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193 · Foul Play [Part 1 of 4] · Charles Reade & Dion Boucicault · sl 1868; sometimes called the New Robinson Crusoe.

234 · Humility · Charles M. Dickinson · pm The Argosy #490, April 23 1892

235 · The Way of the Trangressor · Mary Roberts Rinehart · ss

240 · A Gift from Mars [Part 2 of 3] · William Wallace Cook · sl

255 · One Matinée Ticket · Bradley Vandaworker · ss

257 · A Memory · Theodosia Garrison · pm

258 · The Man in His Shirt Sleeves [Part 2 of 3] · Charles Edward Barns · sl

274 · The Cylinder · George Allan England · ss

277 · Bugles and Butterflies [Part 3 of 5] · J. Aubrey Taylor · sl

292 · On the Steeple · Charles Francis Bourke · ss

296 · Little Dunny Weaver [Part 4 of 4] · Philip Verrill Mighels · sl

310 · Brill and the Yellow Peril · W. S. Rogers · ss

317 · Don't Worry · [uncredited] · pm Locomotive Firemen's Magazine July 1903

318 · A White Streak of Disaster [Part 5 of 5] · Edgar Franklin · sl

333 · Discord · [uncredited] · pm

334 · The Vaughn Velasquez · Frank Marshall White · ss

339 · Jennie's Brother and the Dog-Washer · Ralph T. Yates · ss

343 · The Measure of Life · James Buckham · pm

344 · Cerberus Introduces · Sheppard Stevens · ss

354 · The Man on the Table · Stearn Wheeler · ss

360 · The Castle of Forgetfulness · Helen Sterling Thomas · ss

373 · Capital Punishment · W. A. G. · ss

380 · An Implacable Warder · Edgar White · ss

384 · "If" · James King Duffy · pm Munsey's Magazine March 1892

THE ALL-STORY MAGAZINE.

VOL. V. JUNE, 1906. No. 2.

FOUL PLAY.

Sometimes called "The New Robinson Crusoe."

By CHARLES READE and DION BOUCICAULT.

INTRODUCTION.

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 story never flags, but moves on with a powerful, rapid sweep, with stirring action, and with an exhilarating sense of power up to a climax which recalls the last act of some stirring drama. Its variety of scene gives it an additional picturesqueness, and the variety of its characters is in harmony with the bold conception of the whole.

The plot against *Robert Penfold,* so ingeniously worked out; the convict life in Australia; the conspiracy of a great merchant to gain a fortune, thereby to save his tottering credit; the extraordinary chapters which depict the horrors of a shipwrecked crew at sea in an open boat; the island life which has led the book to be called "The New Robinson Crusoe"; and finally the battle of wits between a subtle criminal and a man bent upon obtaining justice in an almost hopeless fight against wealth and influence—these elements, all interwoven with a story of love and pure romance, make "Foul Play" stand out as a remarkable achievement in the records of English fiction.

Charles Reade (1814-1884) was an Englishman of old family who retained through life intensely aristocratic prejudices, which often showed themselves in a whimsical fashion, while at the same time, in practise, he was one of the most democratic of men. Powerful of physique, irascible, and intensely pugnacious, he was almost always engaged in controversy; yet the warmth of his heart made amends for the quickness of his temper, so that he was loved and esteemed by his contemporaries—Dickens, Tennyson, Wilkie Collins, Henry Irving, Artemus Ward, Victor Hugo, Zola, and Millais, to mention but a few of many famous names.

He had the tastes of a scholar, and was a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, where he also held the offices of Dean of Arts (1845) and Vice-President (1851). But he could never be contented to live apart from his fellow men in a cloistered seclusion. He was too active for that, too practical, too eager for the friction and the combat of the great world.

Nothing delighted him more than to right the wrongs of others; and at one time he took up the cause of four condemned criminals whom he believed to have been illegally sentenced. They were guilty beyond all doubt; yet, none the less, Reade fought for them, both in and out of court, so vigorously as at last to force a reversal of their sentence. This was very characteristic of his bellicose nature, his kindness of heart, his persistency, and his love of abstract justice.

Reade lived in a quaint old house at Albert Gate in one of the busiest parts of London; and he has drawn a picture of himself and his surroundings in one of his novels—"A Terrible Temptation"—under the name of *Francis Rolfe*.

The large mirrors all down to the ground laid hold of the garden and the flowers, and by double and treble reflection filled the room with nooks of verdure and color. To confuse the eye still more, a quantity of young India-rubber trees with glossy leaves were placed before the large central mirror. So far the room was romantic; but there was a prosaic corner to shock those who fancy that fiction is the spontaneous overflow of a poetic fountain fed by nature only. Three plated buckets each containing three pints full of letters to be answered, other letters to be pasted into a classified guard-book, loose notes to be pasted into various books and classified; five things like bankers' bill-books into whose several compartments notes and newspaper cuttings were thrown, as a preliminary toward classification in books. . . . He was writing a novel based on facts. Facts, incidents, living dialogue, pictures, reflections, situations, were all on cards to choose from and arranged in headed columns. The author looked neither like a poet nor a drudge, but a great fat country farmer. He was rather tall, very portly, smallish head, commonplace features, mild brown eyes not very bright, short beard, and wore a suit of tweed all one color. Such looked the writer of romances founded on facts.

This last sentence accurately describes Charles Reade as a man of letters. He had a glowing imagination, but he had also a passion for actuality. He never wrote about anything which he did not absolutely understand; and before commencing a novel he would saturate himself with the minutest details of knowledge on the subject which he was about to treat.

Thus, in writing of the sea, he qualified himself to be theoretically a sailor; of medicine, to be a physician and a surgeon; of law, to be a legal expert; of mining, to be a metallurgist—and so with all the rest. He was a living encyclopedia of facts, and his facts were all fused together by the imagination of a poet and the fiery glow of an ardent nature.

It is this latter circumstance which made his books so instantly effective, and which, as we read them to-day, causes all later romantic fiction to seem pale and cold and ineffectual. There is a white heat about Reade's best novels which startles the reader into immediate attention and which makes it quite impossible for him to set the book down until the very last page is reached. Reade's pugnacity and his passion for justice led him to make some of his novels instruments of social reformation. Thus, in "It Is Never Too Late to Mend," he depicted so terribly the horrors of the solitary system which prevailed in English prisons as to shock all England and to bring about a swift reform in the prison laws.

In "Hard Cash"—perhaps the most thrilling of all his novels—he painted the abuses of private lunatic asylums in such a way as to lead to their regulation by law. Another novel—"Put Yourself in His Place"—led to a revision of the laws affecting the trades unions. Reade's books had the remarkable quality of being instantly *felt*, and of securing an almost instantaneous response. But he did not always write his novels with a social purpose. In "Griffith Gaunt" he has given us a wonderful study of the master passion—jealousy.

His "Cloister and the Hearth" is one of the most remarkable historical novels of his century. In it he writes of the same period that George Eliot has treated in her "Romola," and the two books appeared at almost the same time. But George Eliot's novel appears to be the work of an antiquarian, academic, cold, and formal; Reade's glows with life and color, and brings back to us the fourteenth century so that it seems as real as yesterday, teeming with living men and women who figure in a series of episodes which move one alternately to pity and terror and exultation.

Reade began his career as a playwright; and the art of the playwright is visible in all his work. Many of his books were dramatized by him and he will be remembered not merely for his own best play—"Masks and Faces"—but as having put upon the stage the powerful version of Zola's "L'Assommoir" which Americans and Englishmen remember under the title "Drink."

It was in collaboration with the well-known actor and writer of melodramas, Dion Boucicault, that "Foul Play" was written. To the writing of the story, Boucicault seems to have contributed only a small part, though he undoubtedly helped to elaborate the plot. Afterward he made a play of it which was produced in England and America with great success. In reprinting the novel in these pages, a few superfluous paragraphs have here and there been dropped; but this has in every case been done with the utmost care, so as to detract nothing from what is essential to the movement of the story, but rather to render it more symmetrical and compact.

It is hoped that, in bringing this striking bit of fiction once more to the attention of the reading public, something will have been accomplished to direct the notice of all who love good fiction to the works of one who in his own peculiar sphere is absolutely without a rival.

FOUL PLAY.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are places which appear at first sight inaccessible to romance; and such a place was Mr. Wardlaw's dining-room in Russell Square. It was very large, had sickly green walls, picked out with aldermen, full length; heavy maroon curtains; mahogany chairs; a turkey carpet an inch thick; and was lighted with wax candles only.

In the center, bristling and gleaming with silver and glass, was a round table, at which fourteen could have dined comfortably; and at opposite sides of this table sat two gentlemen, who looked as neat, grave, precise and unromantic as the place: Merchant Wardlaw and his son.

Wardlaw senior was an elderly man, tall, thin, iron-gray, with a round head, a short, thick neck, a good, brown eye, a square jowl that betokened resolution, and a complexion so sallow as to be almost cadaverous. Hard as iron; but a certain stiff dignity and respectability sat upon him, and became him.

Arthur Wardlaw resembled his father in figure, but his mother in face. He had, and has, hay-colored hair, a forehead singularly white and delicate, pale-blue eyes, largish ears, finely chiseled features, the under lip much shorter than the upper; his chin oval and pretty, but somewhat receding; his complexion beautiful. In short, what nineteen people out of twenty would call a handsome young man, and think they had described him.

Both of the Wardlaws were in full dress, according to the invariable custom of the house; and sat in a dead silence, that seemed natural to the great, sober room.

This, however, was not for want of a topic; on the contrary, they had a matter of great importance to discuss, and in fact this was why they dined *tête-à tête:* but their tongues were tied for the present; in the first place, there stood in the middle of the table an epergne,

the size of a Putney laurel-tree; neither Wardlaw could well see the other, without craning out his neck like a rifleman from behind his tree; and then there were three live suppressors of confidential intercourse, two gorgeous footmen, and a somber, sublime, and, in one word, episcopal butler; all three went about as softly as cats after a robin, and conjured one plate away, and smoothly insinuated another, and seemed models of grave discretion; but were known to be all ears, and bound by a secret oath to carry down each crumb of dialogue to the servants' hall, for curious dissection, and boisterous ridicule.

At last, however, those three smug hypocrites retired, and, by good luck, transferred their suffocating epergne to the sideboard; so then father and son looked at one another with that conscious air which naturally precedes a topic of interest; and Wardlaw senior invited his son to try a certain decanter of rare old port, by way of preliminary.

While the young man fills his glass, hurl 'we in his antecedents.

At school till fifteen, and then clerk in his father's office till twenty-two, and showed an aptitude so remarkable that John Wardlaw, who was getting tired, determined, sooner or later, to put the reins of government into his hands. But he conceived a desire that the future head of his office should be a university man. So he announced his resolution, and to Oxford went young Wardlaw, though he had not looked at Greek or Latin for seven years.

He was, however, furnished with a private tutor, under whom he recovered lost ground rapidly. The Rev. Robert Penfold was a first-class man, and had the gift of teaching. The house of Wardlaw had peculiar claims on him, for he was the son of old Michael Penfold, Wardlaw's cashier; he learned from young Wardlaw the stake he was playing for, and, instead of merely giving him one hour's lecture per day, as he did to his other pupils, he used to come to his rooms at all hours and force him to read, by reading with him. He also stood his friend in a serious emergency.

Young Wardlaw, you must know, was blessed, or cursed, with mimicry; his powers in that way really seemed to have no limit, for he could imitate with his voice any sound you liked, and any form with his pen and pencil. Now, we promise you, he was one man under his father's eye, and another down at Oxford; so, one night, this gentleman, being warm with wine, opens his window, and, seeing a group of undergraduates chattering and smoking in the quadrangle, imitates the peculiar grating tones of Mr. Champion, vice-president of the college, and gives them various reasons why they ought to disperse to their rooms and study.

"But, perhaps," says he, in conclusion, "you are too blind drunk to read Bosh in crooked letters by candle-light? In that case——" And he then gave them some very naughty advice how to pass the evening; still in the exact tones of Mr. Champion, who was a very, very strict moralist; and this unexpected sally of wit caused shrieks of laughter, and mightily tickled all the hearers, except Champion *ipse,* who was listening and disapproving at another window. He complained to the president. Then the ingenious Wardlaw, not having come down to us in a direct line from Bayard, committed a great mistake—he denied it.

It was brought home to him, and the president, who had laughed in his sleeve at the practical joke, looked very grave at the falsehood; rustication was talked of and even expulsion.

Then Wardlaw came sorrowfully to Penfold, and said to him, "I must have been awfully cut, for I don't remember all that; I had been wining at Christchurch. I do remember slanging the fellows, but how can I tell what I said? I say, old fellow, it will be a bad job for me if they expel me, or even rusticate me; my father will never forgive me; I shall be his clerk, but never his partner; and then he will find out what a lot I owe down here. I'm done for!"

Penfold uttered not a word, but grasped his hand, and went off to the president, and said his pupil had wined at Christchurch, and could not be expected to remember minutely. Mimicry was, unfortunately, a habit with him. He then pleaded for the milder construction with such zeal and eloquence that the high-minded scholar he was ad-

dressing admitted that construction was *possible,* and therefore must be received. So the affair ended in a written apology to Mr. Champion, which had all the smoothness and neatness of a merchant's letter. Arthur Wardlaw was already a master in that style.

Six months after this, and one fortnight before the actual commencement of our tale, Arthur Wardlaw, well crammed by Penfold, went up for his final examination, throbbing with anxiety. He passed; and was so grateful to his tutor that when the advowson of a small living near Oxford came into the market, he asked Wardlaw senior to lend Robert Penfold a sum of money, much more than was needed: and Wardlaw senior declined without a moment's hesitation.

This slight sketch will serve as a key to the dialogue it has postponed, and to subsequent incidents.

"Well, Arthur, and so you have really taken your degree?"

"No, sir; but I have passed my examination; the degree follows as a matter of course—that is a mere question of fees."

"Oh! Then now I have something to say to you. Try one more glass of the '47 port. Stop; you'll excuse me; I am a man of business; I don't doubt your word; heaven forbid! but, do you happen to have any document you can produce in further confirmation of what you state; namely, that you have passed your final examination at the university?"

"Certainly, sir;" replied young Wardlaw. "My testamur."

"What is that?"

The young gentleman put his hand in his pocket, and produced his testamur, or "We bear witness"; a short printed document in Latin, which may be thus translated:

"We bear witness that Arthur Wardlaw, of St. Luke's College, has answered our questions in humane letters.

"GEORGE RICHARDSON,
"ARTHUR SMYTHE,
"EDWARD MERIVALE,
"Examiners."

Wardlaw senior took it, laid it beside him on the table, inspected it with his double eyeglass, and, not knowing a word of Latin, was mightily impressed, and his respect for his son rose forty or forty-five per cent.

"Very well, sir," said he. "Now listen to me. Perhaps it was an old man's fancy; but I have often seen in the world what a stamp these universities put upon a man. To send you back from commerce to Latin and Greek at two-and-twenty was trying you rather hard. Well, sir, you have stood the trial, and I am proud of you. And so now it is my turn; from this day and from this hour look on yourself as my partner in the old-established house of Wardlaw. You will enter on a flourishing concern, sir; and you will virtually conduct it, in written communication with me; for I have had five-and-forty years of it; and then my liver, you know! Watson advises me strongly to leave my desk, and try country air, and rest from business and its cares."

He paused a moment; and the young man drew a long breath, like one who was in the act of being relieved of some terrible weight.

As for the old gentleman, he was not observing his son just then, but thinking of his own career; a certain expression of pain and regret came over his features; but he shook it off with manly dignity, "Come, come," said he, "this is the law of nature, and must be submitted to with a good grace. Wardlaw junior, fill your glass."

At the same time he stood up and said stoutly, "The setting sun drinks to the rising sun"; but could not maintain that artificial style, and ended with, "God bless you, my boy, and may you stick to business; avoid speculation, as I have done; and so hand the concern down healthy to your son, as my father there (pointing to a picture) handed it down to me, and I to you."

His voice wavered slightly in uttering this benediction; but only for a moment: he then sat quietly down, and sipped his wine composedly.

Not so the other: his color came and went violently all the time his father was speaking, and when he ceased, he sank into his chair with another sigh deeper than the last, and two half-hysterical tears came to his pale eyes.

But presently, feeling he was expected to say something, he struggled against

all this mysterious emotion, and faltered out that he should not fear the responsibility, if he might have constant recourse to his father for advice.

"Why, of course," was the reply. "My country house is but a mile from the station: you can telegraph for me in any case of importance."

"When would you wish me to commence my new duties?"

"Let me see—it will take six weeks to prepare a balance-sheet, such as I could be content to submit to an incoming partner. Say two months."

Young Wardlaw's countenance fell.

"Meantime you shall travel on the Continent and enjoy yourself."

"Thank you," said young Wardlaw, mechanically, and fell into a brown study.

The room now returned to what seemed its natural state. And its silence continued until broken from without.

A sharp knocking was heard at the street door, and resounded across the marble hall.

The Wardlaws looked at one another in some little surprise.

"I have invited nobody," said the elder.

Some time elapsed, and then a footman made his appearance, and brought in a card.

"Mr. Christopher Adams."

Now that Mr. Christopher Adams should call on John Wardlaw, in his private room, at nine o'clock in the evening seemed to that merchant irregular, presumptuous, and monstrous. "Tell him he will find me at my place of business to-morrow, as usual," said he, knitting his brows.

The footman went off with this message; and, soon after, raised voices were heard in the hall, and the episcopal butler entered the room with an injured countenance.

"He says he *must* see you; he is in great anxiety."

"Yes, I am in great anxiety," said a quavering voice at his elbow; and Mr. Adams actually pushed by the butler, and stood, hat in hand, in those sacred precincts. "Pray excuse me, sir," said he, "but it is very serious; I can't be easy in my mind till I have put you a question."

"This is very extraordinary conduct, sir," said Mr. Wardlaw. "Do you think I do business here, and at all hours?"

"Oh, no, sir; it is my own business. I am come to ask you a very serious question. I couldn't wait till morning with such a doubt on my mind."

"Well, sir, I repeat this is irregular and extraordinary; but as you are here, pray what is the matter?" He then dismissed the lingering butler with a look. Mr. Adams cast uneasy glances on young Wardlaw.

"Oh," said the elder, "you can speak before him. This is my partner; that is to say, he will be as soon as the balance-sheet can be prepared, and the deed drawn. Wardlaw junior, this is Mr. Adams, a very respectable bill discounter."

The two men bowed to each other, and Arthur Wardlaw sat down motionless.

"Sir, did you draw a note of hand to-day?" inquired Adams of the elder merchant.

"I dare say I did. Did you discount one signed by me?"

"Yes, sir, we did."

"Well, sir, you have only to present it at maturity. Wardlaw & Son will provide for it, I dare say." This with the lofty nonchalance of a rich man, who had never broken an engagement in his life.

"Ah, that I know they will if it is all right; but suppose it is not?"

"What d'ye mean?" asked Wardlaw, with some astonishment.

"Oh, nothing, sir! It bears your signature, that is good for twenty times the amount; and it is indorsed by your cashier. Only what makes me a little uneasy, your bills used to be always on your own forms, and so I told my partner; he discounted it. Gentlemen, I wish you would just look at it."

"Of course we will look at it. Show it to Arthur first; his eyes are younger than mine."

Mr. Adams took out a large bill-book, extracted the note of hand, and passed it across the table to Wardlaw junior. He took it up with a sort of shiver, and bent his head very low over it; then handed it back in silence.

Adams took it to Wardlaw senior, and

laid it before him, by the side of Arthur's testamur.

The merchant inspected it with his glasses.

"The writing is mine, apparently."

"I am very glad of it," said the bill-broker, eagerly.

"Stop a bit," said Mr. Wardlaw. "Why, what is this? For two thousand pounds! and, as you say, not my form. I have signed no note for two thousand pounds this week. Dated yesterday. You have not cashed it, I hope?"

"I am sorry to say my partner has."

"Well, sir, not to keep you in suspense, the thing is not worth the stamp it is written on."

"Mr. Wardlaw!—Sir!—Good heavens! Then it is as I feared. It is a forgery."

"I should be puzzled to find any other name for it. You need not look so pale, Arthur. We can't help some clever scoundrel imitating our hands; and as for you, Adams, you ought to have been more cautious."

"But, sir, your cashier's name is Penfold," faltered the holder, clinging to a straw. "May he not have drawn—is the indorsement forged as well?"

Mr. Wardlaw examined the back of the bill, and looked puzzled. "No," said he. "My cashier's name is Michael Penfold, but this is indorsed 'Robert Penfold.' Do you hear, Arthur? Why, what is the matter with you? You look like a ghost. I say there is your tutor's name at the back of this forged note. This is very strange. Just look, and tell me who wrote these two words 'Robert Penfold'?"

Young Wardlaw took the document, and tried to examine it calmly, but it shook visibly in his hand, and a cold moisture gathered on his brow. His pale eyes roved to and fro in a very remarkable way; and he was so long before he said anything, that both the other persons present began to eye him with wonder.

At last he faltered out, "This 'Robert Penfold' seems to me very like his own handwriting. But then the rest of the writing is equally like yours, sir. I am sure Robert Penfold never did anything wrong. Mr. Adams, please oblige *me*. Let this go no further till I have seen him, and asked him whether he indorsed it."

"Now don't you be in a hurry," said the elder Wardlaw. "The first question is, who received the money?"

Mr. Adams replied that it was a respectable-looking man, a young clergyman.

"Ah!" said Wardlaw, with a world of meaning.

"Father!" said young Wardlaw, imploringly, "for my sake, say no more to-night. Robert Penfold is incapable of a dishonest act."

"It becomes your years to think so, young man. But I have lived long enough to see what crimes respectable men are betrayed into in the hour of temptation. And, now I think of it, this Robert Penfold is in want of money. Did he not ask me for a loan of two thousand pounds? Was not that the very sum? Can't you answer me? Why, the application came through you."

Receiving no reply from his son, but a sort of agonized stare, he took out his pencil and wrote down Robert Penfold's address. This he handed the bill-broker, and gave him some advice in a whisper, which Mr. Christopher Adams received with a profusion of thanks.

Scarcely a word was spoken for some minutes, and then the younger man broke out suddenly: "Robert Penfold is the best friend I ever had; I should have been expelled but for him, and I should never have earned that testamur but for him."

The old gentleman interrupted him. "You exaggerate: but, to tell the truth, I am sorry now I did not lend him the money you asked for. For, mark my words, in a moment of temptation, that miserable young man has forged my name, and will be convicted of the felony, and punished accordingly."

"No, no; oh, God forbid!" shrieked young Wardlaw. "I couldn't bear it. If he did, he must have intended to replace it. I must see him; I will see him directly." He got up all in a hurry, and was going to Penfold to warn him, and get him out of the way till the money should be replaced. But his father started up at the same moment and forbade him, in accents that he had never yet been able to resist.

"Sit down, sir, this instant," said the old man, with terrible sternness. "Sit down, I say, or you will never be a partner of mine. Justice must take its course. What business and what right have we to protect a felon? I would not take *your* part if you were one."

CHAPTER II.

THAT same evening sat over their tea, in Norfolk Street, Strand, another couple, who were also father and son; but, in this pair, the Wardlaws were reversed. Michael Penfold was a reverend, gentle creature, with white hair, blue eyes, and great timidity; why, if a stranger put to him a question, he used to look all round the room before he ventured to answer.

Robert, his son, was a young man, with a large brown eye, a mellow voice, square shoulders, and a prompt and vigorous manner. Cricketer. Scholar. Parson.

They were talking hopefully together over a living Robert was going to buy: it was near Oxford, he said, and would not prevent his continuing to take pupils. "But, father," said he, "it will be a place to take my wife to if I ever have one; and, meantime, I hope you will run down now and then, Saturday to Monday."

"You are very good, Robert: I would rather see you spend it upon yourself; but, dear me, what a manager you must be to dress so beautifully as you do, and send your old father presents as you do, and yet put by fourteen hundred pounds to buy this living."

"You are mistaken, sir, I have only saved four hundred; the odd thousand—— But that is a secret for the present."

"Oh, I am not inquisitive."

They then chatted about things of no importance whatever, and the old gentleman was just lighting his candle to go to bed, when a visitor was ushered into the room.

The man was well dressed, with one exception; he wore a gold chain. He had a hooked nose, and a black, piercing eye. He stood at the door and observed every person and thing in the room minutely before he spoke a word.

Then he said, quietly, "Mr. Michael Penfold, I believe."

"At your service, sir."

"And Mr. Robert Penfold."

"I am Robert Penfold. What is your business?"

"Pray is the 'Robert Penfold' at the back of this note your writing?"

"Certainly it is; they would not cash it without that."

"Oh, you got the money, then?"

"Of course I did."

"You have not parted with it, have you?"

"No."

"All the better." He then turned to Michael, and looked at him earnestly a moment. "The fact is, sir," said he, "there is a little irregularity about this bill which must be explained."

"Irregularity about—a bill?" cried Michael Penfold, in dismay. "Who is the drawer? Let me see it. Oh, dear me, something wrong about a bill indorsed by you, Robert?" and the old man began to shake piteously.

"Why, father," said Robert, "what are you afraid of? If the bill is irregular, I can but return the money. It is in the house."

"The best way will be for Mr. Robert Penfold to go at once with me to the bill-broker; he lives but a few doors off. And you, sir, must stay here and be responsible for the funds till we return."

Robert Penfold took his hat directly, and went off with this mysterious visitor.

They had not gone many steps when Robert's companion stopped, and getting him in front of him, said, "We can settle this matter here." At the same time a policeman crossed the way, and joined them; and another man, who was in fact a policeman in plain clothes, emerged from a doorway, and stood at Robert Penfold's back.

The detective, having thus surrounded him, threw off disguise. "My man," said he, "I ought to have done this job in your house. But I looked at the worthy old gentleman and his gray hairs. I thought I'd spare him if I could. I have a warrant to arrest you for forgery!"

"Forgery! Arrest me for forgery!" said Robert Penfold with amazement.

The next moment, however, he turned

pale, and almost staggered under the blow.

"We had better go to Mr. Wardlaw," said he. "I entreat you to go to him with me."

"Can't be done," said the detective. "Wardlaw has nothing to do with it. The bill is stopped. You are arrested by the gent that cashed it. Here is the warrant; will you go quietly with us, or must I put the darbies on?"

Robert was violently agitated. "There is no need to arrest me," he cried; "I shall not run from my accuser. Hands off, I say. I'm a clergyman of the Church of England, and you shall not lay hands on me."

But one of the policemen did lay hands on him. Then the Rev. Robert Penfold shook him furiously off, and with one active bound, sprang into the middle of the road.

The officers went at him incautiously and the head detective, as he rushed forward, received a heavy blow on the neck and jaw that sounded along the street and sent him rolling in the mud; this was followed by a quick succession of staggering facers, administered right and left, on the eyes and noses of the subordinates.

These, however, though bruised and bleeding, succeeded at last in grappling their man, and all came to the ground together and there struggled furiously; every window in the street was open by this time, and at one the white hair and reverent face of Michael Penfold looked out on this desperate and unseemly struggle, with hands that beat the air in helpless agony, and inarticulate cries of terror.

The detective got up and sat upon Robert Penfold's chest; and at last the three forced the handcuffs upon him, and took him in a cab to the station-house.

Next day, before the magistrate, Wardlaw senior proved the note a forgery, and Mr. Adams' partner swore to the prisoner as the person who had presented and indorsed the note.

The officers attended, two with black eyes apiece, and one with his jaw bound up, and two sound teeth in his pocket, which had been driven from their sockets by the prisoner in his desperate attempt to escape. Their evidence hurt the prisoner, and the magistrate refused bail.

The Rev. Robert Penfold was committed to prison to be tried at the Central Criminal Court on a charge of felony.

Wardlaw senior returned home, and told Wardlaw junior, who said not a word. He soon received a letter from Robert Penfold, which agitated him greatly, and he promised to go to the prison and see him.

But he never went.

He was very miserable, a prey to an inward struggle. He dared not offend his father on the eve of being made partner. Yet his heart bled for Robert Penfold.

He did what might perhaps have been expected from that pale eye and receding chin—he temporized. He said to himself, "Before that horrible trial comes on I shall be the house of Wardlaw and able to draw a check for thousands. I'll buy off Adams at any price and hush up the whole matter."

So he hoped, and hoped. But the accountant was slow, the public prosecutor unusually quick, and, to young Wardlaw's agony, the partnership deed was not ready when an imploring letter was put into his hands urging him, by all that men hold sacred, to attend at the court as the prisoner's witness.

This letter almost drove young Wardlaw made. He went to Adams and entreated him not to carry the matter into court. But Adams was inexorable. He had got his money, but would be revenged for the fright.

Baffled here, young Wardlaw went down to Oxford and shut himself up in his own room, a prey to fear and remorse. He sported his oak, and never went out. All his exercise was that of a wild beast in its den, walking restlessly up and down.

But all his caution did not prevent the prisoner's solicitor from getting to him. One morning, at seven o'clock, a clerk slipped in at the heels of his scout, and, coming to young Wardlaw's bedside, awoke him out of an uneasy slumber by serving him with a subpœna to appear as Robert Penfold's witness.

This last stroke finished him. His bodily health gave way under his men-

tal distress. Gastric fever set in, and he was lying tossing and raving in delirium, while Robert Penfold was being tried at the Central Criminal Court.

The indictment contained two counts; one for forging the note of hand, the other for uttering it knowing it to be forged.

On the first count, the Crown was weak, and had to encounter the evidence of Undercliff, the distinguished expert, who swore that the hand which wrote "Robert Penfold" was not, in his opinion, the hand that had written the body of the instrument. He gave many minute reasons, in support of this; and nothing of any weight was advanced contra. The judge directed the jury to acquit the prisoner on that count.

But on the charge of uttering the evidence was clear, and on the question of knowledge it was, perhaps, a disadvantage to the prisoner that he was tried in England, and could not be heard in person, as he could have been in a foreign court; above all, his resistance to the officers eked out the presumption that he knew the note had been forged by some person or other, who was probably his accomplice.

The absence of his witness, Wardlaw junior, was severely commented on by his counsel; indeed, he appealed to the judge to commit the said Wardlaw for contempt of court. But Wardlaw senior was recalled, and swore that he had left his son in a burning fever, not expected to live: and declared, with genuine emotion, that nothing but a high sense of public duty had brought *him* hither from his dying son's bedside. He also told the court that Arthur's inability to clear his friend had really been the first cause of his illness, from which he was not expected to recover.

