way either with history or the army records, but, as he was a sociable and good-natured liar, reasonable people did not care whether he had been with Roosevelt, or Shafter, or Stonewall Jackson—or all three; for they felt that it was less difficult and troublesome to believe, than to prove, Tom's experiences.

The soldier's third love was Amelia Tapp, a cook of about forty years of age, with a decided squint. To her he offered

his widowed heart and hand, for he figured that Amelia with her bank-book, and himself with his regular government allowance, made a highly attractive combination.

This also seemed to be the opinion of the lady herself, who probably realized that she was getting toward old-maidhood rapidly, and that, although cross-eyed women are scarce, they are not necessarily in great demand.

The kitchen window of the house in which Miss Tapp lived was immediately back of the church, wherefore the energetic sexton very often saw the neat and portly Amelia as she attended to her household duties. She regularly attended the services, and in a short time an acquaintance was struck between her and the ex-sailor; the latter soon felt a tender regard for the cook, as well as for the pies and cakes of which she supplied him with samples when he called to see her.

His general demeanor pleased her greatly, and in a short time the quondam sailor had won his way into her susceptible heart, though for some weeks he knew it not.

Miss Amelia's father had himself gone down to the sea in ships, and had on one occasion fallen overboard and stayed there long enough to drown. The sexton's choice stories interested her very much, and as he was fifteen years the junior of the soldier, it is not surprising that she transferred her affections.

Such a state of things could not long remain hidden.

It was now to be a battle between "Paul Jones" and "George Washington" for the hand of the fair Amelia. She had to choose between Joseph Smith, with a ship ahoy and one on his arm, and the ex-soldier with his pension. And, as she gazed at her figure, somewhat compromised by her obliquity of vision, she felt flattered that at her age the army and navy were both contending for her smiles.

The rivals met one evening by accident near the side entrance of the cook's domicile, and an engagement at once took place, much more important in its results to the principals than were any of the battles they had up to that time taken part in.

The tactics adopted by the army, represented by Mr. Eversfield, proved successful, and after a rather severe struggle the sailor cleared, in a sinking condition, raked fore and aft by the shots of the enemy. Though victorious, the pensioner also had to betake himself away for repairs.

Miss Tapp, unseen by the contestants, had witnessed the battle, and womanlike, her sympathies went out to the distressed sailor, who had evidently fought under difficulties, being less sure of his ground than if he had been on the water.

Within an hour he waited upon her as usual, but with his face out of repair, a condition due, he said, to falling down the belfry. Before they separated that evening Joseph gained her promise to start with him on a matrimonial voyage the first day of the following month.

Eversfield continued to call twice a week as before, but the encounter between the rivals was never discussed. The soldier believed that his victory in the one case augured well for his success in winning the hand of the object of his regard.

On the 31st of March Amelia and Joseph met to make the final arrangements for the wedding, which was set for the next morning. Between them they concocted this note to the survivor of many battles:

DEAR TOM:

I am sorry you and Mr. Smith quarreled about me. Why did he come between us, dear? I want to see you tomorrow morning at half past eleven.

Don't fail. Love from

AMELIA.

Very spruce was the pensioner when he called the next day, ready to clasp the fair charmer to his martial breast.

In answer to his ring, the master of the house appeared, and blandly asked:

"Whom do you wish to see?"

"Miss Tapp, sir, please," answered the soldier, touching his hat in true military fashion.

"Are you Mr. Eversfield?"

"I am."

"Well, Miss Tapp left here at nine o'clock, and is, I think, married by this time. Before going she left word to re-

mind you that this is the First of April. Some little joke, I suppose?" added the gentleman.

"Ah! Yes! Quite so," replied the now defeated warrior, as he turned on his heel and walked away, realizing that once again the navy had got the best of it.

All of which reminds us:

(1) That there are slips—and there are others.
(2) A soldier's engagements are not all on the battlefield.
(3) The "yarns" of a sailor are not invariably "all wool," though sometimes a yard long.
(4) When a "sailor" meets a "soldier"—or marries a "cook"—look out for "squalls."
(5) It is easier to circle the square than to square the circle.
(6) Any port in a storm.
(7) A good cook is a winner, and man's best friend.
(8) The First of April has its victims no less than war.
(9) The cheerful liar affords good music.

BLASTED.

By Burke Jenkins.

A YARN in which the changes in fortune came suddenly and with great clamor.

"GIT!" commanded Captain Oscar Lee, giving boot to a blear-eyed setter pup that drooped in the doorway of the tool-house.

Entering, he dropped the armful of fire-wood he had been carrying, and turning to the chip-littered work-bench, picked up a brace and bit.

"I guess this'll about do the trick," he muttered in that dreamy drawl that endeared him as a cracker-box wit. "I 'spect to hear a report to the effect as to who's been robbin' my wood-pile—an' pretty soon, I reckon."