The jury consulted together a long time; and, at last, brought in a verdict of "GUILTY"; but recommended him to mercy, on grounds which might fairly have been alleged in favor of his innocence; but, if guilty, rather aggravated his crime.

Then an officer of the court inquired in a sort of chant or recitative, whether the prisoner had anything to say why judgment should not be given in accordance with the verdict.

It is easy to divest words of their meaning by false intonation; and prisoners in general receive this bit of singsong in dead silence. For why? the chant conveys no idea to their ears, and they would as soon think of *replying* to the notes of a cuckoo.

But the Rev. Robert Penfold was in a keen agony that sharpened all his senses; he caught the sense of the words in spite of the speaker, and clung wildly to the straw that monotonous machine held out. "My lord! my lord!" he cried, "I'll tell you the real reason why young Wardlaw is not here."

The judge put up his hand with a gesture that enforced silence: "Prisoner," said he, "I cannot go back to facts; the jury have dealt with them. Judgment can be arrested only on grounds of law. On these you can be heard. But if you have none to offer, you must be silent, and submit to your sentence," and then, without a pause, he condemned the culprit to five years' penal servitude.

At this the poor wretch uttered a cry of anguish that went straight from the heart in the dock to the heart on the judgment-seat. And so his lordship's voice trembled for a moment, and then became firm again, but solemn and human. "But," said he, "my experience tells me this is your first crime, and may possibly be your last. I shall therefore use my influence that you may not be associated with more hardened criminals, but may be sent out of this country to another, where you may begin life afresh, and, in the course of years, efface this dreadful stain. Give me hopes of you; begin your repentance where now you stand, by blaming yourself, and no other man. No man constrained you to utter a forged note, and to receive the money; it was found in your possession. For such an act there can be no defense in law, morality, or religion.

These words overpowered the culprit. He burst out crying with great violence.

But it did not last long. He became strangely composed all of a sudden; and said, "God forgive all concerned in this—but one—but one."

He then bowed respectfully, and like a gentleman, to the judge and jury, and walked out of the dock with the air of a man who had parted with emotion,

and would march to the gallows now without flinching.

The counsel for the Crown required that the forged document should be impounded.

"I was about to make the same demand," said the prisoner's counsel.

The judge snubbed them both, and said it was a matter of course.

Robert Penfold spent a year in separate confinement, and then, to cure him of its salutary effect (if any), was sent on board the hulk "Vengeance," and was herded with the greatest miscreants in creation. They did not reduce him to their level, but they injured his mind: and before half his sentence had expired, he sailed for a penal colony, a man with a hot coal in his bosom, a creature embittered, poisoned; hoping little, believing little, fearing little, and hating much.

CHAPTER III.

MR. WARDLAW went down to his son, and nursed him. He kept the newspapers from him, and, on his fever abating, had him conveyed by easy stages to the seaside, and then sent him abroad.

The young man obeyed in gloomy silence. He never asked after Robert Penfold, now; never mentioned his name. He seemed, somehow, thankful to be controlled mind and body.

But, before he had been abroad a month, he wrote for leave to return home and to throw himself into business. There was, for once, a nervous impatience in his letters, and his father, who pitied him deeply, and was more than ever inclined to reward and indulge him, yielded readily enough; and, on his arrival, signed the partnership deed, and, Polonius-like, gave him much good counsel; then retired to his country seat.

Arthur Wardlaw held the reins, and easily paid his Oxford debts out of the assets of the firm. Not being happy in his mind, he threw himself into commerce with feverish zeal, and very soon extended the operations of the house.

One of his first acts of authority was to send for Michael Penfold into his room. Now poor old Michael, ever since his son's misfortune, as he called it, had crept to his desk like a culprit, expecting every day to be discharged. When he received this summons he gave a sigh and went slowly to the young merchant.

Arthur Wardlaw looked up at his entrance, then looked down again, and said coldly, "Mr. Penfold, you have been a faithful servant to us many years; I raise your salary £50 a year, and you will keep the ledger."

The old man was dumfounded at first, and then began to give vent to his surprise and gratitude; but Wardlaw cut him short, almost fiercely. "There, there, there," said he without raising his eyes, "let me hear no more about it, and, above all, never speak to me of that cursed business. It was no fault of yours, nor mine neither. There—go—I want no thanks. Do you hear? leave me, Mr. Penfold, if you please."

The old man bowed low and retired, wondering much at his employer's goodness, and a little at his irritability.

Wardlaw junior's whole soul was given to business night and day, and he soon became known for a very ambitious and rising merchant. But, by and by, ambition had to encounter a rival in his heart. He fell in love; deeply in love; and with a worthy object.

The young lady was the daughter of a distinguished officer, whose merits were universally recognized, but not rewarded in proportion. Wardlaw's suit was favorably received by the father, and the daughter gradually yielded to an attachment, the warmth, sincerity, and singleness of which were manifest: and the pair would have been married, but for the circumstance that her father (partly through Wardlaw's influence, by the by) had obtained a lucrative post abroad which it suited his means to accept. He was a widower, and his daughter could not let him go alone.

This temporary separation, if it postponed a marriage, led naturally to a solemn engagement; and Arthur Wardlaw enjoyed the happiness of writing and receiving affectionate letters by every foreign post. Love, worthily bestowed, shed its balm upon his heart, and, under its soft but powerful charm, he grew tranquil and complacent, and his character and temper seemed to improve. Such virtue is there in a pure attachment.

Meanwhile the extent of his operations alarmed old Penfold; but he soon reasoned that worthy down with overpowering conclusions and superior smiles.

He had been three years the ruling spirit of Wardlaw & Son, when some curious events took place in another hemisphere; and in these events, which we are now to relate, Arthur Wardlaw was more nearly interested than may appear at first sight.

Robert Penfold, in due course, applied to Lieutenant-General Rolleston for a ticket of leave. That functionary thought the application premature, the crime being so grave. He complained that the system had become too lax, and for his part he seldom gave a ticket of leave until some suitable occupation was provided for the applicant. "Will anybody take you as a clerk? If so—I'll see about it."

Robert Penfold could find nobody to take him into a post of confidence all at once, and wrote the general an eloquent letter, begging hard to be allowed to labor with his hands.

Fortunately, General Rolleston's gardener had just turned him off; so he offered the post to his eloquent correspondent, remarking that he did not much mind employing a ticket-of-leave man himself, though he was resolved to protect his neighbors from their relapses.

The convict then came to General Rolleston, and begged leave to enter on his duties under the name of James Seaton. At that General Rolleston hemmed and hawed, and took a note. But his final decision was as follows: "If you really mean to change your character, why, the name you have disgraced might hang round your neck. Well, I'll give you every chance. But," said this old warrior, suddenly compressing his resolute lips just a little, "If you go a yard off the straight path *now,* look for no mercy—Jemmy Seaton."

So the convict was rechristened at the tail of a threat, and let loose among the warrior's tulips.

His appearance was changed as effectually as his name. Even before he was Seatoned he had grown a silky mustache and beard of singular length and beauty; and, what with these, and his workingman's clothes, and his cheeks and neck tanned by the sun, our readers would never have recognized in this hale, bearded laborer the pale prisoner that had trembled, raged, wept, and submitted in the dock of the Central Criminal Court.

Our universities cure men of doing things by halves, be the things mental or muscular; so Seaton gardened much more zealously than his plebeian predecessor: up at five, and did not leave till eight.

But he was unpopular in the kitchen—because he was always out of it; taciturn and bitter, he shunned his fellow-servants.

One day, as he was rolling the grass upon the lawn, he heard a soft rustle at some distance, and, looking round, saw a young lady on the gravel path, whose calm but bright face, coming so suddenly, literally dazzled him. She had a clear cheek, blooming with exercise, rich brown hair, smooth, glossy, and abundant, and a very light hazel eye, of singular beauty and serenity.

She passed within a few yards of him, and he touched his hat to her. She inclined her head gently, but her eyes did not rest an instant on her gardener.

The young lady was Helen Rolleston, just returned home from a visit. She walked in the garden every day, and Seaton watched her, and peeped at her, unseen, behind trees and bushes. He fed his eyes and his heart upon her, and, by degrees, the daily study of this creature, who, though by no means the angel he took her for, was at all events a pure and virtuous woman, counteracted the demoralizing influences of his late companions. Every day he drank deeper of an insane but purifying and elevating passion.

If a day passed without his seeing her, he was dejected. When she was behind her time, he was restless, anxious, and his work distasteful; and then, when she came out at last, he thrilled all over, and the lawn, aye, the world itself, seemed to fill with sunshine. His adoration, timid by its own nature, was doubly so by reason of his fallen and hopeless state. He cut nosegays for her; but gave them to her maid Wilson for her. He had not the courage to offer them to herself.

One evening, as he went home, a man addressed him familiarly, but in a low voice. Seaton looked at him attentively, and recognized him at last. It was a convict called Butt, who had come over in the ship with him.

The man offered him a glass of ale; Seaton declined it. Butt, a very clever rogue, seemed hurt; so then Seaton assented reluctantly. Butt took him to a public-house in a narrow street, and into a private room. Seaton started as soon as he entered, for there sat two repulsive ruffians, and, by a look that passed rapidly between them and Butt, he saw plainly that they were waiting for him. He felt nervous; the place was so uncouth and dark, the faces so villainous.

However, they invited him to sit down, roughly, but with an air of good fellowship; and very soon opened their business over their ale. We are all bound to assist our fellow-creatures, when it can be done without trouble; and what they asked of him was a simple act of courtesy, such as in their opinion no man worthy of the name could deny to his fellow. It was to give General Rolleston's watch-dog a piece of prepared meat upon a certain evening; and, in return for this trifling civility, they were generous enough to offer him a full share of any light valuables they might find in the general's house.

Seaton trembled, and put his face in his hands a moment. "I cannot do it," said he.

"Why not?"

"He has been too good to me."

A coarse laugh of derision greeted this argument; it seemed so irrelevant to these pure egotists. Seaton, however, persisted, and on that one of the men got up and stood before the door, and drew his knife gently.

Seaton glanced his eyes round in search of a weapon, and turned pale.

"Do you mean to split on us, mate?" said one of the ruffians in front of him.

"No, I don't. But I won't rob my benefactor; you shall kill me first." And with that he darted to the fireplace, and in a moment the poker was high in air, and the way he squared his shoulders and stood ready to hit to the on, or cut to the off, was a caution.

"Come, drop that," said Butt grimly; "and put up *your* knife, Bob. Can't a pal be out of a job, and yet not split on them that is in it!"

"Why should I split?" said Robert Penfold. "Has the law been a friend to me? But I won't rob my benefactor —and his daughter."

"That is square enough," said Butt. "Why, pals, there are other cribs to be cracked besides that old bloke's. Finish the ale, mate, and part friends."

"If you will promise me to 'crack some other crib,' and let that one alone."

A sullen assent was given, and Seaton drank their healths, and walked away. Butt followed him soon after, and affected to side with him, and intimated that he himself was capable of not robbing a man's house who had been good to him, or to a pal of his. Indeed, this plausible person said so much, and his sullen comrades had said so little, that Seaton, rendered keen and anxious by love, invested his savings in a Colt's revolver and ammunition.

He did not stop there; after the hint about the watch-dog, he would not trust that faithful but too carnivorous animal; he brought his blankets into the little tool-house, and lay there every night in a sort of dog's sleep.

This tool-house was erected in a little back garden, separated from the lawn only by some young trees in single file. Now Miss Rolleston's window looked out upon the lawn, so that Seaton's watch-tower was not many yards from it; then, as the tool-house was only lighted from above, he bored a hole in the wooden structure, and through this he watched, and slept, and watched.

After a few nights, his alarms naturally ceased, but his love increased, fed now from this new source, the sweet sense of being the secret protector of her he adored.

Meanwhile, Miss Rolleston's lady's maid, Wilson, fell in love with him after her fashion; she had taken a fancy to his face at once, and he had encouraged her a little, unintentionally; for he had brought the nosegays to her, and listened complacently to her gossip, for the sake of the few words she let fall now and then about her young mistress.

As he never exchanged two sentences at a time with any other servant, this

flattered Sarah Wilson, and she soon began to meet and accost him oftener, and in cherrier-colored ribbons, than he could stand. So then he showed impatience, and then she, reading him by herself, suspected some vulgar rival.

Suspicion soon bred jealousy, jealousy vigilance, and vigilance detection.

Her first discovery was that, so long as she talked of Miss Helen Rolleston, she was always welcome; her second was, that Seaton slept in the tool-house.

She was not romantic enough to connect her two discoveries together. They lay apart in her mind, until circumstances we are about to relate supplied a connecting link.

One Thursday evening James Seaton's goddess took her candle, and glided up to her bedroom. And the moment she got there, she sat down and wrote long letters to three other young ladies, gushing affection, asking questions of the kind nobody replies to, painting, with a young lady's colors, the male being to whom she was shortly to be married, wishing her dear friends a like demigod, if perchance earth contained two; and so to the last new bonnet and preacher.

She sat over her paper till one o'clock, and Seaton watched and adored her shadow.

When she had done writing, she opened her window and looked out upon the night. She lifted those wonderful hazel eyes toward the stars, and her watcher might well be pardoned if he saw in her a celestial being looking up from an earthly resting-place toward her native sky.

At two o'clock she was in bed, but not asleep. She lay calmly gazing at the Southern Cross, and other lovely stars shining with vivid, but chaste, fire in the purple vault of heaven.

While thus employed she heard a slight sound outside that made her turn her eyes toward a young tree near her window. Its top branches were waving a good deal, though there was not a breath of air stirring. This struck her as curious, very curious.

Whilst she wondered, suddenly an arm and a hand came in sight, and after them the whole figure of a man, going up the tree.

Helen sat up now, glaring with terror, and was so paralyzed, she did not utter a sound. About a foot below her window was a lead flat that roofed the bay-window below. It covered an area of several feet, and the man sprang on to it with perfect ease from the tree. Helen shrieked with terror.

At that very instant there was a flash, a pistol shot, and the man's arms went whirling, and he staggered and fell over the edge of the flat, and struck the grass below with a heavy thud. Shots and blows followed, and all the sounds of a bloody struggle rang in Helen's ear as she flung herself screaming from the bed and darted to the door.

She ran and clung quivering to her sleepy maid, Wilson. The house was alarmed, lights flashed, footsteps pattered, there was universal commotion.

General Rolleston soon learned his daughter's story from Wilson, and aroused his male servants, one of whom was an old soldier. They searched the house first; but no entrance had been effected; so they went out on the lawn with blunderbuss and pistol.

They found a man lying on his back at the foot of the bay-window.

They pounced on him, and, to their amazement, it was the gardener, James Seaton, insensible.

General Rolleston was quite taken aback for a moment. Then he was sorry. But, after a little reflection, he said very sternly, "Carry the blackguard indoors, and run for an officer."

Seaton was taken into the hall, and laid flat on the floor.

All the servants gathered about him, brimful of curiosity, and the female ones began to speak all together; but General Rolleston told them sharply to hold their tongues, and to retire behind the man. "Somebody sprinkle him with cold water," said he; "and be quiet, all of you, and keep out of sight, while I examine him." He stood before the insensible figure with his arms folded, amidst a dead silence, broken only by the stifled sobs of Sarah Wilson, and of a sociable housemaid who cried with her for company.

And now Seaton began to writhe and show signs of returning sense.

Next he moaned piteously, and sighed. But General Rolleston could not pity

him; he waited grimly for returning consciousness, to subject him to a merciless interrogatory.

He waited just one second too long. He had to answer a question instead of putting one.

The judgment is the last faculty a man recovers when emerging from insensibilty; and Seaton, seeing the general standing before him, stretched out his hands, and said, in a faint but earnest voice, before eleven witnesses, "Is she safe? Oh, is she safe?"

CHAPTER IV.

SARAH WILSON left off crying, and looked down on the ground with a very red face. General Rolleston was amazed. "'Is she safe?' Is who safe?" said he.

"He means my mistress," replied Wilson, rather brusquely, and flounced out of the hall.

"She is safe, no thanks to you," said General Rolleston. "What were you doing under her window at this time of night?" And the harsh tone in which this question was put showed Seaton he was suspected. This wounded him, and he replied doggedly, "Lucky for you all I was there."

"That is no answer to my question," said the general sternly.

"It is all the answer I shall give you."

"Then I shall hand you over to the officer, without another word."

"Do, sir, do," said Seaton bitterly; but he added more gently, "You will be sorry for it when you come to your senses."

At this moment Wilson entered with a message. "If you please, sir, Miss Rolleston says the robber had no beard. Miss have never noticed Seaton's face, but his beard she have; and oh, if you please, sir, she begged me to ask him, was it you that fired the pistol and shot the robber?"

The delivery of this ungrammatical message but rational query was like a ray of light streaming into a dark place; it changed the whole aspect of things. As for Seaton, he received it as if heaven was speaking to him through Wilson.

His sullen air relaxed, the water stood in his eyes, he smiled affectionately, and said in a low, tender voice, "Tell her I heard some bad characters talking about this house—that was a month ago—so, ever since then I have slept in the toolhouse to watch. Yes, I shot the robber with my revolver, and I marked one or two more; but they were three to one; I think I must have got a blow on the head; for I felt nothing——"

Here he was interrupted by a violent scream from Wilson. She pointed downward, with her eyes glaring; and a little blood was seen to be trickling slowly over Seaton's stocking and shoe.

"Wounded," said the general's servant, Tom, in the business-like accent of one who had seen a thousand wounds.

"Oh, never mind that," said Seaton. "It can't be very deep, for I don't feel it;" then, fixing his eyes on General Rolleston, he said, in a voice that broke down suddenly, "There stands the only man who has wounded me to-night, to hurt me."

The way General Rolleston received this point-blank reproach surprised some persons present, who had observed only the imperious and iron side of his character. He hung his head in silence a moment; then, being discontented with himself, he went into a passion with his servants for standing idle. "Run away, you women," said he, roughly. "Now, Tom, if you are good for anything, strip the man and stanch his wound. Andrew, a bottle of port, quick!"

Then, leaving him for a while in friendly hands, he went to his daughter, and asked her if she saw any objection to a bed being made up in the house for the wounded convict.

"Oh, papa," said she, "why, of course not. I am all gratitude. What is he like, Wilson? for it is a most provoking thing, I never noticed his face, only his beautiful beard glittering in the sunshine ever so far off. Poor young man! Oh, yes, papa! send him to bed directly, and we will all nurse him. I never did any good in the world yet, and so why not begin at once?"

General Rolleston laughed at this squirt of enthusiasm from his staid daughter, and went off to give the requisite orders.

But Wilson followed him immediately and stopped him in the passage.

"If you please, sir, I think you had better not. I have something to tell you." She then communicated to him by degrees her suspicion that James Seaton was in love with his daughter. He treated this with due ridicule at first; but she gave him one reason after another till she staggered him, and he went down-stairs in a most mixed and puzzled frame of mind, inclined to laugh, inclined to be angry, inclined to be sorry.

The officer had just arrived, and was looking over some photographs to see if James Seaton was "one of his birds." Such alas! was his expression.

At sight of this Rolleston colored up; but extricated himself from the double difficulty with some skill. "Hexham," said he, "this poor fellow has behaved like a man, and got himself wounded in my service. You are to take him to the infirmary; but, mind, they must treat him like my own son, and nothing he asks for be denied him."

As for Sarah Wilson, she went to bed discontented, and wondering at her own bad judgment. She saw, too late, that, if she had held her tongue, Seaton would have been her patient and her prisoner; and as for Miss Rolleston, when it came to the point, why, she would never have nursed him except by proxy, and the proxy would have been Sarah Wilson.

However, the blunder blind passion had led her into was partially repaired by Miss Rolleston herself. When she heard, next day, where Seaton was gone, she lifted up her hands in amazement. "What *could* papa be thinking of to send our benefactor to a hospital?" And, after meditating awhile, she directed Wilson to cut a nosegay and carry it to Seaton. "He is a gardener," said she, innocently. "Of course he will miss his flowers sadly in that miserable place."

And she gave the same order every day, with a constancy that, you must know, formed part of this young lady's character. Soup, wine, and jellies were sent from the kitchen every other day.

Wilson concealed the true donor of all those things, and took the credit to herself. By this means she obtained the patient's gratitude, and he showed it so frankly, she hoped to steal his love as well.

But no! his fancy and his heart remained true to the cold beauty he had served so well, and she had forgotten him apparently.

This irritated Wilson at last, and she set to work to cure him with wholesome but bitter medicine. She sat down beside him one day, and said cheerfully: "We are all *'on the keyfeet'* just now. Miss Rolleston's beau is come on a visit."

The patient opened his eyes with astonishment.

"Miss Rolleston's beau?"

"Aye, her intended. What, didn't you know she is engaged to be married?"

"She engaged to be married?" gasped Seaton.

Wilson watched him with a remorseless eye.

"Why, James," said she, after a while, "did you think the likes of her would go through the world without a mate?"

Seaton made no reply but a moan, and lay back like one dead, utterly crushed by this cruel blow.

A buxom middle-aged nurse now came up, and said, with a touch of severity, "Come, my good girl, no doubt you mean well, but you are doing ill. You had better leave him to us for the present."

On this hint Wilson bounced out, and left the patient to his misery.

At her next visit she laid a nosegay on his bed, and gossiped away, talking of everything in the world except Miss Rolleston.

At last she came to a pause, and Seaton laid his hand on her arm directly, and looking piteously in her face spoke his first word.

"Does she love him?"

"What, still harping on *her?*" said Wilson. "Well, she doesn't hate him, I suppose, or she would not marry him."

"For pity's sake don't trifle with me! Does she love him?"

"La, James, how can I tell? She couldn't love him quite as much as I could love a man that took my fancy" (here she cast a languishing glance on Seaton); "but I see no difference between her and other young ladies. Miss is very fond of her papa, for one thing; and he favors the match. Aye, and she likes her partner well enough; she is brighter like, now he is in the house, and

she reads all her friends' letters to him ever so lovingly; and I do notice she leans on him, out walking, a trifle more than there is any need for."

At this picture James Seaton writhed in his bed like some agonized creature under vivisection; but the woman, spurred by jealousy, and also by egotistical passion, and had no mercy left for him.

"And why not?" continued she; "he is young, and handsome, and rich, and he dotes on her. If you are really her friend, you ought to be glad she is so well suited."

At this admonition the tears stood in Seaton's eyes, and after a while he got strength to say, "I know I ought, I know it. If he is only worthy of her, as worthy as any man could be."

"That he is, James. Why, I'll be bound you have heard of him. It is young Mr. Wardlaw."

Seaton started up in bed. "Who? Wardlaw? What Wardlaw?"

"What Wardlaw? Why, the great London merchant, his son. Leastways, he manages the whole concern now, I hear; the old gentleman, he is retired, by all accounts."

"CURSE HIM! CURSE HIM! CURSE HIM!" yelled James Seaton, with his eyes glaring fearfully, and both hands beating the air.

Sarah Wilson recoiled with alarm.

"That angel marry *him!*" shrieked Seaton. "Never, while I live; I'll throttle him with these hands first."

What more his ungovernable fury would have uttered was interrupted by a rush of nurses and attendants, and Wilson was bundled out of the place with little ceremony.

He contrived, however, to hurl a word after her, accompanied with a look of concentrated rage and resolution.

"NEVER, I TELL YOU—WHILE I LIVE."

After a few days and having a piece of news to communicate to Seaton, with respect to Arthur Wardlaw, Wilson asked to see that patient.

"Left the hospital this morning," was the reply.

"What, cured?"

"Why not? We have cured worse cases than his."

"Where has he gone to? Pray tell me."

"Oh, certainly." And inquiry was made. But the reply was, "Left no address."

Sarah Wilson had cause to tremble; for that tongue of hers had launched two wild beasts—Jealousy and Revenge.

That day, Arthur Wardlaw dined with General Rolleston and Helen. They were to be alone for a certain reason; and he came half an hour before dinner.

They walked arm-in-arm on the lawn, talking of the happiness before them, and regretting a temporary separation that was to intervene. He was her father's choice, and she loved her father devotedly; he was her male property; and young ladies like that sort of property, especially when they see nothing to dislike in it.

He loved her passionately, and that was her due, and pleased her and drew a gentle affection, if not a passion, from her in return.

And, on the other side of the hedge that bounded the lawn, a man lay crouched in the ditch, and saw it all with gleaming eyes.

Just before the affianced ones went in, Helen said, "I have a little favor to ask you, dear. The poor man, Seaton, who fought the robbers, and was wounded—papa says he is a man of education, and wanted to be a clerk or something. *Could* you find him a place?"

"I think I can," said Wardlaw; "indeed, I am sure. A line to White & Co. will do it; they want a shipping clerk."

"Oh, how good you are!" said Helen, and lifted her face all beaming with thanks.

The opportunity was tempting; the lover fond; two faces met for a single moment, and one of the two burned for five minutes after.

The basilisk eyes saw the soft collision; but the owner of those eyes did not hear the words that earned him that torture. He lay still and bided his time.

General Rolleston's house stood clear of the town at the end of a short, but narrow and tortuous lane. This situation had tempted the burglars whom Seaton baffled; and now it tempted Seaton.

Wardlaw must pass that way on leaving General Rolleston's house.

At a bend in the lane two twin elms stood out a foot or two from the hedge. Seaton got behind these at about ten o'clock, and watched for him with a patience and immobility that boded ill.

His preparations for this encounter were singular. He had a close-shutting inkstand and a pen, and one sheet of paper, at the top of which he had written "Sydney," and the day of the month and year, leaving the rest blank. And he had the revolver with which he had shot the robber at Helen Rolleston's window; and a barrel of that arm was loaded with swan shot.

CHAPTER V.

THE moon went down; the stars shone out clearer.

Eleven o'clock boomed from a church clock in the town.

Wardlaw did not come, and Seaton did not move from his ambush.

Soon after midnight, General Rolleston's hall door opened, and a figure appeared in a flood of light. Seaton's eyes gleamed at the light, for it was young Wardlaw, with a footman at his back holding a lighted lamp.

Wardlaw, however, seemed in no hurry to leave the house, and the reason soon appeared; he was joined by Helen Rolleston, and she was equipped for walking. The watcher saw her serene face shine in the light. The general himself came next; and, as they left the door, out came Tom with a blunderbuss, and brought up the rear. Seaton drew behind the trees, and postponed, but did not resign his purpose.

Steps and murmurings came, and passed him, and receded.

The only words he caught distinctly came from Wardlaw, as he passed. "It is nearly high tide. I fear we must make haste."

Seaton followed the whole party at a short distance, feeling sure they would eventually separate and give him his opportunity with Wardlaw.

They went down to the harbor and took a boat; Seaton came nearer, and learned they were going on board the steamer bound for England, that loomed so black, with monstrous eyes of fire.

They put off, and Seaton stood baffled.

Presently the black monster, with enormous eyes of fire, spouted her steam like a leviathan, and then was still; next the smoke puffed, the heavy paddles revolved, and she rushed out of the harbor; and Seaton sat down upon the ground, and all seemed ended. Helen gone to England! Wardlaw with her! Love and revenge had alike eluded him.

He looked up at the sky, and played with the pebbles at his feet, stupidly, stupidly. He wondered why he was born; why he consented to live a single minute after this. His angel and his demon gone home together! And he left here!

He wrote a few lines on the paper he had intended for Wardlaw, sprinkled them with sand, and put them in his bosom, then stretched himself out with a weary moan, like a dying dog, to wait the flow of the tide, and, with it—Death. Whether or not his resolution or his madness could have carried him so far cannot be known, for even as the water rippled in, and, trickling under his back, chilled him to the bone, a silvery sound struck his ear. He started to his feet, and life and its joys rushed back upon him. It was the voice of the woman he loved so madly.

Helen Rolleston was on the water, coming ashore again in the little boat.

He crawled, like a lizard, among the boats ashore to catch a sight of her; he did see her, was near her, unseen himself. She landed with her father. So Wardlaw was gone to England without her. Seaton trembled with joy. Presently his goddess began to lament in the prettiest way. "Papa! Papa!" she sighed, "why must friends part in this sad world? Poor Arthur is gone from me; and, by and by, I shall go from you, my own papa." And at that prospect she wept gently.

"Why, you foolish child!" said the old general, tenderly, "what matters a little parting, when we are all to meet again, in dear old England. Well then, there, have a cry; it will do you good." He patted her head tenderly, as she clung to his warlike breast; and she took him at his word; the tears ran swiftly and glistened in the very starlight.

But, oh, how Seaton's heart yearned at all this!

What? Mustn't *he* say a word to comfort her; he who, at that moment, would have thought no more of dying to serve her, or to please her, than he would of throwing one of those pebbles into that slimy water.

Well, her pure tears somehow cooled his hot brain, and washed his soul, and he knelt down and thanked God he had not met Arthur Wardlaw in that dark lane.

Then he went home to his humble lodgings, and there buried himself; and from that day seldom went out, except to seek employment. He soon obtained it as a copyist.

Meantime the police were on his track, employed by a person with a gentle disposition, but a tenacity of purpose truly remarkable.

Great was Seaton's uneasiness when one day he saw Hexham at the foot of his stair; greater still, when the officer's quick eye caught sight of him, and his light foot ascended the stairs directly. He felt sure Hexham had heard of his lurking about General Rolleston's premises. However, he prepared to defend himself to the uttermost.

Hexham came into his room without ceremony, and looking mighty grim. "Well, my lad, so we have got you, after all."

"What is my crime now?" asked Seaton sullenly.

"James," said the officer, very solemnly, "it is an unheard-of crime this time. You have been—running—away—from a pretty girl. Now, that is a mistake at all times; but, when she is as beautiful as an angel, and rich enough to slip a fiver into Dick Hexham's hands, and lay him on your track, what *is* the use? Letter for *you*, my man."

Seaton took the letter, with a puzzled air. It was written in a clear but feminine hand, and slightly scented.

The writer, in a few polished lines, excused herself for taking extraordinary means to find Mr. Seaton; but hoped he would consider that he had laid her under a deep obligation, and that gratitude *will* sometimes be importunate. She had the pleasure to inform him that the office of shipping-clerk at Messrs. White & Co.'s was at his service, and she hoped he would take it without an hour's further delay, for that she was assured that many persons had risen to wealth and consideration in the colony from such situations.

Then, as this wary but courteous young lady had no wish to enter into a correspondence with her ex-gardener, she added:

> Mr. Seaton need not trouble himself to reply to this note. A simple "yes" to Mr. Hexham will be enough, and will give sincere pleasure to Mr. Seaton's
>
> Obedient servant and well-wisher,
> HELEN ANNE ROLLESTON.

Seaton bowed his head over this letter in silent but deep emotion.

Hexham respected that emotion, and watched him with a sort of vague sympathy.

Seaton lifted his head, and the tears stood thick in his eyes. Said he, in a voice of exquisite softness, scarce above a whisper, "Tell her 'yes' and 'God bless her.' Good-by. I want to go on my knees and pray God to bless her, as she deserves. Good-by."

Hexham took the hint, and retired softly.

CHAPTER VI.

WHITE & Co. stumbled on a treasure in James Seaton.

He omitted no opportunity of learning the whole business of White & Co., and was also animated by a feverish zeal that now and then provoked laughter from clerks, but was agreeable, as well as surprising, to White & Co. Of that zeal, his incurable passion was partly the cause.

Fortunes had been made with great rapidity in Sydney; and Seaton now conceived a wild hope of acquiring one, by some lucky hit, before Wardlaw could return to Helen Rolleston.

And yet his common sense said, "If I was as rich as Crœsus, how could she ever mate with me, a stained man?" And yet his burning heart said, "Don't listen to reason; listen only to me. Try."

White & Co. were employed to ship a valuable cargo on board two vessels chartered by Wardlaw & Son—the Shannon and Proserpine.

Both these ships lay in Sydney harbor, and had taken in the bulk of their

cargoes; but the supplement was the cream; for Wardlaw, in person, had warehoused eighteen cases of gold dust and ingots, and fifty of lead and smelted copper.

They were all examined, and branded, by Mr. White, who had duplicate keys of the gold cases. But the contents as a matter of habit and prudence were not described outside, but were marked Proserpine and Shannon, respectively; the mate of the Proserpine, who was in Wardlaw's confidence, had written instructions to look carefully to the stowage of all these cases, and was in and out of the store one afternoon just before closing, and measured the cubic contents of the cases, with a view to stowage in the respective vessels.

The last time he came he seemed rather the worse for liquor; and Seaton, who accompanied him, having stepped out for a minute for something or other, was rather surprised on his return to find the door closed, and it struck him Mr. Wylie (that was the mate's name) might be inside; the more so as the door closed very easily with a spring bolt, but it could only be opened by a key of peculiar construction.

Seaton took out his key, opened the door, and called to the mate, but received no reply. However, he took the precaution to go round the store, and see whether Wylie, rendered somnolent by liquor, might not be lying oblivious among the cases; Wylie, however, was not to be seen, and Seaton finding himself alone did an unwise thing; he came and contemplated Wardlaw's cases of metal and specie.

He eyed them with grief and with desire, and could not restrain a sigh at these material proofs of his rival's wealth; the wealth that probably had smoothed his way to General Rolleston's home, and to his daughter's heart.

This reverie, no doubt, lasted longer than he thought, for presently he heard the loud rattle of shutters going up below: it was closing time; he hastily closed and locked the iron shutters, and then went out and shut the door.

He had been gone about two hours, and that part of the street, so noisy in business hours, was hushed in silence, all but an occasional footstep on the flags outside, when something mysterious occurred in the warehouse, now as dark as pitch.

At an angle of the wall stood two large cases in a vertical position, with smaller cases lying at their feet: these two cases were about eight feet high, more or less. Well, behind these cases suddenly flashed a feeble light, and the next moment two brown and sinewy hands appeared on the edge of one of the cases—the edge next the wall: the case vibrated and rocked a little, and the next moment there mounted on the top of it a sailor; and need we say that sailor was the mate of the Proserpine? He descended lightly from the top of the case behind which he had been jammed for hours and lighted a dark lantern, and went softly groping about the store with it.

Then from out of the large pockets in his jacket he took a bunch of eighteen bright steel keys, numbered, a set of new screw-drivers, a flask of rum, and two ship biscuits.

He unlocked the eighteen cases marked Proserpine, etc., and, peering in with his lantern, saw the gold dust and small ingots packed in parcels, and surrounded by Australian wool of the highest possible quality. It was a luscious sight.

He then proceeded to a heavier task; he unscrewed, one after another, eighteen of the cases marked Shannon, and the eighteen so selected, perhaps by private marks, proved to be packed close, and on a different system from the gold, viz., in pigs, or square blocks, three, or in some cases four, to each chest.

Now, these two ways of packing the specie and the baser metal, respectively, had the effect of producing a certain uniformity of weight in the thirty-six cases Wylie was inspecting: otherwise the gold cases would have been twice the weight of those that contained the baser metal; for lead is proverbially heavy, but under scientific tests is to gold as five to twelve, or thereabouts.

In his secret and mysterious labor Wylie was often interrupted. Whenever he heard a step on the pavement outside, he drew the slide of his lantern and hid the light. Notwithstanding these occasional interruptions, he worked so hard

and continuously, that the perspiration poured down him ere he had unscrewed those eighteen chests containing the pigs of lead.

The next thing was, he took the three pigs of lead out of one of the cases marked Shannon, etc., and numbered fifteen, and laid them very gently on the floor. Then he transferred to that empty case the mixed contents of a case branded Proserpine 1, etc., and this he did with the utmost care and nicety, lest gold dust spilled should tell tales.

And so he went on and amused himself by shifting the contents of the whole eighteen cases marked Proserpine, etc., into eighteen cases marked Shannon, etc., and refilling them with the Shannon's lead. Frolicsome Mr. Wylie! Then he sat down on one of the cases Proserpined and ate a biscuit and drank a little rum; not much; for at this part of his career he was a very sober man, though he could feign drunkenness, or indeed anything else.

The gold was all at his mercy, yet he did not pocket an ounce of it; not even a pennyweight to make a wedding-ring for Nancy Rouse. Mr. Wylie had a conscience. And a very original one it was; and, above all, he was very true to those he worked with. He carefully locked the gold cases up again, and resumed the screw-driver, for there was another heavy stroke of work to be done; and he went at it like a man.

He carefully screwed down again, one after another, all those eighteen cases marked Shannon, which he had filled with gold dust, and then heating a sailor's needle red-hot over his burning wick, he put his own secret marks on those eighteen cases—marks that no eye but his own could detect.

By this time, though a very powerful man, he felt much exhausted, and would gladly have snatched an hour's repose. But, consulting his watch by the light of his lantern, he found the sun had just risen. He retired to his place of concealment in the same cat-like way he had come out of it—that is to say, he mounted on the high cases, and then slipped down behind them, into the angle of the wall.

As soon as the office opened, two sailors, whom he had carefully instructed overnight, came with a boat for the cases; the warehouse was opened in consequence, but they were informed that Wylie must be present at the delivery.

"Oh, he won't be long," said they; "told us he would meet us here."

There was a considerable delay, and a good deal of talking, and presently Wylie was at their backs, and put in his word.

Seaton was greatly surprised at finding him there, and asked him where he had sprung from.

"Me!" said Wylie, jocosely, "why, I hailed from Davy Jones' locker last."

"I never heard you come in," said Seaton thoughtfully.

"Well, sir," replied Wylie civilly, "a man does learn to go like a cat on board ship, that is the truth. I came in at the door like my betters; but I thought I heard you mention my name, so I made no noise. Well, here I am, anyway, and —Jack, how many trips can we take these thundering chests in? Let us see, eighteen for the Proserpine, and forty for the Shannon. Is that correct, sir?"

"Perfectly."

"Then, if you will deliver them, I'll check the delivery aboard the lighter there; and then we'll tow her alongside the ships."

Seaton called up two more clerks, and sent one to the boat, and one on board the barge. The barge was within hail; so the cases were checked as they passed out of the store, and checked again at the small boat, and also on board the lighter. When they were all cleared out Wylie gave Seaton his receipt for them, and, having a steam-tug in attendance, towed the lighter alongside the Shannon first.

Seaton carried the receipt to his employer.

"But, sir," said he, "is this regular for an officer of the Proserpine to take the Shannon's cargo from us?"

"No, it is not regular," said the old gentleman; and he looked through a window, and summoned Mr. Hardcastle.

Hardcastle explained that the Proserpine shipped the gold, which was the more valuable consignment; and that he saw no harm in the officer who was so highly trusted by the merchant (on this and on former occasions) taking out a

few tons of lead and copper to the Shannon.

"Well, sir," said Seaton, "suppose I was to go out and see the chests stowed in those vessels?"

"I think you are making a fuss about nothing," said Hardcastle.

Mr. White was of the same opinion, but, being too wise to check zeal and caution, told Seaton he might go for his own satisfaction.

Seaton saw the chests marked Proserpine stowed in the Proserpine, and brought back Captain Hewitt's receipt of forty cases on board the Shannon, and Captain Hudson's of eighteen on board the Proserpine.

As he landed he met Lloyd's agent, and told him what a valuable freight he had just shipped. That gentleman merely remarked that both ships were underwritten in Sydney by the owners; but the freight was insured in London, no doubt.

There was still something about this business Seaton did not quite like; perhaps it was in the haste of the shipments, or in the manner of the mate. At all events, it was too slight and subtle to be communicated to others with any hope of convincing them; and, moreover, Seaton could not but own to himself that he hated Wardlaw, and was, perhaps, no fair judge of his acts, and even of the acts of his servants.

And soon a blow fell that drove the matter out of his head and his heart. Miss Helen Rolleston called at the office, and, standing within a few feet of him, handed Hardcastle a letter from Arthur Wardlaw, directing that the ladies' cabin on board the Shannon should be placed at her disposal.

Hardcastle bowed low to Beauty and Station, and promised her the best possible accommodaton on board the Shannon, bound for England next week.

As she retired, she cast one quiet glance round the office in search of Seaton's beard. But he had reduced its admired luxuriance, and trimmed it to a narrow mercantile point. She did not know his other features from Adam, and little thought that that young man bent double over his paper was her preserver and *protégé;* still less that he was at this moment cold as ice, and quivering with misery from head to foot, because her own lips had just told him she was going to England in the Shannon.

Heart-broken, but still loving nobly, Seaton dragged himself down to the harbor, and went slowly on board the Shannon to secure Miss Rolleston every comfort.

Then, sick at heart as he was, he made inquiries into the condition of the vessel which was to be trusted with so precious a freight; and the old boatman who was rowing him, hearing him make these inquiries, told him he himself was always about, and had noticed the Shannon's pumps were going every blessed night.

Seaton carried this intelligence directly to Lloyd's agent; he overhauled the ship, and ordered her into the graving dock for repairs.

Then Seaton, for White & Co., wrote Miss Rolleston that the Shannon was not seaworthy and could not sail for a month, at the least.

Wardlaw had made Miss Rolleston promise him faithfully to sail that month in his ship the Shannon. Now, she was a slave to her word, and constant of purpose; so, when she found she could not sail in the Shannon, she called again on Messrs. White and took her passage in the Proserpine. The essential thing to her mind was to sail when she had promised, and to go in a ship that belonged to her lover.

The Proserpine was to sail in ten days.

Seaton inquired into the state of the Proserpine. She was a good, sound vessel, and there was no excuse for detaining her.

Then he wrestled long and hard with the selfish part of his great love. Instead of turning sullen, he set himself to carry out Helen Rolleston's will. He went on board the Proserpine and chose her the best stern-cabin.

General Rolleston had ordered Helen's cabin to be furnished, and the agent had put in the usual things, such as a standing bedstead with drawers beneath, chest of drawers, small table, two chairs, wash-stand, looking-glass, and swinging lamp.

But Seaton made several visits to the ship, and effected the following arrangements at his own cost: He provided a

neat cocoa mat for her cabin deck, for comfort and foothold: he unshipped the regular six-paned stern windows, and put in single-pane plate glass; he fitted venetian blinds, and hung two little rose-colored curtains to each of the windows; all so arranged as to be easily removed in case it should be necessary to ship dead-lights in heavy weather.

He glazed the door leading to her bathroom and quarter-gallery with plate glass; he provided a light easy-chair, slung and fitted with grommets, to be hung on hooks screwed into the beams in the midship of the cabin. On this Helen could sit and read, and so become insensible to the motion of the ship. He fitted a small bookcase, with a button, which could be raised when a book might be wanted; he fixed a strike-bell in her maid's cabin, communicating with two strikers in Helen's cabin; he selected books, taking care that the voyages and travels were prosperous ones. No "Seaman's Recorder," "Life-boat Journal," or "Shipwrecks and Disasters in the British Navy."

Her cabin was the after-cabin on the starboard side, was entered through the cuddy, had a door communicating with the quarter-gallery, two stern windows, and a dead-eye on deck. The maid's cabin was the port after-cabin; doors opened into cuddy and quarter-gallery.

And a fine trouble Miss Rolleston had to get a maid to accompany her; but at last a young woman offered to go with her for high wages, demurely suppressing the fact that she had just married one of the sailors, and would have gladly gone for nothing. Her name was Jane Holt, and her husband's Michael Donovan.

In one of Seaton's visits to the Proserpine he detected the mate and captain talking together, and looking at him with unfriendly eyes.

However, he was in no state of mind to care much how two animals in blue jackets received his acts of self-martyrdom. He was there to do the last kind offices of despairing love for the angel that had crossed his dark path, and illumined it for a moment, to leave it now forever.

At last the fatal evening came; her last in Sydney.

At nine in the evening he crept upon General Rolleston's lawn, where he had first seen her. He sat down in sullen despair, upon the very spot.

Then he came nearer the house. There was a lamp in the dining-room; he looked in and saw her.

She was seated at her father's knee, looking up at him fondly; her hand was in his; the tears were in their eyes; she had no mother; he no son; they loved one another devotedly. This, their tender gesture, and their sad silence, spoke volumes to any one that had known sorrow. Poor Seaton sat down on the dewy grass outside, and wept, because she was weeping.

Her father sent her to bed early. Seaton watched, as he had often done before, till her light went out; and then he flung himself on the wet grass, and stared at the sky in utter misery.

The mind is often clearest in the middle of the night; and all of a sudden, he saw, as if written on the sky, that she was going to England expressly to marry Arthur Wardlaw.

At this revelation he started up, stung with hate as well as love, and his tortured mind rebelled furiously. He repeated his vow that this should never be; and soon a scheme came into his head to prevent it; but it was a project so wild and dangerous, that, even as his heated brain hatched it, his cooler judgment said, "Fly, madman, fly! or this love will *destroy* you!" and in another minute he was out of the premises.

He found himself at the harbor, staring with wild and bloodshot eyes at the Proserpine, he who a few moments ago had seen that he had but one thing to do—to try and forget young Wardlaw's bride. He groaned aloud, and ran wildly back into the town. He hurried up and down one narrow street, raging inwardly, like some wild beast.

By and by his mood changed, and he hung round a lamp-post, and fell to moaning and lamenting his hard fate, and hers.

A policeman came up, took him for a maudlin drunkard, and half advised, half admonished, him to go home.

At that he gave a sort of fierce, despairing snarl, and ran into the next street, to be alone.

In this street he found a shop open, and lighted, though it was but five o'clock in the morning. It was a barber's whose customers were working people. HAIR-CUTTING, SIXPENCE. EASY-SHAVING, THREEPENCE. HOT COFFEE, FOURPENCE THE CUP. Seaton's eyes fell upon this shop. He looked at it fixedly a moment from the opposite side of the way, and then hurried on.

He turned suddenly and came back. He crossed the road and entered the shop. The barber was leaning over the stove, removing a can of boiling water from the fire to the hob. He turned at the sound of Seaton's step, and revealed an ugly countenance, rendered sinister by a squint.

Seaton dropped into a chair, and said, "I want my beard taken off."

The man looked at him, if it could be called looking *at* him, and said, dryly, "Oh, do ye? How much am I to have for that job?"

"You know your own charge."

"Of course I do: threepence a chin."

"Very well. Be quick then."

"Stop a bit: that is my charge for working folk. I must have something more off you."

"Very well, man, I'll pay you double."

"My price to you is ten shillings."

"Why, what is that for?" asked Seaton, in some alarm: he thought, in his confusion, the man must have read his heart.

"I'll tell ye why," said the squinting barber. "No, I won't: I'll show ye." He brought a small mirror, and suddenly clapped it before Seaton's eyes. Seaton started at his own image; wild, ghastly, and the eyes so bloodshot. The barber chuckled. This start was an extorted compliment to his own sagacity. "Now wasn't I right?" said he; "did I ought to take the beard off such a mug as that—for less than ten shillings?"

"I see," groaned Seaton; "you think I have committed some crime. One man sees me weeping with misery; he calls me a drunkard; another sees me pale with the anguish of my breaking heart; he calls me a felon; may God's curse light on him and you, and all mankind!"

"All right," said the squinting barber apathetically; "my price is ten bob, whether or no."

Seaton felt in his pockets. "I have not got the money about me," said he.

"Oh, I'm not particular; leave your watch."

Seaton handed the squinting vampire his watch without another word, and let his head fall upon his breast.

The barber cut his beard close with the scissors, and made trivial remarks from time to time, but received no reply.

At last, extortion having put him in good humor, he said, "Don't be so downhearted, my lad. You are not the first that has got into trouble, and had to change faces."

Seaton vouchsafed no reply.

The barber shaved him clean, and was astonished at the change, and congratulated him. "Nobody will ever know you," said he; "and I'll tell you why; your mouth, it is inclined to turn up a little; now a mustache it bends down, and that alters such a mouth as yours entirely. But, I'll tell you what, taking off this beard shows me something: *you are a gentleman.*' Make it a sovereign, sir."

Seaton staggered out of the place without a word.

"Sulky, eh?" muttered the barber. He gathered up some of the long hair he had cut off Seaton's chin with his scissors, admired it, and put it away in paper.

While thus employed, a regular customer looked in for his cup of coffee. It was the policeman who had taken Seaton for a convivial soul

CHAPTER VII.

THE Proserpine was to sail at two o'clock; at a little before one, a gentleman boarded her, and informed the captain that he was a missionary, the Rev. John Hazel, returning home, after a fever; and wished to take a berth in the Proserpine.

The mate looked him full in the face; and then told him there was very little accommodation for passengers, and it had all been secured by White & Co. for a young lady and her servants.

Mr. Hazel replied that his means

were small, and moderate accommodation would serve him; but he must go to England without delay.

Captain Hudson put in his gracious word: "Then jump off the jetty at high tide and swim there; no room for black coats in my ship."

Mr. Hazel looked from one to the other piteously. "Show me some mercy, gentlemen; my very life depends on it."

"Very sorry, sir," said the mate; "but it is impossible. There's the Shannon, you can go in her."

"But she is under repairs; so I am told."

"Well, there are a hundred and fifty carpenters on to her; and she will come out of port in our wake."

"Now, sir," said Hudson roughly, "bundle down the ship's side again if you please; this is a busy time. Hy! —rig the whip; here's the lady coming off to us."

The missionary heaved a deep sigh, and went down into the boat that had brought him. But he was no sooner seated than he ordered the boatmen, somewhat peremptorily, to pull ashore as fast as they could row.

His boat met the Rollestons, father and daughter, coming out, and he turned his pale face and eyed them as he passed. Helen Rolleston was struck with that sorrowful countenance, and whispered her father, "That poor clergyman has just left the ship."

She made sure he had been taking leave of some beloved one, bound for England. General Rolleston looked round, but the boats had passed each other, and the wan face was no longer visible.

They were soon on board, and received with great obsequiousness. Helen was shown her cabin, and, observing the minute and zealous care that had been taken of her comfort, she said, "Somebody who loves me has been here," and turned her brimming eyes on her father. He looked quite puzzled; but said nothing.

Father and daughter were then left alone in the cabin, till the ship began to heave her anchor (she lay just at the mouth of the harbor), and then the boatswain was sent to give General Rolleston warning. Helen came up with him, pale and distressed. They exchanged a last embrace, and General Rolleston went down the ship's side. Helen hung over the bulwarks and waved her last adieu, though she could hardly see him for her tears.

At this moment a four-oared boat swept alongside; and Mr. Hazel came on board again. He presented Hudson a written order to give the Rev. John Hazel a passage in the small berth abreast the main hatches. It was signed "For White & Co., James Seaton"; and was indorsed with a stamped acknowledgment of the passage money, twenty-seven pounds.

Hudson and Wylie, the mate, put their heads together over this. The missionary saw them consulting, and told them he had mentioned their mysterious conduct to Messrs. White & Co., and that Mr. Seaton had promised to stop the ship if their authority was resisted. "And I have paid my passage money, and will not be turned out now except by force," said the reverend gentleman quietly.

Wylie's head was turned away from Mr. Hazel's, and on its profile was a most gloomy, vindictive look, so much so, that Mr. Hazel was startled when the man turned his front face to him with a jolly, genial air, and said, "Well, sir, the truth is, we seamen don't want passengers aboard ships of this class; they get in our way whenever it blows a capful. However, since you are here, make yourself as comfortable as you can."

"There, that is enough palaver," said the captain, in his offensive way. "Hoist the parson's traps aboard; and sheer off, you. Anchor's apeak."

He then gave his orders in stentorian roars; the anchor was hove up, catted, and fished; one sail went up after another, the Proserpine's head came round, and away she bore for England.

General Rolleston went slowly and heavily home, and often turned his head and looked wistfully at the ship putting out wing upon wing, and carrying off his child like a tiny prey.

As soon as he got home he lighted a cigar, and set to work to console himself by reflecting that it was but a temporary parting, since he had virtually resigned his post, and was only waiting in Sydney

till he should have handed his papers in order over to his successor, and settled one or two private matters that could not take three months.

When he had smoked his cigar, and reasoned away his sense of desolation, Nature put out her hand, and took him by the breast, and drew him gently upstairs to take a look at his beloved daughter's bedroom, by way of seeing the last of her.

The room had one window looking south, and another west; the latter commanded a view of the sea. General Rolleston looked down at the floor, littered with odds and ends—the dead leaves of dress that fall about a lady in the great process of packing—and then gazed through the window at the flying Proserpine.

He sighed and lighted another cigar. Before he had half finished it, he stooped down and took up a little bow of ribbon that lay on the ground, and put it quietly in his bosom. In this act he was surprised by Sarah Wilson, who had come up to sweep all such waifs and strays into her own box.

"La, sir," said she, rather crossly, "why didn't you tell me, and I'd have tidied the room? It is all hugger-mugger, with Miss a leaving."

And with this she went to the wash-hand-stand to begin. General Rolleston's eye followed her movements, and he observed the water in one of the basins was rather red. "What!" said he, "has she had an accident; cut her finger?"

"No, sir," said Wilson.

"Her nose been bleeding, then?"

"No, sir."

"Not from her finger — nor —— Let me look."

He examined the basin narrowly, and his countenance fell. "Good heavens!" said he; "I wish I had seen this before; she should not have gone to-day. Was it the agitation of parting?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Wilson; "don't go to fancy that. Why, it is not the first time by a many."

"Not the first!" faltered Rolleston. "In heaven's name, why was I never told of this?"

"Indeed, sir," said Wilson eagerly, "you must not blame me, sir. It was as much as my place was worth to tell you. Miss is a young lady that will be obeyed; and she gave me strict orders not to let you know; but she is gone now; and I always thought it was a pity she kept it so dark; but as I was saying, sir, she *would* be obeyed."

"Kept what so dark?"

"Why, sir, her spitting of blood at times: and turning so thin by what she used to be, poor dear young lady."

General Rolleston groaned aloud. "And this she hid from me; from me!" He said no more, but kept looking bewildered and helpless, first at the basin, discolored by his daughter's blood, and then at the Proserpine, that was carrying her away, perhaps forever; and, at the double sight, his iron features worked with cruel distress; anguish so mute and male, that the woman Wilson, though not good for much, sat down and shed genuine tears of pity.

But he summoned all his fortitude, told Wilson he could not say she was to blame, she had but obeyed her mistress' orders; and we must all obey orders.

Only he hurried his matters of business; and took his passage in the Shannon.

It was in something of a warrior's spirit that he prepared to follow his daughter and protect her; but often he sighed at the invisible, insidious nature of the foe, and wished it could have been a fair fight of bullets and bayonets, and his own life at stake.

The Shannon sailed, but not until an incident had occurred that must not be entirely passed over. Old Mr. White called on General Rolleston with a long face, and told him James Seaton had disappeared.

"Stolen anything?"

"Not a shilling. Indeed the last thing the poor fellow did was to give us a proof of his honesty. It seems a passenger paid him twenty-seven pounds for a berth in the Proserpine, just before she sailed. Well, sir, he might have put this in his pocket, and nobody been the wiser: but no, he entered the transaction and the numbers of the notes, and left the notes themselves in an envelope addressed to me. What I am most afraid of is that some harm has come to him, poor lad."

"What day did he disappear?"

"The 11th of November."

"The day my daughter sailed for England," said General Rolleston thoughtfully.

"Was it, sir? Yes, I remember. She went in the Proserpine."

General Rolleston knitted his brows in silence for some time; then he said, "I'll set the detectives on his track."

"Not to punish him, general. We do not want him punished."

"To punish him, to protect him, or avenge him, as the case may require," was the reply, uttered very gravely.

Mr. White took his leave. General Rolleston rang the bell, and directed his servant to go for Hexham, the detective.

He then rang the bell again, and sent for Sarah Wilson. He put some searching questions to this woman; and his interrogatory had hardly concluded when Hexham was announced. General Rolleston dismissed the girl, and, looking now very grave indeed, asked the detective whether he remembered James Seaton.

"That I do, sir."

"He has levanted."

"Taken *much,* sir?"

"Not a shilling."

"Gone to the diggings?"

"That you must find out."

"What day was he first missed, sir?"

"Eleventh of November. The very day Miss Rolleston left."

Hexham took out a little greasy notebook, and examined it. "Eleventh of November," said he, "then I almost think I have got a clue, sir; but I shall know more when I have had a word with two parties." With this he retired.

But he came again at night, and General Rolleston went on board the Shannon, charged with curious information about James Seaton; and sailed for England in the wake of the Proserpine, and about two thousand miles astern.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE are men, who seem stupid, yet generally go right; there are also clever men, who appear to have the art of blundering wisely: "*sapienter descendunt in infernum,*" as the ancients have it; and some of these latter will even lie on their backs, after a fall, and lift up their voices, and prove to you that in the nature of things they ought to have gone up, and their being down is monstrous.

Arthur Wardlaw was not quite so clever as all that; but still he misconducted the business of the firm with perfect ability from the first month he entered on it. Like those ambitious railways which ruin a goodly trunk with excess of branches, not to say twigs, he set to work extending, and extending, and sent the sap of the healthy old concern a flying to the ends of the earth.

He was not only too ambitious and not cool enough, he was also unlucky, or under a curse, or something; for things well conceived broke down, in his hands, under petty accidents. And, besides, his new correspondents and agents hit him cruelly hard. Then what did he? Why, shot good money after bad, and lost both.

He could not retrench, for his game was concealment; his father was kept in the dark, and drew his four thousand a year, as usual, and, upon any hesitation in that respect, would have called in an accountant and wound up the concern. But this tax upon the receipts, though inconvenient, was a trifle compared with the series of heavy engagements that were impending.

The future was so black that Wardlaw junior was sore tempted to realize twenty thousand pounds, which a man in his position could easily do, and fly the country. But this would have been to give up Helen Rolleston; and he loved her too well.

His brain was naturally subtle and fertile in expedients; so he brought all its powers to bear on a double problem—how to marry Helen, and restore the concern he had mismanaged to its former state. For this a large sum of money was needed, not less than ninety thousand pounds.

The difficulties were great; but after much hard thought he conceived his double master-stroke; and it was to execute this he went out to Australia.

We have seen that he persuaded Helen Rolleston to come to England and be married; but, as to the other part of his project, that is a matter for the reader to watch as it develops itself.

His first act of business, on reaching England, was to insure the freights of the Proserpine and the Shannon.

He sent Michael Penfold to Lloyd's, with the requisite vouchers, including the receipts of the gold merchants. Penfold easily insured the Shannon, whose freight was valued at only six thousand pounds. The Proserpine, with her cargo, and a hundred and thirty thousand pounds of specie to boot, was another matter.

Some underwriters had an objection to specie, being subject to theft as well as shipwreck; other underwriters applied to by Penfold acquiesced; others called on Wardlaw himself to ask a few questions, and he replied to them courteously, but with a certain nonchalance, treating it as an affair which might be big to them, but was not of particular importance to a merchant doing business on his scale.

To one underwriter, Condell, with whom he was on somewhat intimate terms, he said, "I wish I could insure the Shannon at her value; but that is impossible; the City of London could not do it. The Proserpine brings me some cases of specie, but my true treasure is on board the Shannon. She carries my bride, sir."

"Oh, indeed! Miss Rolleston?"

"Ah, I remember; you have seen her. Then you will not be surprised at a proposal I shall make you. Underwrite the Shannon a million pounds, to be paid by you if harm befalls my Helen. You need not look so astonished; I was only joking; you gentlemen deal with none but substantial values; and, as for me, a million would no more compensate me for losing her, than for losing my own life."

The tears were in his pale eyes as he said these words; and Mr. Condell eyed him with sympathy. But he soon recovered himself, and was the man of business again. "Oh, the specie on board the Proserpine? Well, I was in Australia, you know, and bought that specie myself of the merchants whose names are attached to the receipts.

"I deposited the cases with White & Co., at Sydney. Penfold will show you the receipt. I instructed Joseph Wylie, mate of the Proserpine, and a trustworthy person, to see them stowed away in the Proserpine, by White & Co. Hudson is a good seaman, and the Proserpine a new ship, built by Marc. We have nothing to fear but the ordinary perils of the sea."

"So one would think," said Mr. Condell, and took his leave; but, at the door, he hesitated, and then, looking down a little sheepishly, said, "Mr. Wardlaw, may I offer you a piece of advice?"

"Certainly."

"Then, double the insurance on the Shannon, if you can."

With these words he slipped out, evidently to avoid questions he did not intend to answer.

Wardlaw stared after him, stupidly at first, and then stood up and put his hand to his head in a sort of amazement. Then he sat down again, ashy pale, and with the dew on his forehead, and muttered faintly, "Double—the insurance—on the—Shannon!"

Men who walk in crooked paths are very subject to such surprises; doomed, like Ahab, to be pierced, through the joints of their armor, by random shafts.

It took a good many underwriters to insure the Proserpine's freight; but the business was done at last.