He selected three of four likely looking pieces from the armful, and worked away with an energy far and away above his usual "tar heel" speed.

He bored a hole in each of these; then poured in about a palmful of close-grained powder from a flask that hung alongside his old muzzle-loader. The job was completed by a nicely fitted peg in each hole and a general smear of dirt from the captain's patrician palm.

Then he sauntered his way out to the wood-pile and fixed his loaded fuel in most convenient attitudes. Having performed this act of Samaritanism he yawned; ejected some juice of Orinoco plug; and strolled out for the emporium-post-office-club at Doe's Corners.

And all this just as the cold, new moon of February was hugging close to its light creditor, the sun. The moon went down and darkness settled.

The scene now shifts, and attention is directed to a dilapidated, one-room cabin, situated about a quarter of a mile from the urbane Captain Lee's residence.

Seated before a cheerless hearth, and puffing sadly on a cob pipe, Mose Tang is thinking.

Mose is an "educated" darky. And the present situation stands with him thus. Only two days earlier his good old mammy had turned visage to wall and sighed out her blessing on this good-for-nothing Mose, but had neglected, much to his chagrin, to inform him as to the hiding-place of those small savings that she had managed to put by. That she had hid it was all he knew.

"'Twouldn't be much," he muttered through his little blue smoke. "Still it suttinly would help."

It might be well to state that it never occurred to Mose that he might work.

The wind shifted to the northwest, whistled through the knot-holes, and underscored Moses' cheerlessness.

He rose, turned up a shabby collar, pulled a tattered hat over his right eye, and started in the direction of Captain Oscar Lee's wood-pile.

Consistent with his character, the handily disposed sticks of primed quality fell readily among the armful which he finally tucked under his left; nor did the blear-eyed setter pup summon so much as a yap.

Well, he'd be warm till morning, even if the attenuated "whiteside" strip promised but scanty breakfast. In his copy-book Mose had written, twelve times each, two saws: "When the gods smile, etc.," and "All things come, etc.," and he remembered them.

Reaching the cabin again he applied a match to some strips of fat, "light" wood, laid some of his light-fingered fuel to the blaze, and sat himself down in his one rickety chair to further rumination.

Little by little a tongue of lambent flame licked its way toward one of those grime-besmeared plugs of the captain's cunning.

And Mose puffed away on a new pipeload.

The cheer of the faster crackling blaze lent a premonition of coming warmth, and Moses settled back more comfortably.

Now, sympathetic reader, you know as well as anybody what happened within the minute.

It needs but to be added that from out the flying bricks and mortar a something of flattest trajectory sped its course toward pondering Mose. But it met the proving ground of Mose's curly top and served merely to complete the work of the already tilted chair. And Mose even heard the rattle as it struck the floor beside him.

He raised himself on his elbow and examined it. It proved to be a cigar-box of deep-tinted age. But the explosion had split the top, and through the aperture glinted coins of small denominations.

Mose sat up, box between knees, and counted. Satisfaction took up residence.

Thirty dollars, to a cent!

Meanwhile the captain's humor at the store had taken on an even greater scintillation, and the assembled wondered; but even more did they at the air of expectancy which seemed to render him somewhat restless.

Then the loungers all heard it: that roar; that blast up to windward. And Captain Lee wore an ingrowing smile.

"Judge Carter," he drawled, "if you wouldn't mind, as a pussonal favor, suh, I reckon I've got something in yo' line up the road a spell." And he went on to explain, while smiles of approval went the rounds.

But no time was lost, and up the road strode Captain Lee, with the Hon. Mr. Carter's corpulence stumping a close second, and the rest strung out in order of pedestrian ability.

No difficulty was experienced in locating their quarry. A toppled chimney against a moon-decked sky told the story, and so they crowded into the door of Moses' shack in goodly number.

Moses dropped the box and sat there glued. Coins rolled gleefully.

The captain picked up the overturned chair, proffered it to the wheezing justice, doffed his hat, and gave vent to a sonorous "Hear ye, hear ye!"

Court being thus formally opened, he made his accusation, while Moses' jaw hung limp.

Judge Carter's eyes betrayed nothing, but took in all by the dim and flickering glim of Moses' ill-nourished wall lamp.

"Has the defendant anything to say?"

Moses' throat wouldn't work.

"As this is a first offense," his honor passed sentence, "it pleases this court to be lenient."

Here Judge Carter halted while his eye roved over that scattered coinage. Then his voice took on an added firmness:

"Thirty days or—thirty dollars!"

IN DOUBT.

By Anne Virginia Culbertson.

WHEN lashes drooping lie
On cheeks of softest rose,
Ah, how demure and sly
The wonted aspect grows,
When lashes drooping lie!
And yet, until he try,
No man of surety knows
When lashes drooping—*lie!*