Then Wardlaw, who had feigned *insouciance* so admirably in that part of his interview with Condell went, without losing an hour, and raised a large sum of money on the insured freight, to meet the bills that were coming due for the gold (for he had paid for most of it in paper at short dates), and also other bills that were approaching maturity.

This done, he breathed again, safe for a month or two from everything short of a general panic, and full of hope from his coming master-stroke. But two months soon pass when a man has a flock of kites in the air. Pass? They fly. So now he looked out anxiously for his Australian ships; and went to Lloyd's every day to hear if either had been seen, or heard of by steamers, or by faster sailing vessels than themselves.

And, though Condell had underwritten the Proserpine to the tune of eight thousand pounds, yet still his mysterious words rang strangely in the merchant's ears, and made him so uneasy, that he

employed a discreet person to sound Condell as to what he meant by "double the insurance on the Shannon."

It turned out to be the simplest affair in the world; Condell had secret information that the Shannon was in bad repairs, so he had advised his friend to insure her heavily. For the same reason, he declined to underwrite her freight himself.

With respect to those ships, our readers already know two things, of which Wardlaw himself, *nota bene,* had no idea: namely, that the Shannon had sailed last, instead of first, and that Miss Rolleston was not on board of her, but in the Proserpine, two thousand miles ahead.

The good ship, homeward bound, left Sydney with a fair wind, but soon encountered adverse weather; and made slow progress, being close-hauled, which was her worst point of sailing. She pitched a good deal, and that had a very ill effect upon Miss Rolleston. She was not seasick, but thoroughly out of sorts; and, in one week, became perceptibly paler and thinner than when she started.

The young clergyman, Mr. Hazel, watched her with respectful anxiety, and this did not escape her feminine observation. She noted quietly that those dark eyes of his followed her with a mournful tenderness, but withdrew their gaze when she looked at him. Clearly, he was interested in her, but had no desire to intrude upon her attention.

He would bring up the squabs for her, and some of his own wraps, when she stayed on deck, and was prompt with his arm when the vessel lurched; and showed her those other little attentions which are called for on board ship, but without a word. Yet, when she thanked him in the simplest and shortest way, his great eyes flashed with pleasure, and the color mounted to his very temples.

A ship, like a distant country, thaws even English reserve, and women in general are disposed to admit ecclesiastics to certain privileges. No wonder then that Miss Rolleston, after a few days, met Mr. Hazel half way; and they made acquaintance on board the Proserpine, in monosyllables at first; but, the ice once fairly broken, the intercourse of mind became rather rapid.

At first it was a mere intellectual exchange, but one very agreeable to Miss Rolleston; for a fine memory, and omniverous reading from his very boyhood, with the habit of taking notes, and reviewing them, had made Mr. Hazel a walking dictionary, and a walking essayist if required.

One day they were discoursing of gratitude; and Mr. Hazel said he had a poor opinion of those persons who speak of "the burden of gratitude," and make a fuss about being "laid under an obligation."

"As for me," said he, "I have owed such a debt, and found the sense of it very sweet."

"But perhaps you were always hoping to make a return," said Helen.

"That I was; hoping against hope."

"Do you think that people are grateful, in general?"

"No, Miss Rolleston; I do not."

"Well, I think they are. To me at least. Why, I have experienced gratitude even in a convict. It was a poor man, who had been transported, for something or other, and he begged papa to take him for his gardener. Papa did, and he was so grateful that, do you know, he suspected our house was to be robbed, and he actually watched in the garden night after night; and what do you think? the house *was* attacked by a whole gang; but poor Mr. Seaton confronted them and shot one, and was wounded cruelly; but he beat them off for us. And was not that gratitude?"

While she was speaking so earnestly, Mr. Hazel's blood seemed to run through his veins like heavenly fire, but he said nothing, and the lady resumed with gentle fervor, "Well, we got him a clerk's place in a shipping office, and heard no more of him; but he did not forget us; my cabin here was fitted up with every comfort, and every delicacy. I thanked papa for it; but he looked so blank I saw directly he knew nothing about it; and, now I think of it, it was Mr. Seaton. I am positive it was. And I should not know him if I saw him."

Mr. Hazel observed, in a low voice, that Mr. Seaton's conduct did not seem wonderful to him. "Still," said he, "one is glad to find there is some good left even in a criminal."

"A criminal!" cried Helen Rolleston, firing up. "Pray, who says he was a criminal? Mr. Hazel, once for all, no friend of mine ever deserves such a name as that. A friend of mine may commit some great error or imprudence; but that is all. The poor grateful soul was never guilty of any downright wickedness; *that stands to reason.*"

Mr. Hazel did not encounter this feminine logic with his usual ability; he muttered something or other, with a trembling lip, and left her so abruptly that she asked herself whether she had inadvertently said anything that could have offended him; and awaited an explanation. But none came. The topic was never revived by Mr. Hazel; and his manner, at their next meeting, showed he liked her none the worse that she stood up for her friends.

The wind was steady from the west for two whole days, and the Proserpine showed her best sailing qualities, and ran four hundred and fifty miles in that time.

Then came a dead calm, and the sails flapped lazily, and the masts described an arc; and the sun broiled; and the sailors whistled; and the captain drank; and the mate encouraged him.

During this calm, Miss Rolleston fell downright ill, and quitted the deck. Then Mr. Hazel was very sad; borrowed all the books in the ship, and read them, and took notes; and, when he had done this, he was at leisure to read men, and so began to study Hiram Hudson, Joseph Wylie, and others, and take a few notes about them.

From these we select some that are better worth the reader's attention than anything we could relate in our own persons at this stagnant part of the story.

PASSAGES FROM MR. HAZEL'S DIARY.

Characters on board the Proserpine.

"There are two sailors, messmates, who have formed a unique friendship; their names are John Welch and Samuel Cooper. Welch is a very able seaman and a chatterbox. Cooper is a good sailor, but very silent; only what he does say is much to the purpose.

"I asked Welch what made him like Cooper so much. And he said, 'Why, you see, sir, he is my messmate, for one thing, and a seaman that knows his work; and then he has been well eddycated, and he knows when to hold his tongue, does Sam.'

"I asked Cooper why he was so fond of Welch. He only grunted in an uneasy way at first; but, when I pressed for a reply, he let out two words—'Capital company,' and got away from me.

"Their friendship, though often roughly expressed, is really a tender and touching sentiment. I think either of these sailors would bare his back and take a dozen lashes in place of his messmate. I too once thought I had made such a friend. Eheu!

"Both Cooper and Welch seem, by their talk, to consider the ship a living creature. Cooper chews. Welch only smokes, and often lets his pipe out, he is so voluble.

"Captain Hudson is quite a character; or, I might say, two characters; for he is one man when he is sober, and another when he is the worse for liquor. Captain Hudson, sober, is a rough, bearish seaman, with a quick, experienced eye, that takes in every rope in the ship, as he walks up and down his quarter-deck. He either evades or bluntly declines conversation, and gives his whole mind to sailing his ship.

"Captain Hudson, drunk, is a garrulous man, who seems to have drifted back into the past. He comes up to you, and talks of his own accord, and always about himself, and what he did fifteen or twenty years since. He forgets whatever has occurred half an hour ago; and his eye, which was an eagle's is now a mole's. But the surest indicia of inebriety in Hudson are these two. First, his nose is red. Secondly, he discourses upon a seaman's *duty to his employers.*

"N. B. Except when his nose is red not a word about his 'duty to his employers.' That phrase, like a fine lady, never ventures into the morning air. It is purely post-prandial, and sacred to occasions when he is utterly neglecting his duty to his employers, and to everybody else.

"Joseph Wylie, the mate, is less eccentric, but even more remarkable. He is one of those powerfully built fellows whom nature, one would think, con-

structed to gain all their ends by force and directness. But no such thing; he goes about as softly as a cat; is always popping out of holes and corners; and I can see he watches me, and tries to hear what I say to her. He is civil to me when I speak to him; yet I notice he avoids me quietly. Altogether, there is something about him that puzzles me. Why was he so reluctant to let me on board as a passenger? Why did he tell a downright falsehood? For he said there was no room for me; yet, even now, there are two cabins vacant, and he has taken possession of them.

"The mate of this ship has several barrels of spirits in his cabin, or rather cabins, and it is he who makes the captain drunk. I learned this from one of the boys. This looks ugly. I fear Wylie is a bad, designing man, who wishes to ruin the captain, and so get his place.

"But, meantime, the ship might be endangered by this drunkard's misconduct. I shall watch Wylie closely, and perhaps put the captain on his guard against this false friend.

"Last night, a breeze got up about sunset, and H. R. came on deck for half an hour. I welcomed her as calmly as I could; but I felt my voice tremble and my heart throb. She told me the voyage tired her much; but it was the last she should have to make.

"How strange, how hellish (God forgive me for saying so!) it seems that *she* should love *him*. But, does she love him? Can she love him? Could she love him if she knew all? Know him she shall before she marries him.

"She soon went below and left me desolate. I wandered all about the ship, and, at last, I came upon the inseparables, Welch and Cooper. They were squatted on the deck, and Welch's tongue was going as usual He was talking about this Wylie, and saying that, in all his ships, he had never known such a mate as this; why, the captain was under his thumb.

"'Grog!' suggested Cooper in extenuation.

"Welch admitted Wylie was liberal with that, and friendly enough with the men; but, still, he preferred to see a ship commanded by the captain, and not by a lubber like Wylie.

"I expressed some surprise at this term, and said I had envied Wylie's nerves in a gale of wind we encountered early in the voyage.

"The talking sailor explained, 'In course, he has been to sea afore this, and weathered many a gale. But so has the cook. That don't make a man a sailor. You ask him how to send down a to'-gallant yard or gammon a bowsprit, or even mark a lead line, and he'll stare at ye like Old Nick when the angel caught him with the red-hot tongs and questioned him out of the Church Catechism. Ask Sam, there, if ye don't believe me. Sam, what do you think of this Wylie for a seaman?'

"Cooper could not afford anything so precious, in his estimate of things, as a word; but he lifted a great brawny hand, and gave a snap with his finger and thumb that disposed of the mate's pretensions to seamanship more expressively than words could have done it.

"This morning the wind shifted to the southwest; the captain surprised us by taking in sail. But his sober eye had seen something more than ours; for at noon it blew a gale, and by sunset it was deemed prudent to bring the ship's head to the wind, and we are now lying to. The ship lurches, and the wind howls through the bare rigging; but she rides buoyantly and no danger is apprehended.

"Last night, as I lay in my cabin, unable to sleep, I heard some heavy blows strike the ship's side repeatedly, causing quite a vibration. I felt alarmed, and went out to tell the captain. But I was obliged to go on my hands and knees, such was the force of the wind. Passing the mate's cabin, I heard sounds that made me listen acutely; and I then found the blows were being struck inside the ship. I got to the captain and told him. 'Oh,' said he, 'ten to one it's the mate nailing down his chests, or the like.' But I assured him the blows struck the side of the ship, and, at my earnest request, he came out and listened. He swore a great oath, and said the lubber would be through the ship's side. He then tried the cabin door, but it was locked.

"The sounds ceased directly.

"We called to the mate, but received

no reply for a long time. At last Wylie came out of the gun-room, looking rather pale, and asked what was the matter.

"I told him he ought to know best, for the blows were heard where he had just come from.

"'Blows!' said he; 'I believe you. Why, a tierce of butter had got adrift, and was bumping up and down the hold like thunder.' He then asked us whether that was what we had disturbed him for, entered his cabin, and almost slammed the door in our faces.

"I remarked to the captain on his disrespectful conduct. The captain was civil, and said I was right; he was a cross-grained, unmanageable brute, and he wished he was out of the ship. 'But you see, sir, he has got the ear of the merchant ashore; and so I am obliged to hold a candle to the devil, as the saying is.' He then fired a volley of oaths and abuse at the offender; and, not to encourage foul language, I retired to my cabin.

"The wind declined toward daybreak, and the ship recommenced her voyage at 8 A. M.; but under treble-reefed topsails and reefed courses.

"I caught the captain and mate talking together in the friendliest way possible. That Hudson is a humbug; there is some mystery between him and the mate.

"To-day H. R. was on deck, for several hours, conversing sweetly, and looking like the angel she is. But happiness soon flies from me; a steamer came in sight, bound for Sydney. She signalled us to heave to, and send a boat. This was done, and the boat brought back a letter for *her*. It seems they took us for the Shannon, in which ship she was expected.

"The letter was from *him*. How her cheek flushed and her eye beamed as she took it. And oh, the sadness, the agony that stood beside her unheeded.

"I left the deck; I could not have contained myself. What a thing is wealth! By wealth, that wretch can stretch out his hand across the ocean, and put a letter into her hand under my very eye. Away goes all that I have gained by being near her while he is far away. He is not in England now—he is here. His odious presence has driven me from her. Oh, that I could be a child again, or in my grave, to get away from this hell of Love and Hate."

At this point, we beg leave to take the narrative into our own hands again. Let us stay by the lady's side, and read her letter with her.

RUSSELL SQUARE, Dec. 15, 1865.

MY DEAR LOVE:—Hearing that the Antelope steam-packet was going to Sydney, by way of Cape Horn, I have begged the captain, who is under some obligations to me, to keep a good lookout for the Shannon, homeward bound, and board her with these lines, weather permitting.

Of course the chances are you will not receive them at sea; but still you possibly may; and my heart is so full of you, I seize any excuse for overflowing; and then I picture to myself that bright face reading an unexpected letter in mid-ocean, and so I taste beforehand the greatest pleasure my mind can conceive—the delight of giving you pleasure, my own sweet Helen.

News, I have little. You know how deeply and devotedly you are beloved—know it so well that I feel words are almost wasted in repeating it. Indeed, the time, I hope, is at hand when the word "love" will hardly be mentioned between us. For my part, I think it will be too visible in every act, and look, and word of mine, to need repetition. We do not speak much about the air we live in. We breathe it, and speak with it, not of it.

I suppose all lovers are jealous. I think I should go mad if you were to give me a rival; but then I do not understand that ill-natured jealousy which would rob the beloved object of all affections but the one. I know my Helen loves her father—loves him, perhaps, as well, or better, than she does me. Well, in spite of that, I love him too. Do you know, I never see that erect form, that model of courage and probity, come into a room, but I say to myself, "Here comes my benefactor; but for this man there would be no Helen in the world." Well, dearest, an unexpected circumstance has given me a little military influence (these things do happen in the city), and I really believe that, what with his acknowledged merits (I am secretly informed a very high personage said, the other day, he had not received justice), and the influence I speak of, a post will shortly be offered to your father that will enable him to live, henceforth, in England, with comfort, I might say, affluence. Perhaps he might live with us. That depends upon himself.

Looking forward to this, and my own still greater happiness, diverts my mind awhile from the one ever-pressing anxiety. But, alas! it will return. By this time my Helen is on the seas—the terrible, the treacherous, the cruel seas, that spare neither beauty nor virtue, nor the longing hearts at home. I have conducted this office for some years, and thought I knew care and anxiety. But I find I knew neither till now.

I have two ships at sea, the Shannon and the Proserpine. The Proserpine carries eighteen chests of specie, worth a hundred and thirty thousand pounds. I don't care one straw whether she sinks or swims. But the Shannon carries my darling; and every gust at night awakens me, and every day I go into the great room at Lloyd's and watch the anemometer. Oh, God! be merciful, and bring my angel safe to me! Oh, God! be just, and strike her not for my offenses!

But I must not sadden you with my fears; let me turn to my hopes. How bright they are! what joy, what happiness, is sailing toward me, nearer and nearer every day! I ask myself what am I that such paradise should be mine.

My love, when we are one, shall we share every thought, or shall I keep commerce, speculation, and its temptations away from your pure spirit? Sometimes I think I should like to have neither thought nor occupation unshared by you; and that you would purify trade itself by your contact; at other times I say to myself, "Oh, never soil that angel with your miserable business; but go home to her as if you were going from earth to heaven, for a few blissful hours." But you shall decide this question, and every other.

Must I close this letter? Must I say no more, though I have scarcely begun?

Yes, I will end, since, perhaps, you will never see it.

When I have sealed it, I mean to hold it in my clasped hands, and so pray the Almighty to take it safe to you, and to bring you safe to him who can never know peace nor joy till he sees you once more.

Your devoted and anxious lover,

ARTHUR WARDLAW.

Helen Rolleston read this letter more than once. She smiled over it, all beaming and blushing; she kissed it, and read it again, and sat with it in her lap.

But by and by her mood changed, and, when Mr. Hazel ventured upon deck again, he found her with her forehead sinking on her extended arm, and the lax hand of that same arm holding the letter. She was crying.

The whole drooping attitude was so lovely, so feminine, yet so sad, that Hazel stood irresolute, looking wistfully at her.

She caught sight of him, and, by a natural impulse, turned gently away, as if to hide her tears. But the next moment she altered her mind, and said, with a quiet dignity that came naturally to her at times, "Why should I hide my care from you, sir? Mr. Hazel, may I speak to you *as a clergyman?*"

"Certainly," said Mr. Hazel, in a somewhat faint voice.

She pointed to a seat, and he sat down near her.

She was silent for some time; her lip quivered a little; she was struggling inwardly for that decent composure which on certain occasions distinguishes the lady from the mere woman; and it was with a pretty firm voice she said:

"I am going to tell you a little secret: one I have kept from my own father. It is—that I have not very long to live."

Her hazel eye rested calmly on his face while she said these words quietly.

He received them with amazement at first; amazement, that soon deepened into horror. "What do you mean?" he gasped. "What words are these?"

"Thank you for minding so much," said she sweetly. "I will tell you. I have fits of coughing, not frequent, but violent; and then blood very often comes from my lungs. That is a bad sign, you know. I have been so for four months now, and I am a good deal wasted; my hand used to be very plump, look at it now—Poor Arthur!"

She turned away her head to drop a gentle, unselfish tear or two; and Hazel stared with increasing alarm at the lovely but wasted hand she still held out to him, and glanced, too, at Arthur Wardlaw's letter, held slightly by the beloved fingers.

He said nothing, and, when she looked round again, he was pale and trembling. The revelation was so sudden.

"Pray be calm, sir," said she. "We need speak of this no more. But now, I think, you will not be surprised that I

come to you for religious advice and consolation, short as our acquaintance is."

"I am in no condition to give them," said Hazel, in great agitation. "I can think of nothing but how to save you. May heaven help me, and give me wisdom for that."

"This is idle," said Helen Rolleston gently, but firmly. "Mr. Hazel, I shall never be better. So aid me to bow to the will of heaven. Sir, I do not repine at leaving the world; but it does grieve me to think how my departure will affect those whose happiness is very, very dear to me."

She then looked at the letter, blushed, and hesitated a moment; but ended by giving it to him whom she had applied to as her religious adviser.

"Oblige me by reading that. And, when you have, I think you will grant me a favor I wish to ask you. Poor fellow! so full of hopes that I am doomed to disappoint."

She rose to hide her emotion, and left Arthur Wardlaw's letter in the hands of him who loved her, if possible, more devotedly than Arthur Wardlaw did; and she walked the deck pensively, little dreaming how strange a thing she had done.

As for Hazel, he was in a situation poignant with agony; only the heavy blow that had just fallen had stunned and benumbed him. He felt a natural repugnance to read this letter. But she had given him no choice. He read it carefully to the end, and was examining the signature keenly, when Miss Rolleston rejoined him, and, taking the letter from him, placed it in her bosom before his eyes.

"He loves me; does he not?" said she wistfully.

Hazel looked half stupidly in her face for a moment; then, with a candor which was part of his character, replied doggedly, "Yes, the man who wrote that letter loves you."

"Then you can pity him, and I may venture to ask you the favor to—— It will be a bitter grief and disappointment to him. Will you break it to him as gently as you can; will you say that his Helen—— Will you tell him what I have told you?"

"I decline."

This point-blank refusal surprised Helen Rolleston; all the more that it was uttered with a certain sullenness, and even asperity, she had never seen till then in this gentle clergyman.

It made her fear she had done wrong in asking it; and she looked ashamed and distressed.

However, the explanation soon followed.

"My business," said he, "is to prolong your precious life; and, making up your mind to die is not the way. You shall have no encouragement in such weakness from me. Disease of the lungs is curable."

"Mr. Hazel," said the lady, "we will drop the subject, if you please. It has taken an uninteresting turn."

"To you, perhaps; but not to me."

"Excuse me, sir; if you took that real friendly interest in me and my condition I was vain enough to think you might, you would hardly have refused me the first favor I ever asked you; and," drawing herself up proudly, "need I say the last?"

"You are unjust," said Hazel sadly; "unjust beyond endurance. I refuse you anything that is for your good? I, who would lay down my life with unmixed joy for you?"

"Mr. Hazel!" And she drew back from him with a haughty stare.

"Learn the truth why I cannot, and will not, talk to Arthur Wardlaw about you. For one thing, he is my enemy, and I am his?"

"His enemy? My Arthur's?"

"His mortal enemy. And I am going to England to clear an innocent man, and expose Arthur Wardlaw's guilt."

"Indeed," said Helen, with lofty contempt. "And pray what has he done to *you?*"

"He had a benefactor, a friend; he entrapped him into cashing a note of hand, which he must have known or suspected to be forged; then basely deserted him at the trial, and blasted his friend's life forever."

"Arthur Wardlaw did that?"

"He did; and that very James Seaton was his victim."

Her delicate nostrils were expanded with wrath, and her eyes flashed fire. "Mr. Hazel, you are a liar and a slanderer."

The man gave a kind of shudder, as if cold steel had passed through his heart. But his fortitude was great; he said doggedly, "Time will show. Time, and a jury of our countrymen."

"I will be his witness. I will say, this is the malice of a rival. Yes, sir, you forget that you have let out the motive of this wicked slander. You love me yourself; heaven forgive me for profaning the name of love!"

"Heaven forgive you for blaspheming the purest, fondest love that ever one creature laid at the feet of another. Yes, Helen Rolleston, I love you; and will save you from the grave and from the villain Wardlaw; both from one and the other."

"Oh," said Helen, clenching her teeth, "you wretch!"

Her throat swelled with a violent convulsion, and she could utter no more for a moment; and she put her white handkerchief to her lips.

"Ah! you love me," she cried; "then know, for your comfort, that you have shortened my short life a day or two, by slandering *him* to my face, you monster. Look there at your love, and see what it has done for me."

She put the handkerchief under his eyes, with hate gleaming in her own.

Mr. Hazel turned ashy pale, and glared at it with horror; he could have seen his own shed, with stoical firmness; but a mortal sickness struck his heart at the sight of *her* blood. His hands rose and quivered in a peculiar way, his sight left him, and the strong man, but tender lover, staggered, and fell heavily on the deck, in a dead swoon, and lay at her feet pale and motionless.

She uttered a scream, and sailors came running.

They lifted him, with rough sympathy; and Helen Rolleston retired to her cabin, panting with agitation.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER this, Helen Rolleston and Mr. Hazel never spoke. She walked past him on the deck with cold and haughty contempt. He quietly submitted to it; and never presumed to say one word to her again.

One fine night he sat on the deck, with his back against the mainmast, in deep melancholy and listlessness, and fell, at last, into a doze, from which he was awakened by a peculiar sound below. It was a beautiful and stilly night; all sounds were magnified; and the father of all rats seemed to be gnawing the ship down below.

Hazel's curiosity was excited, and he went softly down the ladder to see what the sound really was. But that was not so easy, for it proved to be below decks; but he saw a light glimmering through a small scuttle abaft the mate's cabin, and the sounds were in the neighborhood of that light.

It now flashed upon Mr. Hazel that this was the very quarter where he had heard that mysterious knocking when the ship was lying to in the gale.

He stood still a moment, listening acutely; then took off his shoes very quietly, and moved with noiseless foot toward the scuttle.

The gnawing still continued.

He put his head through the scuttle, and peered into a dark, dismal place, whose very existence was new to him. It was, in fact, a vacant space between the cargo and the ship's run. This wooden cavern was very narrow, but not less than fifteen feet long. The candle was at the farther end, and between it and Hazel a man was working, with his flank turned toward the spectator.

This partly intercepted the light; but still it revealed in a fitful way the huge ribs of the ship, and her inner skin that formed the right-hand partition, so to speak, of this black cavern; and close outside those gaunt timbers was heard the wash of the sea.

There was something solemn in the close proximity of that tremendous element and the narrowness of the wooden barrier.

The bare place, and the gentle monotonous wash of the liquid monster, on that calm night, conveyed to Mr. Hazel's mind a thought akin to David's.

"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death."

Judge whether that thought grew weaker or stronger, when, after straining his eyes for some time, to understand what was going on at that midnight

hour, in that hidden place, he saw who was the workman, and what was his occupation.

It was Joseph Wylie, the mate. His profile was illuminated by the candle, and looked ghastly. He had in his hands an auger of enormous size, and with this he was drilling a great hole through the ship's side, just below the water-mark; an act, the effect of which would be to let the sea bodily into the ship and sink her, with every soul on board, to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

When Hazel first saw what Wylie was doing, *obstupuit,* he was merely benumbed; but, as his mind realized the fiendish nature of the act, and its tremendous consequences, his hair actually bristled, and for a few minutes at least he could not utter a word.

In that interval of stupor, matters took another turn. The auger went in up to the haft: then Wylie caught up with his left hand a wooden plug *he* had got ready, jerked the auger away, caught up a hammer, and swiftly inserted the plug.

Rapid as he was, a single jet of water came squirting viciously in. But Wylie lost no time; he tapped the plug smartly with his hammer several times, and then, lifting a mallet with both hands, rained heavy blows on it that drove it in, and shook the ship's side.

Then Hazel found his voice, and he uttered an ejaculation that made the mate look round; he glared at the man who was glaring at him, and, staggering backward, trod on the light, and all was darkness and dead silence.

All but the wash of the sea outside, and that louder than ever.

But a short interval sufficed to restore one of the parties to his natural self-possession.

"Lord, sir," said Wylie, "how you startled me! You should not come upon a man at his work like that. We might have had an accident."

"What were you doing?" said Hazel, in a voice that quavered in spite of him.

"Repairing the ship. Found a crack or two in her inner skin. There, let me get a light, and I'll explain it to you, sir."

He groped his way out, and invited Mr. Hazel into his cabin. There he struck a light, and, with great civility, tendered an explanation. The ship, he said, had labored a good deal in the last gale, and he had discovered one or two flaws in her, which were of no immediate importance; but experience had taught him that in calm weather a ship ought to be kept tight. "As they say ashore, a stitch in time saves nine."

"But drilling holes in her is not the way," said Hazel sternly.

The mate laughed. "Why, sir," said he, "what other way is there? We cannot stop an irregular crack; we can frame nothing to fit it. The way is to get ready a plug measured a trifle larger than the aperture you are going to make; then drill a round hole, and force in the plug. I know no other way than that; and I was a ship's carpenter for ten years before I was a mate."

This explanation, and the manner in which it was given, removed Mr. Hazel's apprehension for the time being. "It was very alarming," said he; "but I suppose you know your business."

"Nobody better, sir," said Wylie. "Why, it is not one seaman in three that would trouble his head about a flaw in a ship's inner skin; but I'm a man that looks ahead. Will you have a glass of grog, sir, now you are here? I keep that under my eye, too; between ourselves, if the skipper had as much in his cabin as I have here, that might be worse for us all than a crack or two in the ship's inner skin."

Mr. Hazel declined to drink grog at that time in the morning, but wished him good night, and left him with a better opinion of him than he had ever had till then.

Wylie, when he was gone, drew a tumbler of neat spirit, drank half, and carried the rest back to his work.

Yet Wylie was a very sober man in a general way. Rum was his tool; not his master.

Hazel went to the captain that afternoon, and first told him what he had seen, offering no solution. The captain, on that occasion, was in an amphibious state; neither wet nor dry; and his reply was altogether exceptional. He received the communication with pompous civility; then swore a great oath, and

said he would put the mate in irons. "Confound the lubber! he will be through the ship's bottom."

"But, stop a moment," said Mr. Hazel, "it is only fair you should also hear how he accounts for his proceeding."

The captain listened attentively to the explanation, and altered his tone. "Oh, that is a different matter," said he. "You need be under no alarm, sir; the thundering lubber knows what he is about, at that work. Why, he has been a ship's carpenter all his life. Him a seaman! If anything ever happens to me, and Joe Wylie is set to navigate this ship, then you may say your prayers. He isn't fit to sail a wash-tub across a duck-pond. But I'll tell you what it is," added this worthy, with more pomposity than neatness of articulation, "here's respeckable passenger brought me a report; do my duty to m' employers, and —take a look at the well."

He accordingly chalked a plumb-line, and went and sounded the well.

There were eight inches of water. Hudson told him that was no more than all ships contained from various causes; "In fact," said he, "our pumps suck, and will not draw, at eight inches." Then suddenly grasping Mr. Hazel's hand, he said, in tearful accents, "Don't you trouble your head about Joe Wylie, or any such scum.

"I'm skipper of the Proserpine, and a man that does his duty to 'z employers. Mr. Hazel, sir, I'd come to my last anchor in that well this moment, if my duty to m' employers required it. B—my eyes if I wouldn't lie down there this minute, and never move to all eternity and a day after, if it was my duty to m' employers!"

"No doubt," said Hazel dryly. "But I think you can serve your employers better *in other parts of the ship.*" He then left him, with a piece of advice; "to keep his eye upon that Wylie."

Mr. Hazel kept his own eye on Wylie so constantly, that at eleven o'clock P.M. he saw that worthy go into the captain's cabin with a quart bottle of rum.

The coast was clear; the temptation great.

These men then were still deceiving him with a feigned antagonism. He listened at the keyhole, not without some compunction; which, however, became less and less as fragments of the dialogue reached his ear.

For a long time the only speaker was Hudson, and his discourse ran upon his own exploits at sea. But suddenly Wylie's voice broke in with an unmistakable tone of superiority. "Belay all that chat, and listen to me. It is time we settled something. I'll hear what you have got to say; and then you'll *do* what I say. Better keep your hands off the bottle a minute; you have had enough for the present; this is business. I know you are good for jaw; but what are you game to do for the governor's money? Anything?"

"More than you have ever seen or heard tell of, ye lubber," replied the irritated skipper. "Who has ever served his employers like Hiram Hudson?"

"Keep that song for your quarter-deck," retorted the mate contemptuously. "No; on second thoughts, just tell me how you have served your employers, you old humbug. Give me chapter and verse to choose from. Come now, the Neptune?"

"Well, the Neptune; she caught fire a hundred leagues from land."

"How came she to do that?"

"That is my business. Well, I put her head before the wind, and ran for the Azores; and I stuck to her, sir, till she was as black as a coal, and we couldn't stand on deck, but kept hopping like parched peas; and fire belching out of her port-holes forward: then we took to the boats, and saved a few bales of silk by way of sample of her cargo, and got ashore; and she'd have come ashore too next tide and told tales, but Somebody left a keg of gunpowder in the cabin, with a long fuse, and blew a hole in her old ribs, that the water came in, and down she went, hissing like ten thousand sarpints, and nobody the wiser."

"Who lighted the fuse, I wonder?" said Wylie.

"Didn't I tell ye it was 'Somebody'?" said Hudson. "Hand me the stiff." He replenished his glass, and, after taking a sip or two, asked Wylie if he had ever had the luck to be boarded by pirates.

"No," said Wylie. "Have you?"

"Aye; and they rescued me from a watery grave, as the lubbers call it. Ye see, I was employed by Downes & Co., down at the Havana, and cleared for Vera Cruz with some boxes of old worn-out printer's type."

"To print psalm-books for the darkies, no doubt," suggested Wylie.

"Insured as specie," continued Hudson, ignoring the interruption. "Well, just at daybreak one morning, all of a sudden there was a rakish-looking craft on our weather-bow: lets fly a nine-pounder across our forefoot, and was alongside before my men could tumble up from below. I got knocked into the sea by the boom and fell between the ships; and the pirate he got hold of me and poured hot grog down my throat to bring me to my senses."

"That is not what you use it for in general," said Wylie. "Civil sort of pirate, though."

"Pirate be d—d. That was my consort rigged out with a black flag, and mounted with four nine-pounders on one side, and five dummies on the other. He blustered a bit, and swore, and took our type and cabbages (I complained to Downes ashore about the vagabond taking the vegetables), and ordered us to leeward under all canvas, and we never saw him again—not till he had shaved off his mustaches, and called on Downes to condole and say the varmint had chased his ship fifty leagues out of her course; but he had got clear of him. Downes complimented me publicly.

"Says he, 'This skipper boarded the pirate single-handed; only he jumped short, and fell between the two ships; and here he is by a miracle.' Then he takes out his handkerchief, and flops his head on my shoulder. 'His merciful preservation almost reconciles me to the loss of my gold,' says the thundering crocodile. Cleared £70,000, he did, out of the Marhatten Marine, and gave the pirate and me but £200 between us."

"The Rose?" said Wylie.

"What a hurry you are in! Pass the grog. Well, the Rose; she lay off Ushant. We canted her to wash the decks; lucky she had a careful commander; not like Kempenfelt, whose eye was in his pocket, and his fingers held the pen, so he went to the bottom, with Lord knows how many men. I noticed the squalls came very sudden; so I sent most of my men ashore, and got the boats ready in case of accident. A squall did strike her, and she was on her beam-ends in a moment: we pulled ashore with two bales of silk by way of salvage, and sample of what warn't in her hold when she settled down. We landed; and the Frenchmen were dancing about with excitement. 'Captain,' says one, 'you have much sang fraw.' 'Insured, munseer,' say I. 'Bone,' says he.

"Then there was the Antelope, lost in charge of a pilot off the Hooghly. I knew the water as well as he did. We were on the port tack, standing toward the shoal. Weather it, as we should have done next tack, and I should have failed in my duty to my employers. Anything but that! 'Look out!' said I. 'Pilot, she forereaches in stays.' Pilot was smoking; those sandhead pilots smoke in bed and asleep. He takes his cigar out of his mouth for one moment. 'Ready about,' says he. 'Hands 'bout ship. Helms a-lee. Raise tacks and sheets.' Round she was coming like a top. Pilot smoking.

"Just as he was going to haul the mainsel Somebody tripped against him, and shoved the hot cigar in his eye. He sung out and swore, and there was no mainsel haul. Ship in irons, tide running hard on to the shoal, and before we could clear away for anchoring, bump!—there she was hard and fast. A stiff breeze got up at sunrise, and she broke up. Next day I was sipping my grog and reading the Bengal *Courier*, and it told of the disastrous wreck of the brig Antelope, wrecked in charge of a pilot; 'but no lives lost, and the owners fully insured.' Then there was the bark Sally. Why, you saw her yourself distressed on a lee shore."

"Yes," said Wylie. "I was in that tub, the Grampus, and we contrived to claw off the Scillies; yet you, in your smart Sally, got ashore. What luck!"

"Luck be blowed!" cried Hudson angrily. "Somebody got into the chains to sound, and cut the weather halyards. Next tack the mast went over the side; and I had done my duty."

"Lives were lost that time, eh?" said Wylie gravely.

"What is that to you?" replied Hudson, with the sudden ire of a drunken man. "Mind your own business. Pass me the bottle."

"Yes, lives was lost: and always will be lost in sea-going ships, where the skipper does his duty. There was a sight more lost at Trafalgar, owing to *every* man doing his duty. Lives lost, ye lubber? And why not mine? Because their time was come and mine wasn't. For I'll tell you one thing, Joe Wylie—if she takes fire and runs before the wind till she is as black as a coal, and belching flame through all her port-holes, and then explodes, and goes aloft in ten thousand pieces no bigger than *my* hat, or *your* knowledge of navigation, Hudson is the last man to leave her.

"Duty! If she goes on her beam-ends and founders, Hudson sees the last of her, and reports to his employers. Duty! If she goes grinding on Scilly, Hudson is the last man to leave her bones. Duty! Some day perhaps I shall be swamped myself along with the craft: I have escaped till now, *owing to not being insured;* but if ever my time should come, and you should get clear, promise me, Joe, to see the owners, and tell 'em Hudson did his duty."

Here a few tears quenched his noble ardor for a moment. But he soon recovered, and said, with some little heat, "You have got the bottle again. I never saw such a fellow to get hold of the bottle. Come, here's 'Duty to our employers!'"

Now it was Wylie's turn. "Well," said he, very gravely, "all this was child's play."

There was a pause that marked Hudson's astonishment. Then he broke out, "Child's play, ye lubber! If you had been there your gills would have been as white as your Sunday shirt; and a d—d deal whiter."

"Come, be civil," said Wylie, "I tell you all the ways you have told me are too suspicious. Our governor is a high-flier: he pays like a prince, and, in return, he must not be blown on, if it is ever so little. 'Wylie,' says he, 'a breath of suspicion would kill me.' 'Make it so much,' says I, 'and that breath shall never blow on you.' No, no, skipper; none of those ways will do for us; they have all been worked twice too often. It must be done in fair weather, and in a way—— Fill your glass and I'll fill mine. Capital rum this. You talk of my gills turning white; before long we shall see whose keeps their color best, mine or yours, my boy."

There was a silence, during which Hudson was probably asking himself what Wylie meant; for presently he broke out in a loud, but somewhat quivering voice: "Why, you mad, drunken devil of a ship's carpenter, redhot from hell, I see what you are at now; you are going——"

"Hush!" cried Wylie, alarmed in his turn. "Is this the sort of thing to bellow out for the watch to hear? Whisper, now."

This was followed by the earnest mutterings of two voices. In vain did the listener send his very soul into his ear to hear. He could catch no single word. Yet he could tell, by the very tones of the speakers, that the dialogue was one of mystery and importance.

Here was a situation at once irritating and alarming; but there was no help for it. The best thing now seemed to be to withdraw unobserved and wait for another opportunity. He did so; and he had not long retired, when the mate came out staggering, and flushed with liquor, and that was a thing that had never occurred before. He left the cabin door open, and went into his own room.

Soon after sounds issued from the cabin—peculiar sounds, something between grunting and snoring.

Mr. Hazel came and entered the cabin. There he found the captain of the Proserpine in a position very unfavorable to longevity. His legs were crooked over the seat of his chair, and his head was on the ground. His handkerchief was tight round his neck, and the man himself dead drunk, and purple in the face.

Mr. Hazel instantly undid his stock, on which the gallant seaman muttered inarticulately. He then took his feet off the chair, and laid them on the ground, and put the empty bottle under the animal's neck.

But he had no sooner done all this, than he had a serious misgiving. Would not this man's death have been a blessing? Might not his life prove fatal?

The thought infuriated him, and he gave the prostrate figure a heavy kick that almost turned it over, and the words, "Duty to employers," gurgled out of its mouth directly.

It really seemed as if these sounds were independent of the mind, and resided at the tip of Hudson's tongue: so that a thorough good kick could at any time shake them out of his inanimate body.

Hazel lay awake all night thinking what he should do, and early next day he went into the mate's cabin, and said to him: "Mr. Wylie, in any other ship I should speak to the captain, and not to the mate; but here that would be no use, for you are the master, and he is your servant."

"Don't tell him so, sir, for he doesn't think small beer of himself."

"I shall waste no more words on him. It is to you I speak, and you know I speak the truth. Here is a ship, in which, for certain reasons known to yourself, the captain is under the mate."

"Well, sir," said Wylie, good-humoredly, "it is no use trying to deceive a gentleman like you. Our skipper is an excellent seaman, but he has got a fault." Then Wylie imitated the action of a person filling his glass.

"And you are here to keep him sober, eh?"

Wylie nodded.

"Then why do you ply him with liquor?"

"I don't, sir."

"You do. I have seen you do it a dozen times; and last night you took rum into his room, and made him so drunk he would have died where he lay if I had not loosed his handkerchief."

"I am sorry to hear that, sir; but he was sober when I left him. The fool must have got to the bottle the moment I was gone."

"But that bottle you put in his way; I saw you; and what was your object? To deaden his conscience with liquor, his and your own, while you made him your fiendish proposal. Man, man, do you believe in God, and in a judgment to come for the deeds done in the body, that you can plan in cold blood to destroy a vessel with nineteen souls on board, besides the live stock, the innocent animals that God pitied and spared when he raised his hand in wrath over Nineveh of old?"

While the clergyman was speaking, with flashing eyes and commanding voice, the seaman turned ashy pale; and drew his shoulders together like a cat preparing to defend her life.

"I plan to destroy a vessel, sir! You never heard me say such a word; and don't you hint such a thing in the ship, or you will get yourself into trouble."

"That depends on you."

"How so, sir?"

"I have long suspected you."

"You need not tell me that, sir."

"But I have not communicated my suspicions. And now that they are certainties, I come first to you. In one word, will you forego your intention, since it is found out?"

"How can I forego what never was in my head?" said Wylie. "Cast away the ship! Why, there's no land within two thousand miles. Founder a vessel in the Pacific! Do you think my life is not as sweet to me as yours is to you?"

Wylie eyed him keenly to see the effect of these words, and, by a puzzled expression that came over his face, saw at once he had assumed a more exact knowledge than he really possessed.

Hazel replied that he had said nothing about foundering the ship; but there were many ways of destroying one. "For instance," said he, "I know how the Neptune was destroyed—and so do you; how the Rose and the Antelope were cast away—and so do you."

At this enumeration, Wylie lost his color and self-possession for a moment; he saw Hazel had been listening. Hazel followed up his blow. "Promise me now, by all you hold sacred, to forego this villainy; and I hold my tongue. Attempt to defy me, or to throw dust in my eyes, and I go instantly among the crew, and denounce both you and Hudson to them."

"Good heavens!" cried Wylie, in unfeigned terror. "Why, the men would mutiny on the spot."

"I can't help that," said Hazel firmly, and took a step toward the door.

"Stop a bit," said the mate. "Don't be in such a nation hurry; for, if you do, it will be bad for me, but worse for you." The above was said so gravely, and with such evident sincerity, that Mr. Hazel was struck, and showed it. Wylie followed up that trifling advantage. "Sit down a minute, sir, if you please, and listen to me. You never saw a mutiny on board ship, I'll be bound. It is a worse thing than any gale that ever blew; begins fair enough, sometimes; but how does it end? In breaking into the spirit-room, and drinking to madness, plundering the ship, and cutting a throat or so for certain.

"You don't seem so fond of the picture as you were of the idea. And then they might turn a deaf ear to you after all. Ship is well found in all stores; provisions served out freely; men in good humor, and I have got their ear. And now I'll tell you why it won't suit your little game to blacken me to the crew, upon the bare chance of a mutiny." He paused for a moment, then resumed in a lower tone, and revealed himself the extraordinary man he was.

"You see, sir," said he, "when a man is very ready to suspect me, I always suspect him. Now you was uncommon ready to suspect me. You didn't wait till you came on board; you began the game ashore. Oh, what, that makes you open one eye, does it? You thought I didn't know you again. Knew you, my man, the moment you came aboard. I never forget a face, and disguises don't pass on me."

It was now Hazel's turn to look anxious and discomposed.

"So, then, the moment I saw you suspected me I was down upon you. Well, you come aboard under false colors. We didn't want a chap like you in the ship; but you would come. 'What is the bloke after?' says I, and watches. You was so intent suspecting me of this, that, and t'other, that you unguarded yourself, and that is common, too. I'm blowed if it isn't the lady you are after. With all my heart; only she might do better, and I don't *see* how she could do worse, unless she went to Old Nick for a mate.

"Now, I'll tell you what it is, my man.

"I've been in trouble myself, and don't want to be hard on a poor devil, just because he sails under an alias, and lies as near the wind as he can, to weather on the beaks and the bobbies. But one good turn deserves another. Keep your dirty suspicions to yourself; for if you dare to open your lips to the men, in five minutes, or less than that, you shall be in irons, and confined to your cabin, and we'll put you ashore at the first port that flies the British flag, and hand you over to the authorities till one of her Majesty's cruisers sends a boat for you."

At this threat Mr. Hazel hung his head in confusion and dismay.

"Come, get out of my cabin, Parson Alias," shouted the mate; "and belay your foul tongue in this ship, and don't make an enemy of Joe Wylie, a man that will eat you up else, and spit you out again, and never brag. Sheer off, I say, and be d—d to you."

Mr. Hazel, with a pale face and sick heart, looked aghast at this dangerous man, who could be fox or tiger, as the occasion demanded.

Surprised, alarmed, outwitted, and out-menaced, he retired with disordered countenance and uneven steps, and hid himself in his own cabin.

The more he weighed the whole situation, the more clearly did he see that he was utterly powerless in the hands of Wylie.

A skipper is an emperor, and Hudson had the power to iron him, and set him on shore at the nearest port.

He succumbed in silence for two days; and then, in spite of Wylie's threat, he made one timid attempt to approach the subject with Welch and Cooper, but a sailor came up instantly, and sent them forward to reef topsails. And, whenever he tried to enter into conversation with the pair, some sailor or other was always sure to come up and listen.

Then he saw that he was spotted; or, as we say nowadays, picketed.

He was at his wits' end.

He tried his last throw. He wrote a few lines to Miss Rolleston, requesting an interview. Aware of the difficulties he had to encounter here, he stilled his heart by main force, and wrote in terms carefully measured. He begged her to

believe he had no design to intrude upon her, without absolute necessity, and for her own good. Respect for her own wishes forbade this, and also his self-respect.

"But," said he, "I have made a terrible discovery. The mate and the captain certainly intend to cast away this ship. No doubt they will try and not sacrifice their own lives and ours; but risk them they must, in the very nature of things. Before troubling you, I have tried all I could, in the way of persuasion and menace; but am defeated. So now it rests with you. You, alone, can save us all.

"I will tell you how, if you will restrain your repugnance, and accord me a short interview. Need I say that no other subject shall be introduced by me? In England, should we ever reach it, I may perhaps try to take measures to regain your good opinion; but here, I am aware, that is impossible; and I shall make no attempt in that direction, upon my honor."

To this came a prompt and feminine reply:

> The ship is *his*. The captain and the mate are able men, appointed by *him*. Your suspicions of these poor men are calumnies, and of a piece with your other monstrous slanders.
>
> I really must insist on you holding no further communications of any sort with one to whom your character is revealed and odious.
>
> H. R.

This letter benumbed his heart at first. A letter? It was a blow; a blow from her he loved, and she hated him!

His long-suffering love gave way at last. What folly and cruelty combined! He could no longer make allowances for the spite of a woman whose lover had been traduced. Rage and despair seized him; he bit his nails, and tore his hair with fury; and prayed heaven to help him hate her as she deserved, "the blind, insolent idiot!" Yes, these bitter words actually came out of his mouth, in a torrent of fury.

As a proof of how little this state of mind was natural to him, it stirred up all the bile in his body, and brought on a severe attack of yellow jaundice, accompanied by the settled dejection that marks that disorder.

The surgeon shook his head, and told Hudson the parson was booked.

"And good riddance of bad rubbish!" was that worthy's gracious comment.

The ship now encountered an adverse gale, and for three whole days, was under close-reefed top-sails; she was always a wet ship under stress of weather; and she took in a good deal of water on this occasion. On the fourth day it fell calm, and Captain Hudson, having examined the well, and found three feet of water, ordered the men to the pumps.

After working through one watch, the well was sounded again, and the water was so much reduced that the gangs were taken off, and the ship being now becalmed, and the weather lovely, the men were allowed to dance upon deck to the boatswain's fiddle.

While this pastime went on, the sun, large and red, reached the horizon, and diffused a roseate light over the entire ocean.

While the eye was yet charmed with this enchanting bridal of the sea and sky, and the ear amused with the merry fiddle and the nimble feet that tapped the sounding deck so deftly at every note, Cooper, who had been sounding the well, ran forward all of a sudden, and flung a thunderbolt in their midst.

"A LEAK!"

(To be continued.)

HUMILITY.

By Charles M. Dickinson.

I ASK not a life for the dear ones,
  All radiant, as others have done,
But that life may have just enough shadow
  To temper the glare of the sun.
I would pray God would guard them from evil,
  But my prayer would bound back to myself;
Ah! a seraph may pray for a sinner,
  But a sinner must pray for himself.

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR.

By Mary Roberts Rinehart.

OF certain complications that befell a souvenir hunter with a guilty conscience.

WHEN Betty came in, with her hat on one side as usual, and said that the Van Blounts' carriage was down the street at the Fentons', and would probably be along in a few minutes, I decided to go out.

The Van Blounts are newcomers, prodigiously rich, and mama had called, of course. She went the very day she learned they had a son of marriageable age, and it looked almost too evident to me. I could shut my eyes and see the whole thing—Mrs. Van Blount, fat and placid; mama, erect and aquiline, with her best shell lornon and her most imposing manner:

"Dear Alicia is so young, so unspoiled by all the attention she receives. I dread to think of the time when I must lose her, and yet it is inevitable. You are a mother, too, Mrs. Van Blount, and you can understand. I hope our children will be friends."

Betty and I got out of the house safely, just as the Van Blount carriage came majestically up the street. It was a beautiful afternoon in May, and the pale green of the new leaves with a bit of black branch here and there gave me the idea for a gown that did wonders later.

I wanted to go down the avenue, get tea at the Tea-rooms, and look over some hats at Carise's. But Betty wanted to do something really frivolous and unusual; so, after a good bit of discussion and some discord, we decided on a trip on the trolley to one of the street-car parks—you know the kind, where they have balloon-ascensions and fireworks on the Fourth of July, and where the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Association of Grocers' Clerks hold their annual picnics. Betty and I had never seen one, and it promised a lark, so we hailed a car with "Edgewood Park" in letters a foot high, and embarked cheerfully on a sea of troubles that nearly swamped us before we emerged.

There were a few people scattered through the park when we got there, but there seemed to be more relics of past festivity, in the shape of paper bags and empty boxes, than present gaiety. A merry-go-round was circling dolorously, with two or three people riding on the ridiculous animals, and over at the chutes one man, a young one, was patiently repeating over and over the plunge down the slide into the water, and the climb up the steps.

Betty and I watched him with fascinated eyes—he looked so pathetically lonely. He was a nice-looking fellow—quite handsome, indeed—and the queer thing was that he seemed to get absolutely no enjoyment out of the performance, and yet stuck to it as if he couldn't stop. We sat down and watched him.

"Now look closely, Betty," I said, "and see if he doesn't show the least bit of excitement just before he hits the water—where most people shriek, you know."

But he didn't. The man at the top started the thing down; it went slowly at first, then faster, and finally hit the water at the third speed with a tremendous splash. And through it all the fellow with the melancholy expression sat with folden arms and his hat pulled down over his eyes, the very picture of isolation and despair.

"It gets me," said Betty, after a while. "It certainly is a queer place to sulk. Come on, I'm getting dizzy."

We wandered around dolefully enough, but as Betty said, having come so far, we were bound to see over the place anyhow, and besides she was starving, and there was surely a place where we could get something to eat.

It wasn't at all a bad place when we found it. It was a Japanese pagoda-shaped building, open to the air, with blossoming cherry-trees all around it, while bamboo boxes everywhere were filled with plants and vines, and a bit of a brook just outside had one of those queer Japanese bridges, raised in the middle, and with slats across to keep you from sliding back. Betty drew a long breath as she hung her leather bag on the back of the bamboo chair and sat down.

"Positively, I feel like taking off my shoes," she said, "and the background is perfect for you, Alicia. Why don't you go as Cherry Blossom to the Whitney's costume ball? You could have a pink and silver kimono, and have cherry blossoms painted on the sash."

"I'll think about it," I said, studying the menu, which was distinctly United States. We got some lettuce sandwiches and tea, brought by a little Jap in a queer blue cotton blouse, which I suspected was his working costume. Evidently we were between hours, the place was deserted, and there was a strong smell of soap and water in the air. But it was only necessary to drink the tea and look out at that hump-backed bridge to fancy oneself thousands of miles from the Van Blounts, and the Whitneys, and tailor-made clothes, and all the other evidences of civilization.

The little Jap was leaning against the other side of the tea house, his hands in his blue cotton sleeves, his eyes almost shut. Betty had paid the charge, which was enormous—we were paying for the cherry blossoms and the bamboo bridge, like dining at the Waldorf, where you pay for your surroundings. Then Betty leaned over and whispered:

"Don't go yet. Put on your gloves slowly, or do something, while I talk to you. I want you—don't look at it—but when you get a chance slip that lovely little Japanese pitcher into your lap. I want it for my collection of hotel creamers."

"I won't do it," I said firmly. "Steal for yourself, or go and buy it."

"It's directly at your elbow," she persisted, "and I don't want to buy it. It would spoil the fun."

"I'll not do it," I reiterated. "That Jap has his beady eyes on me now."

At that instant the Jap glanced away. Quick as a flash Betty reached across the table and picking up the pitcher tucked it into the front of her blouse.

"Good gracious!" I gasped, and looked at the Jap; he was staring directly at Betty, and, for all his impassiveness, I fancied a baleful gleam in his slit-like eyes. As he took a step toward us, Betty rose grandly, her head in the air, and walked to the door. I followed, tramping on her heels in my hurry, and expecting a hand on my shoulder any moment.

Once down the steps Betty's dignified step changed almost to a run, and we were quite breathless when we drew up beside a rustic fountain and dropped on to a bench well out of sight of the tea-house.

"That's what you get for stealing," I said severely, trying to fasten up my hair.

Betty drew out the little pitcher and looked at it proudly. "*This* is what I get for stealing," she said. "And now it's almost five, and so let's start for home."

She tucked the pitcher away and began to look around for something. Then she got up and shook her skirt, and looked on the ground under the bench and in the grass back of it.

"What are you looking for?" I asked, exasperated. "If you're looking to see if the bench is fastened, it's not. Only, for goodness' sake, take it while no one is looking."

But my sarcasm was quite lost on Betty. She was looking really frightened, and began to fumble in the pockets of her ulster. "It's not funny," she said glumly. "I must have left my pocketbook hanging on the back of that chair in the tea-house, and I haven't a penny."

We looked at each other speechlessly. I had left my chatelaine at home and Betty had left hers where neither of us would have set foot again for a dozen pocketbooks, and there we were, seven miles from home, and without even enough money to telephone for assistance.

I was angry enough to cry, but

Betty looked so dismayed that I hadn't the heart to remind her that it all came from stealing ridiculous Japanese pitchers for souvenirs.

"Feel in your pockets," she said at last. "You may have a dime somewhere."

But beyond a package of powder-papers and the bangle of a bracelet, there wasn't a thing. Betty's pockets are always full of things, bits of peppermint, and a pink satchet, and the key for her Irish terrier's collar, but after a minute she held up something in triumph. It was a five-cent piece!

"You take this and go home for some money," she said generously, "and I'll wait around for you. An hour in and an hour out will make it after seven; then we can both be home for dinner at eight."

Dinner at eight! It was easy enough at Betty's house, with a dozen people to look after one, but an eight o'clock dinner at our house, with only Martha and Lizzie—whom mama speaks of vaguely as the "servants"—it meant starvation, no less.

"You would better be the one to go," I said resignedly. "If that Jap comes nosing around——"

Betty jumped at that and agreed to go. So I settled myself as comfortably as I could for a two-hour wait, probably the most forlorn person in that not very festive park.

It began to grow chilly as the sun got lower, and I decided to walk around. People looked at me curiously, and I felt conspicuously alone, and as if I bore the marks of shame on my face. But the most trying thing was to come.

I had passed a little pavilion where a man was blowing glass tumblers in his shirt sleeves—that is, the man was in his shirt sleeves—when I saw the melancholy youth of the chutes. Perhaps I looked at him rather closely, but the next thing was more than disconcerting, for although he had been walking toward me, he turned suddenly and began to follow me. He was absolutely respectful, keeping at a distance and all that, but just the same, he followed me.

I made the round of that wretched park, avoiding, of course, the Japanese tea-house, and ascertaining occasionally that he was still in view. Then a horrible fear seized me in its grip, a fear which grew as I contemplated it, under which my knees shook and my hands got cold and clammy. The young man of the chutes was an official of the park, a plain-clothes man, perhaps—I was vague about plain-clothes men, but his clothes had the plainness of good tailoring—or possibly he was one of the owners of the park.

The lost pitcher had been reported to him, and I was being shadowed, if not as the thief, at least as accessory to the theft. It seemed a lot of fuss to make about a three-inch individual cream pitcher, but the Japanese are queer, and one never knows the value of a thing belonging to them by its size; they worship centuries of ancestors with an altar a foot or so each way, and of course there might have been something very unusual about that pitcher.

The guiltier I felt the higher I held my head, naturally, and of course I stumbled over a stone or something, and hurt my foot—girls in stories usually manage this at appropriate times and places, but was ever time or place more ill-chosen than this? I sat down on a near-by bench and stared straight ahead of me, while the man behind came closer and closer.

There was one awful moment of indecision when he seemed to hesitate; then he stopped and took off his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but I think you were in the Japanese tea-house a half hour or so ago, and I have——"

"You are mistaken," I said, as icily as I could, "and having learned your mistake, may I ask you to stop following me around in this disgraceful manner?"

I actually had visions of handcuffs and being got out on bail, whatever that is, but the young man merely lifted his hat, bowed, and sauntered away.

It was a couple of minutes before I could take a natural breath, and I wasn't entirely over the shock when I had another, for along the path, her hat tilted more than ever, her hands dejectedly in her ulster-pockets, came Betty, limping rather than walking, and with a world of wo in her face. She dropped on the bench beside me with a groan.

"I lost it!" she wailed. "I dropped

that wretched nickel a half mile down the car track, and I've been hunting it ever since. I got off the car with some crazy excuse about feeling sick, and I've walked all the way back. The heels of these boots are just boring into my feet."

"There's only one thing to do, Betty," I said firmly. "You must go back and claim your pocketbook. Offer to pay for the pitcher, or return it—anything but to be stranded here after dark."

"I won't do it," she said decidedly. "I did go to the pay station and ask the operator if she could change a twenty-dollar bill so I could get some money for the telephone." This despairingly.

"Well?"

"Well, she said she could change the bill, but the 'phone is out of order."

We were gloomily silent. Then Betty got up with a long breath.

"There's nothing else to do," she said resignedly, "but to go back to that wretched tea-house and try to get my pocketbook. Only I won't go alone."

So we went together through the gathering dusk to the peach orchard and the pagoda. Betty was silent with despair, while I brooded resentfully over our predicament. Once I heard a small crash beside the path, and knew the pitcher had met a richly merited fate. But the tea-house was closed, bamboo screens stood before the entrance, and the colored lanterns hung dark from the ceiling. Betty sat down on the step and got out her handkerchief.

"I wouldn't care," she said piteously, "if it was for a decent amount, but to be tied up in this horrid park for the lack of ten cents is too humiliating."

It was not dark, but the sun had gone, and the yellow afterglow was fading. In the shadows it was cold, and I determined on one last, final effort. The screens were locked into place and refused to move, but as the building consisted of little but a roof and walls four feet high, it was not hard to get in.

Once inside, I hunted around as best I could in the obscurity, but the pocketbook was gone, and I climbed out over the flower-boxes and dropped to the ground again, to come face to face with the man of the chutes.

"I am sorry to intrude," he said meekly, "but——"

"You *are* intruding!" I snapped, furious at being discovered in a ridiculous situation, and frightened too. "I must ask you not to speak to me again."

Instead of being angry, I thought he laughed to himself, as if he was vastly amused.

"Can I help you find anything?" he persisted, ignoring my snub. "You haven't lost anything?"

"Nothing"—frigidly.

"Then I should call it housebreaking," he said coolly; "but I'd be willing to overlook it if you would allow me to ask you a question. I've been trying for an hour and a half, without——"

Oh, I knew that question—"Did the young lady with you appropriate a valuable cream pitcher from the tea-house?"

"You needn't trouble to ask any questions," I said loftily. "I shall certainly not answer them."

Then I walked with dignity around the corner of the pagoda, took Betty by the arm, and together we flew through the darkness toward the trolley line.

The park was almost deserted now. Betty wanted to leave her chatelaine-watch as security with some one, and get enough money to take us home, but there were only a few attendants in loud uniforms, and after watching a group of them laughing and talking, we preferred walking back to town, to being exposed to their impertinent grins.

Fortunately I am a good walker—golf has done that much for me—but Betty doesn't golf, and she wears boots with the most outrageous high heels, so we hadn't gone a mile before she was limping desperately. After a while she sat down and slipped off her boots, and paddled along in her stockings.

It was growing very dark now, but the trolley company had strung electric lights along the road, and we would have done fairly well had it not been for Betty's feet. She sat down at the end of the second mile and refused to move.

"Just try it," she said. "Go for years with your heels raised two or three inches off the ground, and then try to walk flat-footed. I tell you the backs of

my legs are so sore I can't take another step."

Things were certainly desperate. A trolley car whizzed by us scornfully, and off somewhere we could hear the slow vibration of the engine in an auto. It came into view at last, limping along much as Betty and I had done, and it didn't take much observation to see that the car was feeling its way lamely, and was in danger any moment of sitting down beside the road with us. As it came abreast it stopped with a jerk, and a man got out with a wrench and made a few vicious jabs at something. Then he threw the wrench into the box and came toward us, raising his hat.

"For the third—and last—time, may I offer my assistance?" he said coolly, yet civilly. "One turn down is usually enough for a man, especially when he has done nothing to warrant it—but I am not going to stand by and see you young ladies made the victims of your own foolishness. My car is at your service, and I think you will be wise to accept it."

It was the man of the chutes! The plain-clothes man of the pitcher! Betty made a frantic dive for her shoes, she would have ridden in an ash-cart cheerfully.

"Give me a hairpin to button them," she whispered.

"We are taking a walk," I said, with a last clutch at dignity, "but it is growing dark, and perhaps——"

"Exactly," he said, and drawing off his gloves he assisted me into the car, and turned for Betty. "We won't make very good time—the auto has been at a blacksmith shop near that apology for a park all afternoon, but it is more comfortable than—the trolley."

Betty snuggled back into the cushions with a groan of relief. As for me, I tried to be resentful and indignant, but ended by being thankful. The car chugged on very deliberately, and I amused myself watching the outline of the chauffeur against the sky. He had good shoulders, I could see, and a well poised head.

After a while I began to resent his silence, the incident of the pitcher had faded with the last fences of Edgewood Park, but there still remained his mysterious connection with the case. This was rescue, not arrest. Then what had he wanted to tell me?

"I'm afraid I've been making a mistake," I said meekly. "If you still have something to tell me——"

"Oh, it wasn't of any importance," he flung back at me over his shoulder.

"Won't you allow me to judge that?" I asked. "You were very anxious——"

"Disgracefully, I think you said." He was still calmly virtuous.

Betty had been listening in a sort of stupefaction.

"What is it?" she asked. "Is there something you haven't told me, Alicia?"

But I ignored her.

"If you please," I said meekly, seeing that he was bound I should bite the dust; "if you please, why were you following me around, and what did you wish to ask me?"

"I should think it *is* disgraceful," said Betty severely.

The auto stopped suddenly, with a jerk that almost threw us out, and the rescuer got out with his wrench.

"Simply" (pound-pound) "I happened to see the pitcher incident" (a groan from Betty) "and I was trying" (bing-bung) "to return a pocketbook" (low objurgation, probably blasphemous) "you left in the tea-house."

Betty giggled joyously, but I dropped from my pinnacle of self-esteem to the depths of abasement with an audible thud. And I would not allow him to tell me! And I had run like a rabbit every time he had approached with that wretched pocketbook!

"Give me that hairpin," I said to Betty fiercely, in an undertone. "I'm a perfect fright."

The auto gave an expiring gasp and died, so we all climbed down dismally and stood in the road.

"I'm afraid it's the trolley after all," our rescuer said, looking at me. "There's a car coming now, and here's the pocketbook."

He gave it to Betty and stood looking dejectedly up the track, muttering something about it being his luck to have the old thing give out now.

The car stopped and the motorman sat down and got out his dinner bucket, so Betty and I crawled leisurely on, and there, of all people, sat Linda Hansen and Teddy McKnight, both in their riding clothes, and Linda with a scratch clear across her chin and a purple lump on her forehead.

It was the time—I suppose every one knows about it—when Linda's horse at the Hunt Club meet got tangled in a wire fence, miles from any place, and had to be laid up for repairs in somebody's barn, while they got home the best way they could.

The car stood a good while. Linda told her story straight through and over again backward; then she glanced out at our rescuer, who was hammering away at the auto.

"Oh," she said, "was it Syd whose auto broke down? Call him, Teddy, I want to tell him my little story."

Teddy McKnight lowered the window.

"Hey, Van Blount!" he called, and Betty and I gasped.

Of course you know how it turned out.

Mama thinks I have been very clever about the whole thing; and other people think mama has been clever; while only two people know that the real matchmaker was a three-inch Japanese pitcher, aided and abetted by a missing pocketbook and a roving five-cent piece!

A GIFT FROM MARS.*

By William Wallace Cook.

An astronomical wonder story that does not get all its plot from the stars.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

A METEOR falls in Coon Hollow, from the middle of which Professor Spriggs, a phrenologist, lately arrived and of eccentric demeanor, extracts a small black stone.

Unfortunately the professor's keepers, from an asylum, having discovered his new abiding place, appear at this point and remove him from the scene.

The professor turns the stone over to Jethro Mydus, who, he has foretold, will be a Napoleon of Finance. Jethro does not fulfil the prediction immediately, for, having sold a gold brick to Deacon Cotter, in order to elope with Luella Easley, the latter project is defeated, and the deacon arrests him as a swindler. Jethro, in court, says he thought the brick was gold, as his Uncle Ezra sent it from Montana. The brick is brought into court, and to the general surprise a second test proves that it is gold.

This is not true, but Uncle Ezra, who has unexpectedly appeared, corroborates Jethro's statement that it was a gift from him and boasts of his fabulous wealth. Later, Jethro discovers that Uncle Ezra's financial magnitude is pure bluff, but realizing the advantages of a fictitious source offers him an interest in his rôle as Napoleon of Finance, no questions answered.

CHAPTER VI.

MYDUS & MYDUS, LIMITED.

NEXT morning Uncle Ez waited upon Hiram Noggs and purchased all the scrap iron he could conveniently carry away. It was observed by Hiram Noggs that he had an abstracted air and wore the look of a man whose uncertainty was almost painful.

In the afternoon came Uncle Ez and Jethro, driving through town with several boxes in the rear of the lumber wagon. Uncle Ezra's mood had changed, for he was now radiant with exultation.

He was doing the driving. At his

*Began May All-Story Magazine. Single copies, 10 cents.

side sat Jethro, arms folded, brows bent, and a look of stony determination upon his face.

They were gone for a week; and then a wondrous contraption came tearing into Coon Hollow, frightening horses and other live stock and causing as much excitement among the people as a circus procession.

The machine was on four low wheels with wide rubber rims. It was painted yellow; there were two brass lamps on either side, at the front; it held two seats, upholstered with shiny leather. On the front seat was a stranger, who turned a wheel in front of him and occasionally manipulated a lever; on the rear seat sat Jethro, still wearing the apparel in which he had appeared before Judge Grimes; and at Jethro's elbow sat——

Wonder of wonders! Could that immaculate person be Ezra Mydus? He wore a high hat, tilted the veriest trifle over one drooping eye; a black frock coat covered his ample shoulders; he had a red vest, a green necktie, checkered trousers, white spats, patent leather shoes—and he wore gloves and carried a cane!

Coon Hollow lay back and gasped. And while it trembled, and watched, and caught its breath, the strange machine swept up to the local bank, halted, and Uncle Ez got out with a large satchel.

Sweeping grandly into the financial institution, Uncle Ez flung the satchel carelessly down in front of the receiving teller.

"I'd like to open an account here," said he.

The receiving teller opened the satchel and dumped upon the counter such a stack of bank-notes that his face went white and his brain reeled. He called the president, who eyed the heap of money with a tremor and cast distrustful glances at the bank vault.

Uncle Ez was leaning on one elbow at the window—leaning there and whistling softly while he polished a large diamond in the green necktie with a red silk handkerchief.

"A-hem!" coughed the president, in an embarrassed way, after the heap had been counted. "There's twenty-seven thousand dollars here, Mr. Mydus."

In the voice there was an obsequiousness dear to Uncle Ezra's soul as manna in the wilderness.

"As a bagatelle," said he, flicking a bit of dust from one sleeve. "I left the bulk of this batch of funds on deposit in Shelbyville. It is necessary to have something here, however, for current expenses."

"May I ask you, Mr. Mydus, to step into my office?" said the president.

Mr. Mydus stepped into the office.

"I want your patronage, sir," observed the president, when they were carefully shut in, "but such a vast sum is quite likely to prove a temptation to the bank's employees. Deacon Cotter owns a large block of stock and he is—er—most conservative."

"Is he the only conservative member of the board of directors?"

"There are one or two others, Mr. Mydus. I should like to be progressive, sir, and have a little more latitude in the matter of receiving deposits and making loans, but——"

"Buy up this conservative stock, Mr. Prentiss," said Uncle Ez, "and call on me for funds to pay for it. Get for us a controlling voice on the board; then we shall build a new bank with a modern vault and be in shape to take care of the financial affairs of this town when it begins to boom." When he left the bank, he was bowed from the front door by the president himself.

That afternoon Uncle Ez did several more things that kept the town on a tiptoe of excitement. Chief among these, he rented the entire second floor of Than Loftis' tavern as an abiding place for himself and his nephew, and he secured the storeroom where Clawson, alias Spriggs, had delineated characters as a garage for his automobile; and he gave such orders, looking to the comfort of himself, his nephew, and his chauffeur, as caused Mr. Loftis to despatch a messenger post haste to Shelbyville for unheard-of articles in the line of provisions and other creature comforts.

That night, in their new quarters, Uncle Ez consumed twenty-five-cent cigars and expounded high finance for the benefit of Jethro.

"My boy," said he, "if I had traded Deacon Cotter a hundred shares of min-

ing stock I knew to be worthless for a hundred-dollar horse, what sort of a deal would you call it?"

"Robbery," answered Jethro, in a flash.

"No, business," answered Uncle Ez. "If I waive the useless formality of the mining stock and walk out of town with the deacon's horse behind me, what would you call that?"

Jethro was somewhat in doubt. "Business?" he queried.

"No, robbery. To become expert in financial affairs you must learn to juggle. Having set your eye on the horse you want, don't go to the barn by night and remove him by stealth; simply befool the owner and walk away with the animal in broad day. The difference lies in the way the thing is done."

Jethro rubbed his chin and looked thoughtful.

"Suppose," went on Uncle Ez, "I take three shells and a buckskin ball, and that I make a farmer bet ten dollars the ball is under one shell when I know it's under another. What would you call that?"

"Robbery."

"Business, Jethro! It illustrates my contention as to ways and means. Now, if I thrust a hand into the farmer's pocket and simply take out the ten dollars without the plausibility of the shell game, what would you call that?"

"Look here, Uncle Ez," returned Jethro, "what's the difference between a swindler and a thief?"

"A few millions, generally," was the oracular answer. "But don't be so literal in your application of the term 'swindler.' Say simply shrewdness, or business acumen.

"Now, Jethro, suppose the deacon offers to sell me a good, sound horse next September for one hundred and fifty dollars——"

"That's more than a good, sound horse is worth, just now," interpolated Jethro.

"Precisely, but the deacon is taking a chance. By next September horses may be worth less, or more."

"You're taking a chance too, aren't you?"

"I'm speculating, that's all, and so is the deacon. Now we'll suppose that the epizootic, or the glanders, or something, breaks out and sweeps all the horses out of the country. When September rolls around the deacon finds horses have risen in value to two hundred, three hundred, perhaps five hundred dollars apiece. I have legitimately bled the deacon for the difference between the hundred and fifty and what he's obliged to pay to make his bargain good.

"On the other hand, if a train load of Western horses are rushed in here, and the price breaks, the deacon wins and I quit loser. See? To go further, suppose the deacon doesn't intend to sell me a horse, and I don't intend to buy; but next September, if horses are high, he pays me the difference; and if they are low, I pay the difference to him. What would you call that?"

"Robbery by agreement," answered Jethro, after a period of deep thought.

"My boy, my boy!" murmured Uncle Ez. "Did you ever go to a church sociable, pay ten cents for a whack at the grab-bag, and pull out a two-cent lead pencil? In the case of our improved horse dicker we are buying and selling air; in the case of the grab-bag—well, there isn't anything in it that's worth more'n a nickel."

"Look here," said Jethro, "suppose I buy up all the cows in the vicinity of Coon Hollow and hire the milk hauled to the Hank's Corners' cheese factory?"

"Poor business! It would cost you more for extra hauling than——"

Jethro leaned toward Uncle Ez with a glint in his eyes.

"What would become of the Coon Hollow creamery?" he asked hoarsely.

"If you bought up all the cows around here and sold the milk in Hank's Corners?" queried the startled Uncle Ez.

"Yes."

"Sooner or later the sheriff would come along and tack up a notice on the creamery door."

"That's what you got to do, Uncle Ez!" declared Jethro.

"But say," answered Uncle Ez, "I've been thinking of going to New York and taking a fall out of Wall Street. I haven't any time to fool away on the dairy business."

"Where does this money come from

that you are handling?" demanded Jethro, leaning back in his chair.

"Blamed if I know! You shut yourself in the back room with a lot of iron scrap, and——"

"I furnish it, don't I?" insisted Jethro.

"It looks that way."

"Very good! If you want to stay in this firm of Mydus & Mydus, Limited, you've got to couple your lessons in high finance with demonstrations.

"Break Bud Brackett! Don't leave him with a roof over his head or a coat to his back. Nail his hide to the creamery door and I'll give you money enough to fill Wall Street from end to end; fail me in this and our partnership is dissolved. More than that, I'll land you in jail for stealing the deacon's horse."

Uncle Ez stiffened in his chair. Could this stony-hearted tyrant be his dearly loved nephew—the lad who, as a child, he had dandled on his knee?

A wave of sorrow rolled over Ezra Mydus and left him shivering. Yet in spite of the benumbing tendency of this flood of feeling his brain was tremendously alive to the situation.

Jethro, heretofore regarded by his uncle as rather dull-witted and with no ambition beyond the twenty dollars a month and "found" of a hired man, had suddenly blazed comet-like across the murky skies of finance.

Where and how he came by the gold, which had stood the tests of the Government sub-treasury, was a seven-day wonder for Uncle Ez; yet get it he did, and so long as yellow metal of standard weight and fineness was forthcoming Uncle Ez was not too critical of ways and means.

"And another thing," pursued Jethro. "Just as we did with our Shelbyville bank account we'll do here: the funds will be subject to my check alone. Until you prove by wrecking Bud Brackett that you are qualified as an exponent of high finance I will give you an allowance."

Uncle Ezra jumped.

"An allowance?" he gasped. "How much of an allowance?"

"Five dollars a week."

Uncle Ez fell back, as limp as a lashed reed.

"But I'll need money to carry on this campaign against Bud Brackett," he expostulated. "How many cows can I buy on a salary of five dollars a week?"

"I'll audit your cow-vouchers and draw checks in payment," answered Jethro. "You may also turn in an expense account and if I find you have been economical it will be O.K.'d and settled. Besides, you still have the money paid by Barkins for the gold brick. If you run short, draw on that."

"How—how long am I to be on such a miserable allowance?" faltered Uncle Ez.

"Until you have landed Bud Brackett in the poorhouse." And with that Jethro went off to bed, leaving his uncle to gloomy reflections.

CHAPTER VII.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF A MILLIONAIRE.

YOUR ordinary Napoleon of Finance resembles that other Napoleon of Austerlitz, Moscow, and Waterloo in nothing more certainly than this, that he has about as much heart as a Fiji cannibal.

Given a youth of agrarian simplicity, generous to a fault, honest as the day, rich in health, and amply supplying his daily needs with the brawn of his arm, then hurl a Professor Spriggs across his humble orbit, drop into his life a thing for which the ancients searched until they were gray and which has been referred to herein as a gift from Mars—and what is the result? A transformation which the reader is invited to step to one side and watch.

As a further and powerful influence to warp and twist a goodly nature, let us consider a blighted love affair; and in order that we may miss nothing from our inventory of evil allurements, let us consider Uncle Ez.

The present chronicler, as has already been stated, is no apologist, nor was he near enough to Jethro to pose as his Boswell; yet, given the facts as set forth, he makes bold to aver that nine out of ten young men would travel Jethro's course.

Unlimited capital, as the world wags in these halcyon days, is synonymous with

unlimited power; and time never was when unlimited power failed to make the wielder of it a tyrant. The "Limited," attached to the name of Mydus & Mydus, referred solely to the firm's conception of its commercial responsibilities.

Jethro's diary for this eventful year is before the chronicler as he writes. At about the period Uncle Ez undertook his financial lessons the entries take a sordid turn, bordering now and then upon plain brutality.

While the young Napoleon's powers were reaching toward maturity, the more important events may be set forth through the medium of the journal.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21. Contracted for a train load of pig iron to be sent from the Lake Superior country. Discovered that Noggs was buying scrap in Shelbyville and Hank's Corners and selling it to me at an advance of two cents a pound. I call this robbery, but Uncle Ez says it is business.

Noggs is too grasping. A margin of half a cent a pound when I took the stuff in hundred-pound lots should have satisfied him. Realized two hundred and fifty thousand dollars out of last lot of Noggs scrap. What in the world am I to do with all this money?

Parson Kirby called with subscription list for new church bell. Gave him two dollars and a half and he seemed disappointed. What good will the bell ever do me?

Audited vouchers for ten cows at an average of fifty dollars each. Brackett is out trying to contract for milk, but the demand for cows is making the farmers wary.

Uncle Ez and Elisha Prentiss went into a deal to secure controlling interest in Coon Hollow bank. Repudiated transaction; Uncle Ez very bitter. Disowned me, washed his hands of me, etc., and left for Shelbyville.

THURSDAY, JUNE 22. Uncle Ez back this morning and buying cows as usual. Turned in vouchers for twenty-five cows at fifty dollars each. Suspicions aroused by his manner. Investigated. Found he had only fifteen cows and had falsified vouchers for balance. Read him a lecture and threatened to cut his allowance. Live stock seems to be Uncle Ezra's weak point.

Passed sleepless night trying to figure out what I'm to do with all my money. Over five hundred thousand dollars already in the bank. The worry is something frightful.

Took a spin along Rocky Run road to get rid of a headache and motor car frightened Farmer Higgins' team. Team ran away. Higgins thrown against stake-and-rider fence; arm broken and perhaps internal injuries. Told Mrs. H. I'd pay doctor bill, if it wasn't too steep.

Jenkins says if Higgins dies I may have to put up five thousand dollars; if he lives, and is crippled, no telling what a jury will give him. Hustled Jenkins off to make settlement. Something else to worry about.

They say Bud Brackett is beginning to do a little worrying himself and is cancelling New York orders for Coon Hollow butter. I'll get him! Passed Mrs. Brackett in front of the post-office and looked the other way.

Discharged chauffeur and told Uncle Ez to sell motor car for old junk.

FRIDAY, JUNE 23. Jenkins settled with Higgins for $269. Doctor says H. will be laid up for six months and will never be "right." That's more money than Higgins ever made in a year before, right or wrong. Anything seems to be legitimate, though, that takes money out of a well-filled pocket.

Building sheds on my forty to accommodate cows, but Uncle Ez has struck a snag. Farmers have combined and want a flat rate of seventy-five dollars each for cows. No purchases to-day and creamery stock looking up. Is Brackett behind this?

SATURDAY, JUNE 24. Discovered Uncle Ez is back of cow-combine. After heated interview he went out and bought fifty cows at old rate of fifty dollars. It costs a lot to buy cows and fodder, and hire men to look after them. Am sending milk to Shelbyville instead of to Hank's Corners. Brackett, they say, is almost crazy and has discharged his butter maker.

FRIDAY, JUNE 30. Train load of pig iron reached Shelbyville yesterday. Bought an old foundry in that town

and had the iron carted from the depot and put inside. Had doors and windows boarded up and took myself into the place by a secret entrance. Results even better with pig iron than with scrap. Made first shipment from this lot to New York.

Coon Hollow creamery closed and Bud Brackett sick abed. Waited on by a delegation of citizens holding stock in creamery. Offered to buy their stock at ten cents on the dollar, providing Brackett would sell and I could get all of it. Deacon Cotter—he was one of 'em—almost went into a faint. They took the matter under advisement.

MONDAY, JULY 3. Rec'd check for a trifle over a million for first shipment. Am shipping same amount of bullion every day. Intend to keep it up and have ordered three more train loads of pig iron.

Nearly wild to know what I'm to do with all this money. A million a day, and my personal expenses will not average more than $2.16 per diem! Think I can economize and save the sixteen cents. Have jewed Loftis down to the last penny on room rent.

Took supper at the Mite Society—ten cents. Gave thirty-five cents to Ladies' Aid. Might as well have thrown it away. How have the ladies ever aided *me?* Also seventy cents to W. C. T. U.

Have opened an account in a Boston bank. Uncle Ez clamored for a raise on account of success in creamery deal. Am paying him six dollars a week now, and that expense account of his is terribly elastic.

He is smoking five cent cigars, but Than Loftis has some at two for five that are just as good. Suggested this to Uncle Ez, but he did not take to it kindly.

Tobe Easley called to see me. Had Uncle Ez tell him I was out. Mrs. Brackett called. Would not see her, but wrote out a check for ten dollars and asked Uncle Ez to hand it to her.

She wore a ragged shawl and a last year's bonnet, and I thought she needed the money. She tore up the check and threw the pieces in Uncle Ezra's face. When was a woman ever consistent?

Am receiving so much mail the Coon Hollow post-office has been advanced to first class. Cy Lepper is the postmaster. (Mem: Could I threaten to make Shelbyville my headquarters and hold him up for half his raise in salary?) Letters from polar explorers, missionary societies, financial agents, people with good things, politicians, trust companies, life insurance men, cranks, etc. Had to have a secretary; advertised for one in Boston paper last week.

Secretary came on from Boston this afternoon and was summoned while I was trying to get a little rest in my room. Told Uncle Ez to offer him fifty dollars a month. Uncle Ez came back and said she wanted one hundred dollars. *She!* Great Scott! Went to see her myself. Concluded to give the one hundred dollars.

Squire Bingham called at five o'clock P.M. with subscription list for fireworks for the 4th. Handed him a coin; found, afterward, it was a five-dollar gold piece. Overtook him before he had gone two blocks, got it back, and gave him a quarter.

Just then secretary came around corner with suit-case. Didn't like the way she smiled, and handed Bingham twenty dollars. Secretary's expression changed and I liked it better. That smile cost me $19.75.

TUESDAY, JULY 4. Drove over to Shelbyville with secretary to see celebration. Ice cream, forty cents; lemonade, twenty cents; cut flowers, two dollars.

Personally welcomed by mayor and board of aldermen. Rode with secretary in carriage between brass band and fife-and-drum corps during procession.

Was called on for speech. Don't know what I said. Secretary told me afterward I had promised to give the town a $20,000 dollar library to be called the "Mydus Memorial" in case the Shelbyville people would raise $19,000 of the amount. Strange how excitement will work on a man's generosity.

Passed a blind man with hand-organ; tucked five dollars into his cup. Secretary pressed my hand. Went back and put five dollars more in the cup. Secretary laughed—music, melodeon, Sousa's marches on the phonograph—can't begin to describe that laugh.

Rode on merry-go-round with secretary. Would have liked to ride all day, but she wanted to see balloon ascension. Dance in the evening, and home by moonlight.

Did not go near foundry to-day and so lost a million. Had a good time, however, and it was cheap at the price. Feeling much better than I have for weeks. Wonder why?

WEDNESDAY, JULY 5. Spent four hours in foundry instead of two. Doubled output of bullion to make up for yesterday. Uncle Ez very sullen, and lessons in high finance discontinued. Fallacy that our money comes from his Montana mine exploded.

MONDAY, JULY 10. Over ten millions to the credit of Mydus & Mydus, Limited, in Shelbyville, Boston, and New York banks. How easy it is to make money if you only know how! More iron, more bullion, more people sitting up and taking notice.

Secretary showed me a three-column write-up in a New York paper, all about myself, picture, etc. Most of it fiction, but splendid reading. I am called the Young Crœsus of Coon Hollow.

Had secretary busy all morning trying to figure out how rich that other Crœsus was. Some trouble reducing talents to American dollars. Have decided to quit when I have gone old Crœsus one better.

Waited on at four P.M. by delegation of striking paper-mill men from Shelbyville. Said they needed food. Told them I'd give them an art gallery, and they went away cheering wildly.

In the evening addressed Young People's Debating Society of Hank's Corners on "How to Succeed in Life." Told them I had begun as a poor boy with tax title to forty acres of land. Now look at me. Industry and frugality stepping stones to all success in life.

Uncle Ez disowned and washed his hands of me again at two P. M. At two-thirty he came back, gave me a cigar, and went to filing letters.

His persistent clamoring led to the rupture. He said something about my agreeing to send him to New York with money enough to break Wall Street if he ruined Brackett. What nonsense.

Visited by a man who turned out to be a secret agent of the government. Compelled to be very wary. Where can I invest all this money so it will be safe?

Lost two pounds last week thinking about this. Believe I had better order more pig iron before mine owners form a pool and boost the price.

Recent issues of financial papers have contained articles to the effect that Coon Hollow Crœsus is likely to unsettle the country with his gold. Preposterous!

Long-haired man with a cigar-box came into the office this afternoon. Said that if I didn't give him a million dollars in two minutes he'd blow me to kingdom come. Refused.

He threw cigar-box at me and we grappled. Secretary ran in, tossed cigar-box through open window, and after the explosion there was a hole in Main Street as big as the Mammoth Cave.

Secretary hysterical. Sent her home to recover composure. Long-haired gentleman vanished. Query: Was he the tool of frightened financiers?

THURSDAY, JULY 27. Since doubling foundry's output have fifty millions in various banks. But have received a great shock. Letter from Spriggs marked "Private." Asks me to meet him at the old mill at midnight to-night, and to come alone.

Is it possible he wants the stone back? Can he have the heart to stop me in the very height of my career of usefulness? I shall go, of course, but the stone will be left behind, safely locked in my office safe. . . .

Just here there is a break in the journal. Friday, July 28, the young Crœsus was not in evidence, nor could he be found in Shelbyville or Hank's Corners. Saturday and Sunday passed and still he did not appear. He had vanished, as it were, into thin air.

CHAPTER VIII.

BETWEEN THE MILLSTONES.

ON the night of Thursday, July 27, Jethro departed secretly from his apartments in the Loftis tavern, skulked out of town along an alleyway and plunged

through the thick woods in the direction of Rocky Run. By twelve he was near the old mill.

What must have been his thoughts on beholding that ancient and abandoned structure! 'Twas here the elder Mydus, Jethro's father, had plied the trade of miller; and of him it was said, in the quaint manner of the country people:

"He never'd toll a widder woman's grist, nor a man's who'd brought it to mill on his back."

It was strange how a man like Jethro's father could have had a brother like Uncle Ez.

At that old mill, too, Jethro had met Luella, and there they had plumed themselves for disastrous flight. This thought stirred the stagnant bitterness in the young man's soul and he frowned darkly as he stepped toward the door of the ruin.

"Spriggs!" he called in a low tone.

No answer was returned, and he pushed through the dilapidated gap in the mill wall. Then from out the opaque gloom of the mill's interior a pencil of light flashed in his eyes; another moment and he was fiercely beset and overborne.

He tried to struggle, but was held as in bands of steel; nor could he cry out, for two hands were about his throat, all but throttling him.

"Hasten, my lads," came a suave, mild voice, evidently from him who held the lantern. "Be careful that your zeal does not trick you into brutality. Make fast the ankle iron, and then release him."

It was not the voice of Spriggs. Instantly Jethro realized that he had been beguiled into a trap, and the trap sprung.

The prisoner became sensible of a pressure about his ankle and heard a metallic snap; then he was released and rose gaspingly to his feet.

After a brief rest he bounded for the door. A chain, rattling at his heels, tripped him, and he fell on his knees.

"Close the door," went on the same voice that had already spoken, "and let us have more light."

The old door was propped against the entrance and two lanterns were lighted and hung from overhead beams. Then, for a little, curiosity and wonder got the better of Jethro's fear.

He was in the presence of five men—two of them burly rascals and the other three in high hats and frock coats. All wore half masks, or dominoes.

The well dressed trio sat side by side on an old square timber. The ruffianly pair stood at Jethro's right and left, their great arms folded, each of them ominously silent and ready.

Encircling the prisoner's ankle was a band of steel, to which was attached a strong chain. The chain, in its turn was made fast to a ring set in the end of a bar of pig iron.

"Is Professor Spriggs here?" queried Jethro, creeping back and crouching on the ingot, vis-à-vis with those on the beam.

"I am a professor," answered the smooth-voiced man who had heretofore done all the speaking, "but my name is not Spriggs. Political economy is my forte. The gentleman on my right is a humanitarian; the one on my left, a capitalist. We have been appointed a committee of three, with plenary powers."

"A committee of three?" echoed Jethro. "For what purpose?"

"To investigate the Crœsus of Coon Hollow and to determine how great a menace he is likely to become to the affairs of the country."

"Particularly to the happiness and prosperity of the people," spoke up the humanitarian.

"And most particularly to the monetary interests," struck in the capitalist.

"Our work, in the main," went on the professor, "is correlative. We are here to give you a hearing and to take such steps to remedy the evil as may seem advisable."

"Why didn't you wait on me like honest gentlemen in my office?" demanded the aggrieved Jethro. "Why did you deceive me with a forged note, and why have you made me a prisoner in this fashion?"

"Because," said the humanitarian grimly, "before we are done heroic measures may be necessary, and it will be well to make this investigation in secret."

Jethro's flesh began to creep. Yet he

was no weakling, and he was determined to stand fast for what he believed to be his rights.

"My business is none of yours," said he defiantly.

"When your business interferes with that of some ninety million people," answered the professor, "you can hardly limit the application of that recognized principle. Mr. Mydus, where do you get your gold?"

"Where a number of other highly respected men get theirs—out of the iron industry."

"How do you get it? What is the secret whereby you transmute so much iron into another and more precious metal?"

Jethro was silent. The professor went on:

"We have had detectives searching your Shelbyville foundry. They find nothing but iron. Where are your forges, your crucibles, your retorts?"

"I have none."

"How much money have you in bank?"

"Upward of fifty millions."

"How far do you intend to go in this hoarding of wealth?"

"As far as I please."

"Has it never occurred to you that the more you make, beyond a certain point, the less you will be worth?"

"Is that the case with other millionaires?" queried Jethro.

"Your wealth is tangible, ponderable, the thing *per se;* that of other millionaires is potential. You produce the gold itself, while others are satisfied with its equivalent in paper."

"I do not hoard it," answered Jethro. "As soon as the gold is ready it goes into the channels of trade."

"Ah, there's the point! Your production of gold is limited by the output of the iron mines alone. As soon as made you throw it upon the market. Before long you will have kicked the props out from under the gold standard—then will come commercial chaos, and you will go down to ruin with the rest of the country."

"I will not split hairs with you on that point," said Jethro.

"You have already more money than a man can spend in the course of his lifetime," proceeded the professor, "and you must desist before the danger line is reached."

"I will not desist!"

"In other words you will not be reasonable."

"Are other millionaires reasonable? Do you decoy them into obscure places and tell them to quit piling up their funds? Why have you singled me out for investigation?"

"I have already explained that your riches are——"

"Enough!" cried the humanitarian, jumping to his feet. "He is obdurate, and there is nothing left but to take extreme measures. To spare untold misery to the people at large we must make an end of him. The old mill-race is deep and convenient; let him be hurled into it without further delay. Shackled as he is to that piece of iron, he will not be able to save himself. Over with him, my lads!"

The two strapping rogues stooped to pick up the ingot. Just then the professor interfered.

"Wait!" said he mildly, drawing a small phial from his pocket. "I have in this bottle an antidote for the perils that threaten us—and it has the advantage of being painless."

"And the disadvantage of leaving a clue!" returned the humanitarian hotly. "I demand that he be dropped into the water."

"And I," answered the professor, losing his temper, "will not agree to a method so coarse and barbarous."

As the two gentlemen stood glaring at each other the capitalist arose and stepped between them.

"My friends," said he, "this proceeding may well wait a few days. Let us give Mydus a chance to change his mind. Reflection, no doubt, will cause him to see the matter in a different light. Shackled to the ingot, and with our two guards to watch him, he will be safe enough. And though he is benefiting by this period of grace, he is not working at his foundry."

"His absence will cause comment and investigation," returned the humanitarian. "Searching parties, no doubt, will be sent to look for him!"

"If a searching party heads this

way," parried the capitalist, "Mydus can be gagged and dropped under the mill-floor."—

"We are playing with fire," muttered the humanitarian.

"If we are careful until Monday," said the capitalist, "no conflagration will be started."

There was some further talk, and while his fate was being discussed Jethro preserved a profound silence. In the end the capitalist carried his point, the three departing and leaving the prisoner in the hands of the two ruffians.

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday were days of torture for Jethro. Between the upper and the nether millstones the life was likely to be ground out of him.

No searching parties came near the ruined mill during those days. The waters of the race rippled unceasingly in his ears—humming a dirge that in no wise ministered to his peace of mind.

Life was sweet to him, but not so sweet as the unlimited power this committee of three was endeavoring to wrest from his hands. Food was furnished him, but the length of his chain was the measure of his liberty.

He dared not call aloud because of his watchful guards and the weapons they significantly displayed. Day and night he could but sit on his ingot and think.

And strangely enough, he gave two thoughts to his secretary where he gave one to his own prospective fate. The monotony of the three days was broken by members of the committee who visited him severally and by stealth.

On Friday night the capitalist came, ordered the guards to one side and proposed that Jethro give him a half interest in his receipt for transmuting iron into gold. This concession was to insure Jethro his immediate liberty.

Jethro refused, and the capitalist waxed wroth and went away.

Saturday night the professor showed himself, tendering a similar proposition. He, also, was refused.

And Sunday night, lo the humanitarian came and, for an interest in Jethro's business, promised to eliminate the race from his perspective. He took himself off, baffled and vowing vengeance.

Jethro was not a little amused. While the committee, as a whole, was anxious to go to any extreme to save the country, separately its members were most willing to prosper themselves at the country's expense.

There were no laws on the statute-books making the amassing of legitimate wealth a capital offense. The lawmakers might have evolved emergency measures, but even emergency measures took time, and Jethro was proceeding at such a rate that anything like a Fabian policy invited disaster.

Those who might cavil at Jethro's attitude during this period of his fortunes cannot refuse him their admiration. Guarded by ruffians, under sentence of death and shackled to the very source of his mysterious wealth, he could yet remain firm, sit on his ingot, and enjoy the greed of the committee.

Monday morning Jethro turned his batteries on his guards. They were each receiving five dollars a day for their assistance in the worthy work of freeing the country of its impending "yellow peril."

If it were possible to bribe their employers, how much easier would it be to subsidize the men themselves? Jethro made the attempt and was staggered with a curt refusal.

He offered to turn the ingot to gold and give it to them. They would have none of it. Then he mounted by hundred-thousand-dollar jumps until he was offering the rogues a million apiece, but they laughed in his face.

Verily, thought Jethro, the country must be on the road to ruin when professors, humanitarians, and capitalists had their probity discounted by a pair of five-dollar-a-day assassins.

Monday noon a messenger came to the old mill with a note, brief, but to the point:

> Despatch the prisoner immediately in any effective way best suited to your convenience.

From this, Jethro was tempted to think that the committee had allowed him three days of grace merely for the purpose of engineering a private deal. No effort was made to discover whether he had undergone a change of heart. The order for execution arrived without any frils in the shape of provisos.

A little time was allowed Jethro in which to make a will. He drew it himself on the back of an old envelope, leaving all his funds to his secretary. His "forty," together with some three hundred cows and the good-will of the dairy business, he bequeathed to Uncle Ez.

The executioners witnessed the instrument; after which Jethro gave one his diamond ring and the other his watch, shook hands with them gratefully and walked toward the race. As he walked, his executioners rolled the ingot after him.

To this mill, where his father had refused to toll the grain of the poor man and the widow, Jethro had brought his own grist only to have it tolled to the uttermost.

Before they had fairly gained the decaying platform that overlooked the old wheel and the race, voices were heard, accompanied by a hurry of footsteps.

Jethro raised a shout, and an answer was returned from the other side of the ruin. The ruffians swore roundly.

"Over with 'im!" growled one, "an' then cut for the timber."

Jethro hung back, struggling with all his might. One of the men laid hold of him and the other, with tremendous energy, heaved at the iron.

So fiercely did they labor that Jethro and the ingot slipped from the platform at the same identical moment. Without tarrying, the ruffians dodged away into the sheltering bushes farther along the bank of the race.

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE VERSUS COLD CASH.

THE young Crœsus of Coon Hollow cheated death by a slip of the dice. It was the mill-wheel that did it.

The wheel was battered and almost gone, but it still held together. In their haste the ruffians dropped Jethro on one side of the wheel and the ingot of iron on the other.

Jethro's head and body were half-submerged and he hung in a reversed position, held by the ingot on the opposite side of the wheel and the section of chain between. The mass of suspended iron caused the wheel to do something it had not done for years, and that was to *turn*.

Yielding to the weight dangling from its periphery it started to revolve with a creaking groan, attracting the instant attention of Miss Mabel Perkins (the secretary), Neb Hanchett, and Uncle Ez.

These three formed the relief party which had arrived upon the scene in the very nick of time. Hearing Jethro's shout they had rushed through the mill to the platform.

As they stood spellbound, looking at the wheel, Jethro was turned into sight and gave a spluttering call for help. Uncle Ez grabbed at him, with the result that both were dragged into the waters of the race.

Neb Hanchett caught Uncle Ez, and Miss Perkins laid hold of Neb Hanchett. Even with so many to aid him it looked, for a few moments, as though the ingot would accomplish its fell purpose.

Uncle Ez, clinging with a life and death grip to his future prospects—which were wrapped up in Jethro—was hauled out on the edge of the platform; then he and the constable, by main strength, pulled Jethro, chain, and ingot, clear of the waters.

"Well, now," muttered the startled constable, "how'd he ever get in that fix?"

"My boy, my boy!" whimpered Uncle Ez. "If anything had happened to you, what in the world would have become of the firm?"

Jethro was drenched to the skin, and contact with the old wheel had given him a partial coating of green moss. But he was alive, and as he looked at his secretary and saw a suggestion of tears in her eyes he was very, very thankful.

Lifting himself, he resumed his old seat on the ingot.

"Thank you, my friends, for rescuing me," he said, holding his head on one side and cuffing his ear to free it of water. "You came just in time to be of service. Had you delayed a moment, the waters would have closed over my head forever."

Miss Perkins shuddered.

"It was only by the barest chance, Mr. Mydus," said she, tremulously,

"that we happened to be here. We have missed you——"

"You have missed me!" murmured Jethro.

"For more than three days," the secretary proceeded. "A short time ago I chanced to find a letter on your desk, asking you to come to this place alone, last Thursday night. I showed the letter to your uncle, and he went at once for Mr. Hanchett; then we three hurried here as fast as we could come. What happened to you?"

"Let us not talk about it," answered Jethro, after a period of thought. "What took place in the old mill is of no interest to anybody apart from myself. I have been saved," he smiled. "and that is the main point."

Nor could he be persuaded to open his lips or breathe a whisper concerning the committee of three and their desperate attempt to do away with him. Uncle Ez returned to the village. When he came back Hiram Noggs was with him, and Hiram Noggs carried a cold chisel and a sledge.

"It'll cost ye five dollars, Jethro," said the smith, "to git rid o' that chain."

"Outrageous!" exclaimed Jethro. "Why, man, it won't take you more than ten minutes."

"Go ahead, Mr. Noggs," said the secretary; "it is useless to debate a question of so much importance."

"But, Miss Perkins!" exclaimed Jethro. "Because a man has a little money that is no sign——"

"You can call at the office to-morrow, Mr. Noggs," proceeded the secretary complacently, "and receive your five dollars."

Jethro was silenced. In something less than a quarter of an hour the ankle iron was removed.

"The ingot and chain belong to me, Mr. Noggs," warned Jethro, as he started away. "I will have an expressman call and get them."

When Miss Perkins, Jethro, and Uncle Ez had disappeared, Hiram Noggs turned to Neb Hanchett.

"When that there boy hadn't nothin' in the world but that tax title to his forty," said he, "he'd 'a' divided his last dollar with anybody that asked him."

"That's so," said Neb Hanchett.

"The question is," proceeded Hiram Noggs, "if he's as near as that on fifty millions, what'll he be on a hundred?"

"Don't fret, Hiram," said the constable, half closing one of his eyes in a suggestive wink. "You seen what that girl done? Mebby Jethro won't be so near by the time Miss Perkins has more of a say in his affairs. Haven't ye noticed——" Neb Hanchett finished with a telling silence.

"Sho!" cried Hiram Noggs. "Why, I thought that when Luella went an' married Bud Brackett——" And the smith paused with an expressive hiatus.

"So did I," chuckled Hanchett, "but it's hard to figger out these things."

Uncle Ez, on the journey townward, had fallen behind Jethro and the secretary.

"Of course, Mr. Mydus," said Miss Perkins, "you'll do something handsome for Mr. Hanchett."

"Of course I will," remarked Jethro generously. "To-morrow I'm going to send him a check for two dollars."

"Mr. Mydus!"

The secretary's tone was reproachful and she paused and looked at her employer steadily.

"Now, Miss Perkins," said Jethro hastily, "when Neb Hanchett works all day he makes two dollars. He didn't work more than an hour for me, did he? If I give him a day's wages for an hour's work isn't that doing the handsome thing?"

"It isn't the time that counts, Mr. Mydus," said the secretary, "but the work that has been accomplished. You must give Mr. Hanchett a check for one hundred dollars."

"See here, Miss Perkins," said Jethro, "I'll admit your advice is usually pretty good, but I'm not going to set a pattern I can't live up to. If I gave Hanchett one hundred dollars, he'd hang around the office, day in and day out, trying to do something else for me. He gets two dollars, that's what he gets."

Jethro was wet and out of temper. Perhaps this had something to do with the way he spoke.

Miss Perkins walked along at his side for a few moments in silence. Then she remarked, calmly enough:

"I believe, Mr. Mydus, I can't work for you any longer. Will a week's notice be sufficient?"

Then it was Jethro's turn to stop and stare.

"Can't work for me?" he repeated. "Why—how——"

"I don't feel as though I wanted to work for a man who doesn't value his life at more than two dollars," pursued the girl.

"Ah!" said he, grimly, "you think a hundred comes nearer the mark?"

"A hundred cents," said she tartly, "if you haven't any more heart than your actions indicate."

Of course, the secretary's position did not warrant any such remark. Miss Perkins, however, was a young woman who always said exactly what she thought.

Jethro made no answer. A feeling of bitterness against Miss Perkins and all her sex arose in his breast.

Gradually—so imperceptibly, in truth, that Jethro had hardly noticed it—Miss Perkins had been usurping the niche formerly occupied by Luella. But the secretary was not yet so firmly enthroned that she could wage successful battle with a parsimony born of millions.

The young Crœsus wondered, at that moment, if a millionaire had a moral right to love any one, or anything, apart from his heaped-up dollars and bursting money-bags.

Love opens the door to so many doubtful policies calculated to make inroads upon a shrewdly garnered store. No, he, J. Napoleon Mydus, was dedicated to Mammon. That gift from Mars, falling almost at his very threshold, had signed, sealed, and delivered him to the God of Wealth—body and soul.

A change of garments, a warm meal, and a good cigar set the current of his thoughts flowing the other way.

He recalled how, when a long-haired person had called on him with an infernal machine, Miss Perkins had been the one to hurl the deadly contrivance from the window. She had saved his life; and all it had cost him was fifty dollars for having the street repaired! He had not raised her salary a penny; had hardly thanked her.

And yet, why had it been so pleasant for him to reflect over the emotion she had manifested on his account? Why was her deep interest in him nursed in his heart as a never failing delight?

Then, too, there was that glorious Fourth which they two had spent in Shelbyville. She had but just entered his employ, and yet he remembered how he had deferred to her wishes from that very hour—and had derived happiness from doing so.

Now she was about to leave him, and all on account of a little ninety-eight-dollar difference between her ideas of right and his own.

His night was sleepless. Arising late, he dressed, went into his office, sat down at his desk and wrote out a check for one hundred dollars, payable to the order of Neb Hanchett.

He was about to press the electric button which summoned the secretary from the outer office, when she opened the door and entered. Her face was rosy and her eyes like stars.

Ah, he thought, she was glad she was going to leave. It was pleasant to quit the service of a man whose life, judged by the amount of heart manifested by his actions, was dear at a hundred cents.

"Mr. Mydus," said the secretary, "Mr. Hanchett is waiting in the other room."

She brought one of her hands into sight and he saw that it contained a slip of paper.

"Brought his bill, has he?" asked Jethro. "What value does *he* set on the life of a Crœsus?"

"It is not a bill, Mr. Mydus," answered the girl softly. "It seems more in the nature of a hastily executed last will and testament. Mr. Hanchett found it in the old mill, and——"

Jethro caught it out of her hand.

"Did you read it?" he demanded.

"I glanced it over," she answered demurely.

"Oh, you did; you glanced it over." He tore it in pieces and cast it into his waste-basket. Then he leaned back in his chair, looked into her roguish eyes, and laughed. "Miss Perkins, there is a check for Mr. Hanchett. I had just finished writing it when you came in."

She reached for the check.

"Tell me," said he, "must I look for another secretary?"

"No-o-o," she answered slowly. Then, after looking at the check and starting for the door, she glanced back over her shoulder and added decidedly, "Certainly not!"

Then Jethro, flushed and happy, leaned over his desk, balanced a paper-knife on his finger and allowed his mind to dwell on many things not exactly in the line of business.

CHAPTER X.

THE STORM BREAKS.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4. Uncle Ez did not sell the motor car after all. Borrowed five hundred dollars on it of a man in Shelbyville.

Nice reputation he's making for Mydus & Mydus. One member of the firm borrowing money and the other member overloaded with funds! Redeemed motor car and had it brought to Coon Hollow. Anticipate some pleasant moonlight rides in it with secretary.

Various stories afloat concerning my three days' absence. The worst rumor has it I intended to commit suicide on account of Luella.

Have taken particular pains to convince secretary Mrs. Brackett is only a memory. Have purchased a revolver, and next time that committee of three makes a date with me they will have cause to remember it.

Close to a hundred millions scattered around in various banks. A great deal of my gold purchased by goldsmiths. It appears to be of a finer grade and more malleable than the ordinary article.

Tobe Easley called. Secretary urged me to see him, and did so. Bud Brackett did not sign a release, after all. Easley explained that his wealth in seven figures is late in arriving and that wolf is howling at Bud's door. Loaned Easley three hundred dollars. Consider it a doubtful move.

Some talk of running me for Congress. Asked the gentlemen who suggested it how much it would cost. Estimates varied all the way from fifty to one hundred thousand. Firmly but respectfully declined to make the race. Uncle Ez clamoring again. Says I gave Hanchett one hundred dollars for pulling me out of the race and that he—Uncle Ez—did as much as Hanchett.

Told Uncle Ez we'd compromise and that he could keep the five hundred he had raised on motor car. He left office in a huff.

Uneasiness in commercial circles most marked. Find myself wondering if that masked professor was talking sense or gammon.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5. Sent Mite Society $50, Ladies' Aid $100, Coon Hollow Association for Relief of Distressed Africans $25. Presented Parson Kirby with diamond ring—$75.

Secretary suggested first three donations, but seemed doubtful about the ring. Gave diamond to parson in morning and he brought it back in afternoon.

Was deeply grateful, etc., but Mrs. K. needed new dress, the little K's were out at elbows, and the parson himself stood in need of shoes.

Would I take back the ring and tender him its equivalent in cash? Did so. If I don't watch out, people will be calling me a philanthropist.

Waited on by delegation of bankers from Wall Street, with request that I desist from throwing any more gold on the market for six months. Asked them if they would also agree not to make any money for the same period?

They answered that they could not. I returned that neither could I. They went away wagging their hoary heads disconsolately.

Uncle Ez acting very suspiciously. Caught him prowling around foundry while I was at work, and he could give no lucid explanation as to why he was there.

Had tiff with secretary on account of creamery affair. Milk famine among farmers on account of my owning all the cows.

Secretary suggested that I sell cows back to original owners without any stipulation as to where milk should be sold. Secretary remarked that, if Mrs. Brackett is really a "memory," I should be willing to do that. What did she mean?

More signs of an upheaval in monetary affairs. Is it possible the members of that committee of three were more far-sighted than I?

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6. Sold cows back to their original owners at slight advance. Result: Coon Hollow creamery reopened and Bud Brackett again at the helm. Somehow I don't take it to heart as much as I thought I should.

Another tiff with secretary at nine A.M. She suggested that, as Farmer Higgins would never be able to do another day's work, I should present him with one thousand dollars. Quite a shock. I left outer office indignant.

At ten A.M. went back with thousand-dollar check and secretary took it out to the Higgins' place herself. Her eyes were red when she got back. Said the Higgins family had wept—that everybody had wept. Was inclined to weep, myself. Another thousand gone. Am no longer worrying as to what I shall do with my money.

More pig iron, more gold. Financial circles in a frenzy. Papers refer to me as the "Yellow Pig." They ought to send reporters out here to see what I've done for Higgins.

Western gold mines cannot compete with Shelbyville foundry and are closing down. Some syndicate is buying them at a tenth of their value and taking every mine offered. Who can be back of such a syndicate?

Secretary suggests that I close foundry for a while, but she does not realize how impossible it is for a man to stop making money.

Mail full of threatening letters as to what will happen to me if I keep throwing gold upon the market. My business is my own, I take it, and I will go my own course.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11. Merciful powers! Price of gold is going off and my weekly receipts are falling behind. Silver now ten to one and looking up.

Gold mines going for a song. Who are the fools that are buying them?

Financial and other papers continue their frenzied propaganda. They are advising the government to put me in the penitentiary and confiscate my plant. Am considering the advisability of paying the national debt, providing the United States will keep hands off.

People are refusing to notice me on the street. Secretary, Bud Brackett, and Farmer Higgins seem to be my only friends in this vicinity. Uncle Ez acting queerly, but have not the time to give him much attention.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18. Gold still falling, banks going under, people melting up their silver plate and getting as much for it as I am for my yellow metal.

Not a silver certificate in circulation—all in deposit vaults. Coon Hollow and Shelbyville banks both gone to the wall. Feeling very bitter against me all over the country. Secretary in great distress, insists that I take to the woods; declares my life is in danger.

Sent a check for $500,000 to a Boston hospital. It was declined with thanks.

Gold reserve of the U. S. worth only half what it was when I began operations. Emperor of Germany fighting mad, and declares his war chest all but ruined; Bank of England makes strenuous protest against allowing me to live and do business; France calls me a world-wrecker and threatens to declare war if I am not guillotined; every nation is in arms against me.

Yet I cannot stop making money; the more gold depreciates the more I must turn out in order to keep my receipts from diminishing. Secretary declares I am driving nails in my coffin, but she is a woman and cannot understand.

Where will all this end?

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21. Thank Heaven! For days I have been in a panic, but a measure of peace has come to me. Uncle Ez has made off with the Gift from Mars!

He has been acting very strangely of late. Since the day I caught him in the foundry, lurking behind a pile of iron while I was at work, he has been haunting me—keeping at my heels like my shadow. He must have discovered where I kept the stone during these last few days, for when I entered my office this morning the safe was wrecked and the relic from the Red Star was gone. Now my power has passed from me and into hands that are even more unworthy. . . . . It is midnight. . . . . Secretary, wild with excitement, has just

hurried into the office where I am writing and informed me that Shelbyville foundry is in flames . . . also that an armed mob is marching upon Coon Hollow to make an end of me. . . . The automobile is at the door, having been made ready for me by Bud Brackett. . . . Secretary and I are to fly together, for the mob may not be in a mood to distinguish between the culpability of a confidential lieutenant—even though she be a woman—and the Crœsus himself.

The outlook is very dark. I am like a man stunned, and my one ray of comfort has reached me through Uncle Ez. In the midst of my bewilderment the thought that the stone is gone arouses hope of an anchor to windward. . . . But I must be away . . . there is not a moment to lose. Delay, at this time, is dangerous.

(To be continued.)

ONE MATINÉE TICKET.

By Bradley Vandaworker.

A LESSON to wives who have a mania for going through their husbands' pockets.

THE worthy Mr. Francis Scarlet was one of the city's most brilliant lawyers. Petite Pamelia was his wife. Both were fond of a little joke.

Mrs. Scarlet had a mania for clubs. She was an active member of several, which she attended religiously.

Mr. Francis Scarlet's one source of recreation was comic opera, for which he had a weakness; particularly opera of a spectacular nature requiring a large and good-looking chorus.

Upon the bill-boards there appeared the flaming pictures and large type announcing the coming of a much talked of musical extravaganza. Passing the box-office Mr. Scarlet was unable to resist the purchase of a seat.

The next morning as he donned his waistcoat a single thread broke and a button fell to the floor.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "I can't go into court with a button off."

"Stop at the tailor shop," suggested Pamelia sweetly.

"Won't have time. Clear out of my way," he replied desperately.

"Perhaps I can fasten it," smiled Pamelia.

With a sigh of relief he tore off the waistcoat, handing it to her as she returned with needle and thread. Then he went to the library to collect some papers on which he had spent the greater part of the night. These papers were to figure importantly in the trial.

After sewing on the button, Mrs. Scarlet gave the waistcoat a shake. A small envelope containing a matinée ticket fluttered to her feet. Hastily looking at the date she remembered the bills and pictures advertising the show—also, the nature of the entertainment.

"So! Mr. Francis Scarlet," she exclaimed. "You think you are going to be smart and sneak off to this sort of thing when your poor little wife is engaged with her club work! Well, sir, I'll just teach you a lesson."

Snatching up her scissors she cut down a postal card to the exact size of the ticket. Inserting the counterfeit she sealed the envelope, smiling serenely, and slipped it into the waistcoat pocket as Mr. Scarlet returned. Helping him on with his coat, she gave him a Judas kiss.

Under her work-box lay matinée ticket No. 5; Row 1; Center. Mrs. Pamelia Scarlet had made up her mind to use this ticket to see for herself just what sort of a show Spectacular Extravaganza was, and play Mr. Scarlet a trick that would not only teach him a lesson, but show him a woman's brain cleverer than his.

After a hard fought battle in the court-room Mr. Scarlet hung his hat in the office and sat down to talk it over with the other members of the firm.

Through the window across the roof beneath strayed the eyes of Francis. On a distant bill-board "Spectacular Extravaganza" were two words that stood out clearly in large type. Instinctively his fingers drew the envelope from the waistcoat pocket.

"By Jove! Lucky for me Pamelia did not find you," he soliloquized as he placed it in a drawer of his desk. "You'll be safer there."

Saturday morning Mrs. Scarlet flicked a speck of dust from his coat, straightened his tie, and put up her lips as usual.

"Will you be home early, Francis?"

"I shall be very busy to-day. Don't look for me till I come," he hazarded, hoping she would not put too many cornering questions. Turning in the door, he asked:

"This is your club day?"

"Yes. Shall I stop at the office for you?"

"No. You better not. I may be tied up in the court-room till dark. We've a tough case on to-day," he unblushingly affirmed.

"Very well," sweetly replied Mrs. Scarlet, with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

Precisely at two o'clock Francis Scarlet, with a flower in his buttonhole, entered the theater lobby. Tearing open the envelope he drew out the bogus ticket.

"What in thunder is this!" he exclaimed.

For some weeks small articles and loose coin had disappeared from the office. Suspicion lay between the clerks and the janitor. Naturally he attributed the loss of the ticket to the same source, for the envelope had lain in his unlocked drawer for several days.

Having an acquaintance with the opera house manager he explained the circumstances, with a view to catching the thief.

"Do you remember the location of your seat?" he inquired.

"No. 5; Row 1; Center."

"Go in and enjoy the show," suggested the manager. "I'll watch for the culprit."

"Should any one appear with the ticket have an officer arrest the person," instructed Scarlet, hurrying in.

Shortly a well-dressed lady presented ticket No. 5; Row 1; Center.

At a sign from the manager an officer approached.

"Guess you'll have to come 'long with me, lady."

"Sir!"

"You're under arrest," he affirmed.

"Arrested!" gasped the lady.

"I guess you know what that means all right. No use to try the innocent gag, for it won't work on this here cop. Better go 'long peaceably and save trouble," advised the officer.

"Not one step, sir," retorted Pamelia firmly, but losing color.

By this time the attention of the late comers was attracted and a crowd blocked the entrance.

"You'd better come to the corner and git in the hurry-up without no fuss."

"Do you know whom you are addressing," exclaimed Pamelia bravely.

"I know you stole that ticket. Perhaps you can explain what become of a lot of other things that have been missed from the office," insinuated the officer.

"Come, hurry her out of here," commanded the manager. "We can't have this blockade."

"I'm Mr. Scarlet's wife," informed Pamelia.

"That's a likely story. If you are he don't know it," retorted the manager.

"You can tell that to the sergeant," sneered the policeman, laying a heavy hand on her shoulder.

It was no use for her to expostulate. No one in the crowd had any acquaintance with clubs or club women; therefore Pamelia was not recognized.

Before she knew it she was rattling down the street in the patrol wagon. At the station-house she failed to convince any one of her identity. Dire threats of vengeance, and pleadings that would melt a stone made little impression upon the sergeant. The most she gained was permission to sit in his office until Mr. Scarlet appeared.

"Can't you summon him by 'phone?" she begged.

"Madam, Mr. Scarlet is not a man to be annoyed. You don't know him."

"Don't know him!" she shrieked. "Why, he's my husband."

The sergeant smiled, replying:

"Mr. Scarlet ordered your arrest. When the show is out he may come down to have a look at you."

"Mr. Scarlet ordered my arrest!" she stammered.

"If he should stop to tank up," he continued, "and forget to come, you'll be locked up until Monday morning."

The telephone bell rang and he took down the receiver.

"Hello! Yes, this is the police station. That you, Mr. Scarlet? We got her safe enough. Says she is your wife. What's that? Wife gone to a club meeting. Describe her? Short, about a hundred and ten pounds, red hair and squinty eyes. Nose turns up a trifle. Well dressed, but looks as though she wasn't used to good clothes. You know they are all alike. What? Oh, yes, I'll hold her till Monday morning. Good-by."

Calling the matron, the sergeant gave orders to have the prisoner held for trial.

Back to his seat went Mr. Scarlet for the final act. No one laughed louder or applauded the comedians more than he. After the show he met a number of friends and took on a few high-balls. By the time he reached home it was nearly eight o'clock. The telephone bell was ringing furiously as he entered the house.

"Hello!"

"This is the police-station," answered the sergeant. "The lady has club membership cards with your wife's name——"

"Why didn't she show them in the first place?" interrupted Scarlet. "She's trying to fool you."

"Says she didn't think of it," continued the sergeant. "Of course she is lying but you'd beter come down and see about it. Don't look just right to me. Has your wife returned yet?"

"I guess so. Wait till I see. That will settle it."

The servant informed him that Mrs. Scarlet had not been home since early in the afternoon. Calling up the president of the club, he learned, to his astonishment, that Pamelia had not attended the meeting.

Securing a cab he drove to the station at break-neck pace.

When he entered the sergeant's office Pamelia threw herself into his arms, exclaiming:

"Francis! how could you do it! Take me away from here."

"It's all a mistake, sergeant. Come, Pamelia." In the door he turned and said sarcastically: "By the way, that was a damned good description you gave me. I hope you'll keep this quiet," and he hurried into the cab.

Not a word was said till they were nearly home.

Pamelia's hand stole quietly into his. Cautiously he gave it a gentle squeeze.

"Pamelia," said Francis, "did you take that ticket out of my pocket?"

"Yes," she timidly replied.

"Well, I guess after this, if you can spare the time from the clubs, we'd better attend matinées together."

"I'm going to resign from every one of them," she replied. Then looking up out of the tail of her eye she asked: "Do you think my hair red, and do my eyes squint?"

"That sergeant is a fool. Certainly *not?*"

"Really now, tell me the truth. Does my nose turn up?"

"Not to me, Pamelia."

"Then I don't mind, dear."

A MEMORY.

By Theodosia Garrison.

You came into my life for one brief day—
  Gave me the laughter of your lips and eyes,
Touch of your hand in mine, then turned away,
  Yet left these memories.

Ah, child, you brought strange sunlight to my gloom—
  So carelessly you gave a thing so fair;
As though one passed through some closed, haunted room,
  And dropped a flower there.

THE MAN IN HIS SHIRT SLEEVES.*

By Charles Edward Barns.

A serial of the sea and the strange adventures that befell a coatless hero.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

ACCORDING to the papers, Lieut. Daniel Mountjoy, after forty minutes' tardiness, deserts his bride, Marcia Van Brunt, in the middle of the marriage ceremony, and disappears.

As it chanced, an unexpected turn in the market had delayed Mountjoy, who was obliged to dress for the wedding in a cab as he drove from Brooklyn Heights to Gramercy Park.

A few days after the catastrophe Marcia is visited by Haydon Barr, who tells a remarkable story. Barr, an old friend of Mountjoy's, in severe straits, had come to New York to find him; not succeeding, he tried to commit suicide on Brooklyn Bridge. As he grasped a cable he suddenly heard his name called, as a half-dressed man rushed from a cab, stopped by a block in traffic, and attempted to seize him, failed, and shot over the bridge.

Barr got into the cab, put on the clothes he found, and waited to see what would happen, arriving presently at the church, where he was hailed as the bridegroom. He dared not carry the deception to a conclusion, but departed in haste, and after a severe mental shock awoke to find himself ensconced in luxurious hotel apartments. He found too that he had some stock certificates and sufficient memoranda to use them intelligently, and that the man whose place he had usurped was his old friend Mountjoy.

He read an account of the desertion in the paper, and also of a wireless message which is confusing the government, but which he thinks is from Mountjoy, whose life is apparently in jeopardy.

He convinces Marcia that there is some hope in the situation, and leaves for Washington to sift the mystery.

CHAPTER VIII.

LETTING SLIP THE DOGS OF WAR.

THE Secretary of the Navy was at breakfast. His thoughts were busy with a telegram received the night before from New York. Even now, over his coffee and toast, he glanced again at the yellow sheet with curiosity.

"So he has solved the mystery of the Roanoke wireless message, has he?" murmured the statesman. "And it 'discloses a gigantic conspiracy which involves the United States government,' does it, indeed? Well, we shall see before the day is over what sort of a madman this extraordinary person is——"

"Excuse me, sir," said the butler, entering. "A stranger has been here twice to see you this morning. I told him that you did not receive visitors before eleven o'clock, and then only at your headquarters. But he says that it is a matter of extreme importance, and he must see you."

"Does he look sane, William?"

"Quite so, sir, although you can never tell. However, you can depend upon me in any emergency. He seems greatly agitated, but I think he is harmless, sir. He says he has solved some sort of a cipher despatch for you——"

"Oh, that's the man, is it? Let's see, what's his name?" The secretary referred again to the telegram.

"Barr—Haydon Barr, is it? Well, tell Mr. Barr to come in for a moment, and mind you, keep close to his heels till I get a good look at him."

"Depend upon me, sir," returned the butler.

*Began May All-Story Magazine. Single copies, 10 cents.

A moment later the door was opened, disclosing a rather tall, determined, and altogether well-groomed person, who made a military salute and advanced a few steps. The butler dropped back, for he saw that all doubt of the stranger had left the secretary's mind.

"Mr. Barr?" said the secretary, motioning the stranger to a seat.

The visitor bowed acknowledgment.

"Thank you, Mr. Secretary."

"The man whose telegram I received last night, and who claims to have solved the Roanoke riddle, I presume. Well, you will oblige me by being as brief as possible. In fact, this is rather an extraordinary concession——"

"I realize that, sir," broke in the stranger, "and I am grateful. Yet, when I have told you my story, I fancy you will realize that this errand is an extraordinary one, and the one justifies the other."

He gave the butler a frown.

"William, you may go. If I require you I will tap this bell," commanded the secretary, as if to hint that his uniformed flunky might remain quite within hearing, though beyond doors.

"Proceed at once, please. Your despatch says that the solution of the strange message unearths a gigantic conspiracy which involves this government. This is a most alarming assertion, to say the least, sir."

"And yet, I assure your excellency," returned Barr, "that the statement is entirely borne out by the facts and by the investigations which I have made in more directions than one."

"You might as well begin at the beginning," said the host. "I believe I have a copy of the cipher despatch in question—yes, here it is. Well, sir, you might read that off for me, if you will, as you have unraveled it."

"Here is the entire message, with all the lapses restored," said Barr, drawing a sheet from his pocket and laying it upon the table under the secretary's eyes.

There was a long pause. Three times the secretary ran his eyes carefully along every line, as if half convinced upon one reading, but sorely doubting with the succeeding. Then he gave utterance to an expression of surprise and mystification as he turned toward the stranger.

"Most extraordinary—indeed, nothing short of a miracle," he exclaimed.

The other's face lightened. He had expected a rebuff, and here at the outset he was at least favored with a degree of credence.

"Would that every chapter in history were as demonstratable and clear as this," said Barr. "I have sounded every doubtful point. All I can say, sir, is—try me. Take up the sentences one by one. I will explain—indeed, I will verify everything."

The secretary readjusted his glasses.

"What about this brigantine Ariel, to begin with?" he asked, fingering the document. "Did you discover her owners?"

"A firm of lumber dealers from Maine. She has for some years been in the habit of making regular trips from Bath down the coast to New York, thence down to the Bahamas and even farther, taking on cargoes of dye-woods, returning to New York, landing her cargoes at a Greenpoint dock, above Brooklyn Bridge, in East River, then clearing again for Bath."

"And yet on this occasion——"

"That's just it. According to that despatch, instead of heading for the northwest as soon as she passed Sandy Hook in the fog, she turned about and struck off to the southeast."

"And this message?"

"Was sent from a distance, I should say, of three or four hundred miles east of Roanoke, about twelve days out."

"And how do you account for a vessel not fitted with the wireless system, as it seems impossible that this one could have been, delivering a message to the Roanoke station?"

"The imperfect transmision, sir, together with the fact that there were probably no receiving instruments on board the Ariel proves to me that there was a man on board to whom an expedient of this kind was as natural as for you to solve a problem in diplomacy."

"It would appear from this message that he is in a predicament just now that will cost him his head," said the secretary. "You know him?"

"Like a brother, sir. He once tried to save my life, and in so doing, came within a hairbreadth of losing his

own. It is with the hope of saving him that I wish to undertake, with the help of your excellency and the government, an expedition at once to overhaul the Ariel before she lands her cargo, and before my friend and comrade of years is taken out like a dog and shot."

"And this arch-conspirator 'Roderiguez'—who is he?"

"That, my dear sir, is a story of great length. But I know him well."

"Unfortunately, press of time forbids a long recital. Can you not sum him up in a nutshell?"

"Ah, sir, it is such a nut as will require all of Uncle Sam's ingenuity to crack. He is positively the most brazen, far-reaching, fearless and skilled mutineer that ever scuttled a ship of state or plotted the overthrow of a kingdom."

"But the island republic, whither the bark is bound with its cargo of conspirators and arms, as the message affirms, is not a kingdom——"

"Sir, most Latin republics to the south of us are republics in name, but little kingdoms in fact. Take this one, for instance.

"The constitution of this island republic provides that no president shall serve more than two consecutive terms. The present executive is now in his fourth.

"He has unlimited power of life and death over his people, all nominally free, but actually subjects. He has bonded the island for some thirty millions, a bare two per cent of which has ever reached the government treasury. The balance, after paying extortionate commissions and legislative bribes, has gone to his own private purse.

"He travels under armed guard like a sixteenth-century knight-at-arms, elects his own legislature, appoints his own ministers. Any subject of his power, rich or poor, who is at variance with his will, is invited to dine with the executive. *Voila!* he is never heard of again. Hundreds of citizens have been thus 'disciplined,' their estates confiscated by the government, which means its ruler, and hundreds more have been exiled through his tyrannies. Among these, I may name this rebel, Roderiguez."

"It looks like a case of jackal eating jackal, does it not?"

"Perhaps; and yet, can even this be permitted with tacit assistance from the United States? Is this not a direct violation of the Foreign Enlistment Act for any individual or body to conspire against a foreign country with which the United States is at peace, to arm and equip a vessel here for such a filibustering enterprise, and to sail on an expedition of war flying the American flag?"

"It is certainly a grave offense," granted the secretary. "And yet, are you quite certain that such is the case?"

"I have proved every allegation in that wireless message. The Ariel was bought by the conspirators through a Philadelphia firm. The money was paid in cash."

"Where did this money come from?"

"It came from dupes of Roderiguez. I myself, sir, I may confess, lost my entire fortune to this same rascal, escaping barely with my life."

"But these arms and munitions of war——"

"I have investigated that, and find the message speaks true. The Franklin Arms Company supplied three thousand rifles of their latest make. One firm in Connecticut sold the conspirators several million cartridges, which were smuggled in the night down the Sound to the brigantine.

"A Massachusetts manufacturer supplied the field guns and the ammunition for their use. Another furnished clothing; another saddles and bridles for the cavalry; another surgical instruments and necessities for a field hospital; and still another, thousands of machetes, pistols, and daggers.

"I challenge investigation by the secret service, your excellency, for I have been more than conservative—indeed, I have underestimated the strength of the invading mutineers.

"The expedition may cause the violation of the Monroe Doctrine by some foreign power, and more vital to me, it will be the certain death of my best friend. Moreover, your excellency, I have sworn to save him. Will you not help me to my duty, sir, by doing your own duty speedily and with decision?"

The secretary meditated long before he answered. "I believe you are telling the truth and the whole truth," he said

firmly. "Personally, I am satisfied. However, this is a grave matter. It involves nations. I must consult, I must set the secret service at work. All of this takes time——"

"Delay will be fatal, sir—fatal to the cause, fatal to my friend. There is barely time to intercept the expedition. You have two fast cruisers at Havana."

"Yes, but——"

"If you will only order them put in instant readiness! Meanwhile, within an hour, I shall take a special train for Tampa. By the time I have reached Tampa, sir, you will have sounded the wisdom of my advice and verified the truth of my every statement."

"I have intimated that I believe you incapable of deceit. And yet there is for me no alternative. I must investigate."

"Good; if I may say it, sir, I invite it."

"What is your full plan, then?" said the secretary, taking notes.

"To take a special at once, making all speed to Tampa. Thence proceeding to Havana, I can receive there such orders as you see fit to entrust me to execute. I know the islands perfectly—just where I can obtain pilots to pass the difficult channels and make a short cut, just where the rebel stronghold is, almost the exact spot where the landing will naturally be made, where the conspirators will unite with those who are awaiting them, and where the first stroke will be made. Cannot one cruiser, well equipped, be placed entirely under my command? In the circumstances, is this too much to ask?"

The statesman thought deeply.

"It is the most extraordinary request ever made of this department," he said at last. "I will not answer you now. I will merely counsel you to proceed at once to Havana. What will await you there will depend upon what I find out in the meantime, and upon what the President decides. This matter must be laid before him."

"Thank you, thank you!" cried the visitor.

"I need not enjoin you to the utmost secrecy," added the secretary.

"Secrecy and hard work—these shall attain all."

"You have funds?"

"Yes, more than enough for any emergency. God bless you, your excellency! I begin to live again. I shall be doing my government a service. I shall save a friend, and shall restore him to a good woman's love."

"Good-by, sir! And if we never meet again, I can at least say, in all sincerity and truth that I have believed from your lips a story I should believe from no other."

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT HAPPENED TO A GROOM ON HIS WEDDING-NIGHT.

THE man in his shirt sleeves opened his eyes.

A cluster of bright stars blinked down through a rift between a silvery lace of cloud. He seemed to be waking from a trance. In his ears was the sound of waters. What did it all mean? Where was he? How came he here?

Then he began vaguely to recall things.

At first, memory came in shreds and patches. Then there dawned whole scenes, episodes, designs; Wall street—Amalgamated Silver—the flight over the big bridge—the hasty toilet in the slow-moving coach; then the silence was broken by his weak cry.

"My wedding-day—great God! it is my wedding-day!"

The dreamer struck at the sides of his canvas prison. Peering over the verge, he saw through a forest of masts and sails a vast stretch of rolling sea. A hoarse voice came out of the stillness far below.

"Ho, ready about there—station for stays! Ease down helm! Haul spanker boom. Man weather an' lee crossjack braces! Man th' burtons! Ho, clew down that skysail there!"

A shudder ran along the mast, and the half-furled sail in which the man in shirt sleeves was cradled, began to rise slowly, rolling its burden toward the edge. A moment more and he would have fallen into the midst of a most astonished crew below.

There was barely time to seize a rope and throw one leg over the topgallant yard-arm, drawing himself up and bal-

ancing there like a culprit riding a rail, clinging for dear life. Yet here new terrors assailed him.

The ship had tacked to the southward. The flapping of the mist-drenched sails ceased. The man in his shirt-sleeves raised his eyes. Over the horizon, and above the fog, shot a shaft of white light. Then the man on the yard-arm realized that beyond it lay America, home, friends—all that he held dear, and dearest of all, Marcia.

Little by little it all came back to him: that chase from Wall Street, that halt half way across the bridge, that glance out of the window, the familiar figure on the great cables—the man contemplating the last desperate act of a ruined life. Haydon Barr!

He recalled how he had burst open the door and in shirt sleeves and stocking feet, leaped forward to seize his old comrade; how he had missed him by a finger-tip, and, slipping, had made that headlong plunge into the fog, to land in very midair flat on his back in the sails of a passing ship.

What would the world think of this desertion of a bride at the very altar? Still more, what would Marcia think? What were the poor girl's misgivings, her misjudgments, her terrors? Maddening as were these inner queries, they nerved him to further action. At least he must live to tell her the tale!

Little by little the man rallied and began to plan. He would climb to the decks below, go straight to the skipper, unfold the truth and offer him a thousand dollars—yes, ten thousand—to turn back to land. By daybreak the vessel would be within signaling distance.

Then he began his perilous descent.

To climb from a swaying ship's upperworld down the breadth of the topgallant topsail and through an intricacy of tarred rope and a confusion of ladders in the murk of fog and night is a task that would challenge any man in his full senses and strength. To the man in his shirt sleeves, weakened by shock, the ordeal was trying indeed.

Time and time again he paused in the downward course, and was half tempted to cry out for help. Still, not knowing what manner of people manned the decks below, he hesitated, gathering strength and struggling on to the end. At last he reached the deck and sank to his knees. He glanced weakly up and down the fog-obscured spaces, but the great decks seemed all deserted. Only the lapping of the waves against the ship's sides and the occasional creaking of the stays and yard-arms above broke the silence.

For a long time he sat there in doubt. Then, during a slight clearing of the mist along decks, he espied a light bursting through a skylight from a cabin below.

"They are there," he muttered. "Let me creep over and see what manner of creatures these are who have become, without knowing it, my rescuers."

So, saying, he crept over the damp decks toward the comforting gleams.

Beside the cabin skylight he paused, and, craning his neck cautiously over the nearest of the little windows, he looked into a wide cabin crowded with men. At first he could not distinguish forms and features, but after wiping the mist from the heavy pane, he bent closer, and his heart leaped. The picture below him was enough to turn the tide of confidence into new channels, and to drive away instantly every assurance of safety and hope.

Surrounded by a circle of, perhaps, a hundred men, each armed, with drawn sword in one hand and revolver in the other, stood a trio. They were bent over a blindfolded and shackled figure. The muzzles of two revolvers were pressed to either temple, and a sword's keen edge rested upon his sallow neck, while before him was a man in the full military uniform, who seemed to be administering an oath, which the poor creature beneath him was repeating with shuddering and halting accents.

The eavesdropper huddled down closer, laying his ear against the pane. Even with his imperfect knowledge of Spanish, he caught some of the following detached phrases:

"And you solemnly swear . . . . upon penalty of death . . . . your wife and children removed by the sword . . . . and all your goods and properties confiscate . . . . . that you will stand by the flag of the new republic . . . . . swearing allegiance in all

things to . . . its new chief executive . . . . . doing his bidding in all things and at all times . . . . . vowing with him to overthrow the present tyrant ruler of Santo Morro and all his aides and officers in power . . . . . removing them by shot and sword . . . . . or driving them into the jungles to perish . . . . and that on the promise of myself, the chief executive of the new administration, to reward your faithfulness to him and to his cause . . . . . I will stand ready to lay down my life at the command of my superiors . . . . . or if need be to uphold my oath to the new constitution. . . . . And further do I pledge myself . . . . . "

The eavesdropper started, for he thought he heard a step beside him. Tremblingly he looked about him as if he expected a desperado to leap out of the shadows and pounce upon him.

But no; there were no eyes upon him from the gloomy depths, and for the moment at least he was safe. The decks had evidently been cleared of all the sailors save the watches during these ceremonies, and all who might turn eavesdroppers and thus learn the desperate aim of this strangest expedition that ever left American shores, were safely locked up in the cockpit far forward, where they would remain safe till the solemn rites were done. The man in his shirt sleeves was the sole witness beyond the pale, and he realized it.

"What sort of a ship of demons have I blundered into?" he muttered, as he sank down again and watched the oath-bound crew at their satanic ordinances. Long he gazed and listened, catching phrases here and there, watching intently every secret ceremonial.

Then, at last, the conviction came that he was indeed a prisoner; that to make himself known was useless, perhaps fatal; that hope of turning back was vain; that he was bound on a long and terrible voyage to war and not to some haven of peace; and that fortunate indeed would he be ever to touch dry land even in chains.

"To hiding!" he muttered, perceiving that the ceremonies were about to close, and fearing that the decks would soon be alive with the armed and desperate rebels. "I must find refuge and think out a course, for to give myself up now would mean death."

Then, as he slunk into the shadows, he added bitterly:

"And this is my wedding-night, my wedding-night—my God! can it be true, can it be true?"

CHAPTER X.

A SHIP DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF.

MEN searching for some expedient in a desperate extremity will be satisfied with small favors from Providence when at other times and under less perilous circumstances they would reject greater bounties.

Often the first thing to come to hand may be turned to good account by one skilful enough to seize upon its saving grace, and so was it with the man in his shirt sleeves. Making his way over the decks, keeping well out of the starboard lantern's betraying beams, he pursued his search here and there till he happened upon the great barrel at least four feet in diameter, with its canvas-top cover, which holds fresh water for the crew.

In order to cool his parching throat, he raised the lid, reaching the hollow of his hand down into it to scoop out a comforting draft. But the furthest stretch of his arm did not bring up water.

"Well," he whispered, "if it cannot serve one purpose, perhaps it can another."

Raising the lid still higher, seizing the stays of the davits above, he drew himself up over the verge, and then let himself down slowly till his feet touched bottom. There he stood upright neck-deep in the hollow cylinder which to the bottom was dry as a bone.

"A safe hiding for the night," he said with a chuckle, forgetting for the moment his physical ailments, his fear of what might take place on the morrow, his hunger and thirst. Crouching down in his strange prison, he folded his arms and thought.

Eight bells!

"Midnight!" exclaimed the solitary in his cell more narrow than ever anchorite's in the caves of the Nile.

Twelve o'clock, but was all well? How little do we know indeed what a day will bring forth! That very morning more than joyous in the prospect of the happiest hour in a man's career, lingering throughout the day to gather just one more shred of Wall Street quotation, perhaps achieving just one more *coup* for her dear sake, and then, because of this very chase after phantom success, brought face to face with death and ushered through the valley, as it were, into a purgatory of perils and uncertainties such as heroes seldom face unflinchingly.

And Marcia! Where was she? Sobbing her heart out, praying, hoping, doubting, trusting, listening still for every sound near or afar that might bring tidings of him she so loved. Realizing her sorrow and doubt, and yet powerless for all his wealth and youthful strength to accomplish the miracle of her enlightenment, the situation was maddening. Restlessly he chafed the side of the barrel, resolving once more to tempt fate, if only for a moment's respite. He was only too glad, as will appear, to hurry back to his shelter.

The patter of bare feet along the decks proved to him that it was no phantom ship upon which he had unwillingly embarked. Rising, he peered from under the canvas cover of his hiding place. Men in sailor-garb, swarthy and rugged, barefooted and bare of arms, were running hither and thither in answer to commands.

"Ho, lay aloft the quarter watch! Clear the riff-points! Man topsail halyards, tend braces! Hoist away, trim yards. Reef out o' course! Ease away! Aye, aye! Lay down from aloft!"

At intervals these gruff calls sounded, and the creaking of the great tackles told of the unreefing of the sails to make better speed in a light breeze.

The man in his shirt sleeves tried to scan the faces of the sailors as they ran up and down the decks, but he could not make out their nationality.

"At least they understand good Down-East marine dialect," he said to himself with somewhat of reassurance, for the scene below decks had given him more and more a feeling of remoteness from his native land and his fellows.

The voices died down and the pattering of feet ceased, and again the desire to steal from his hiding place and take a final peep into the cabin below overcame the lone watcher.

"It may help me solve my problems the sooner," he said; for two passions now consumed him, making him forget all else—to remain in hiding till he could see his way clear to make himself known without danger to his life, and then, more difficult task, to devise some method of reaching land with all safety and speed.

He stole from his concealment, creeping almost on all fours back to the gleaming cabin skylights.

The scene was as before, save that in place of a crouching novice taking the oath of allegiance to his chief, there was a small table upon which were spread sundry maps and documents, about which was gathered the same determined body. Their swords were now sheathed and their revolvers hidden.

One of the skylights had been raised to admit the air, and beside it the eavesdropper now crouched, not daring watch lest he be himself watched, but hearing all and gathering the import of every syllable "Then it is understood?" said the leader in uniform, raising his flaming black eyes.

"It is, Mr. President," said a voice in muffled tones.

"We shall approach the island from the north. There we shall find the trail, the speediest into the thickest of the jungles where our two thousand comrades-at-arms await us."

"But if they fail, general?"

"Fail? How is it possible? There are no cowards among my adherents. All they want is arms and ammunition, cold steel and hot lead. With our three thousand stand of arms, our four million rounds of ammunition, our five field guns, our machetes—everything——"

"True, true! They cannot fail us. They love liberty too much——"

"And hate tyranny. Have I not planned it all, my comrades? Ah, night and day all the best years of my youth and manhood, I have been dreaming of this hour when I should gather about me such brave men and dedicate my life with theirs to the cause of the fatherland, the most glorious country of all the earth."

"Heaven preserve her!" broke in a voice, vibrant with enthusiasm.

"Yes, my heroes," continued the speaker, in his grandiloquence so characteristic of Latin-America, "I have ferreted out every secret of the present accursed government, learned every vulnerable spot whereon to strike. I have made myself familiar with every trail across country to the capital. I have leagued with my cause thousands of the peasantry, who will rise up and follow me to victory."

"Victory, my general! Nothing short of complete victory, overwhelming——"

"Tell me, have I left undone anything that human ingenuity could devise or that skill and daring could avail to achieve so great a triumph?"

"Nothing, nothing!"

"So be it! Who can fail with God and these right arms to the rescue of a downtrodden people? Wine, more wine! Fill to the brim, my comrades—more, more! I am drunk with patriotism to-night, mad with joy, for I have faith in our victory. Drink, to the new republic, drink! God save her!"

"To the new republic!"

"To its chief executive!"

"To all of us—one and all, forgetting none!" cried the commander.

It was a wild, weird scene, and made a deep impression upon the eavesdropper, who could not restrain a desire to steal now and then a glimpse into that orgie of rebellion and battle. The man in gold lace and epaulets ran on like a torrent that had burst its confines.

"Ah, my heroes, fame, wealth, glory, all await you—the rewards that follow great deeds of valor and sacrifice, rewards worthy of emperors, warriors, and kings. What have we to fear?"

"Nothing, nothing!"

"Truly, nothing! We have slipped out of the 'great white republic of the north,' our vessel laden with enough powder and dynamite to blow Santo Morro into eternity if she does not yield.

"And now the parting toast; for already it is growing late, and we have work in secret to do as soon as we are well out to sea, which will be on the morrow. Thus, heroes, let us drain to the last drop this token to the victories that shall come after, in proof of the precious oath to the fatherland, for even so did our noble Spanish forebears in elder days on the eve of battle. To the new republic! Victory! victory!"

A great shout shook the venerable hull. All drank to the dregs, returning their glasses to the table bowl down.

"Bravo, bravo!" cried the chief gratefully. "Gentlemen, remember that we shall recall this glorious hour many times when we shall have achieved our high estate. You, general, because of your fidelity to my cause for many years, shall be my Minister of War."

"I thank you, your excellency."

"And you, my worthy compatriot of the mountains, shall be my Minister of the Interior. And you, worthy son of a noble Spanish line, shall be my Minister of State."

"Long live your excellency!"

"And as for the others, each shall have his due reward. Trust me and fear nothing. There is one propitious hour of promise in every man's life: behold, beloved comrades, this hour is mine!"

"May it lead to victory!"

"And now, noble brothers, the pledge! Then we shall part for the night. I shall remain on watch till the darkest hour before the dawn, for sleep has been denied me these many days. Come; is the last mooted point covered? Is the final word said?"

"It is, your excellency."

"Then, the pledge! Up, heroes all! The pledge!"

"The pledge, gentlemen!"

"With drawn sword, remember, thus! Now, altogether! 'Before the God of our fathers, do we here, collectively and individually, solemnly and devoutly swear that we will follow our leader and chief executive, by the will of the people, Don Isodore Roderiguez, president of the new republic of Santo Morro, in his conquest of the fatherland now fallen into the hands of a tyrant usurper, standing by him and his cause through flood and fire, recognizing no other temporal authority above his, promising faithfully to maintain him in office and power once attained, to support his constitution, by force of arms if need be, against foreign or other foe, faithful unto death!'"

"So be it!"

"Hark! brothers. Who is there?"

"What is it? Why this interruption?"

"One of the guards is at the door. He demands instant admission."

"Let him enter. Hush, gentlemen! Señor, have I not given orders that nó one shall interrupt our council?" The executive spoke in tones of great displeasure.

"But, your excellency, there is cause for some alarm," said the guard, advancing into the silent circle.

"Speak! What is it?"

"My comrade on the port side of the vessel fears a spy is aboard."

"A spy? Impossible! Was not every nook and cranny searched before our clearing? Was not every man inspected as he came aboard?"

"That may be, your excellency; but a stranger has been seen, neither a sailor nor one of us, darting hither and thither in the mist and darkness—a man in his shirt sleeves."

"Impossible! However, we will search the ship; and if a spy is found, you know the penalty: he shall be burned at the stake—burned alive. That is the law."

"Some vagary of the sentinel's mind, general. I myself went from garboard-strake to skysail, and found nothing suspicious. He dreams."

"But he swears to it, gentlemen. He says that even now the spy in hiding may be listening to this very conference——"

"Then he shall answer to me!" bellowed the chief, shaking with rage. "What, spies aboard?—eavesdroppers, mouchards, traitors? Prepare, gentlemen! search the ship, and no quarter without the password, mark you that! Shoot down the first man aft without the password! Come; to the search!"

With drawn weapons the conspirators made a dash for the various exits, each intent on murder to prove the sincerity of his pledge.

"Back to the barrel for me!" mused the man in his shirt sleeves above, creeping silently along the deck among the shadows like a crab, lifting the cover of his prison house and swinging himself in again by the aid of the davit-stays.

Then, as he heard the tramp of many feet and, peering out, saw the flash of weapons through the murk, he crouched low in his bulging den, scarcely breathing.

"Enough excitement for one man's wedding-night," he mused ironically. "There is only one way out of this now for Danny Mountjoy. That is to turn rebel and join the mutineers!"

CHAPTER XI.

A MEAL THAT ALMOST COST A LIFE.

THE noise of feet over the deck soon died away. Now and then a sailor came aft, scuffling up the rigging at the commands of his superiors, but otherwise the monotony was unbroken.

The weary and distressed prisoner in his cramped position in the barrel fell into slumber, but it was full of troubled visions and fears that brought a quaking chill with every suspicious sound. At last the bells sounded two o'clock. Rising from his cramped position the man in his shirt-sleeves peered out along the decks. He was again seized with an irresistible desire to explore.

The more he glanced about him, the greater became his wish to leap out at all hazard. Besides, hunger and thirst urged him on almost to any risk.

"I'll just see if there is not at least a drop of water in sight," he muttered, growing bold through very familiarity with the situation. Men in like predicaments have accomplished the heroic, first of all through sheer stress of necessity.

Climbing over the edge of the barrel, he moved along the deck until he stood once more beside that open skylight. He peered within the cabin. All was silent now, but there was still a single lamp burning above the table, littered still with the remains of an informal feast.

The sight of the viands, the tempting fruits and the wines ravished him with such a desire for food and drink that he did without hesitation what at first he would have considered certain death to attempt—he raised the skylight softly, braced it, then thrust his head and shoulders down into the silent chamber.

Oh, if he only had something with which to reach the food and drink! As it was, thinking the cabin untenanted, he softly slid through the open skylight,

seized the lamp-hanging and swung free, dropping on his tiptoes upon a soft rug.

What joy! What relief! He poured a glass of wine with great care, drinking the full goblet almost at a gulp. It was like a saving grace from high heaven.

Another bumper; and then reaching for an inviting cake just beyond, he murmured to himself, "at least these mutineers know what is good to eat and drink. Well, they may enjoy it while they can. God knows how long their honeymoon with the God of War will last——"

Bang!

Out of the obscurity rang a pistol-shot.

Bang!

Another.

The man in his shirt sleeves turned abruptly, thrusting his arms into air, one hand clenching a biscuit, the other palm outward in token of submission. A slight sting at his elbow apprised him that he had been hit, and blood began to run down his upraised arm.

"Gentlemen, I surrender!" he said. "Don't shoot, for God's sake!"

"*Por Dio!* Who are you?"

"Come out of your hiding and I will tell you. I am an American—I am a gentleman."

"You lie! You are a spy——"

"Shoot him down!" cried a voice in Spanish.

"No; he cannot move save on peril of his life. Let us inquire further. It may be to our interest."

Advancing a step, the man in the uniform of a general disclosed himself, never once lowering the two cocked revolvers which were aimed straight at the stranger's breast.

"Drop what you have in your hand there!" he commanded in English.

The biscuit fell to the floor.

"Do not fear," said the unwelcome visitor. "I am well able to pay you for my little repast——"

"Pay for it?" answered the apprehender, savagely making a thrust forward as if to lunge the very pistol's muzzle through his vitals. "Spy that you are—traitor, dog! You shall pay dearer than you know. Come forward, men. Search him!"

It now seemed as if the whole rebel band had heard the shots, for by scores they came stampeding into the cabin, half-attired, but all armed and eager for combat.

They met only one stalwart and composed American in his stocking feet, hatless, in evening-dress shirt and broadcloth trousers, facing them with calmness. Rough hands were laid hold of the stranger. He was quickly searched.

"Any weapons?" said the general.

"No; your excellency."

"Anything at all that will serve as a clue to his identity—anything whereby we may connect him with a plot to betray us?"

"Nothing, sir."

The chief advanced. "Who are you?" he demanded in fair English.

"I am Lieutenant Daniel Mountjoy, an American——"

"Ah, he is an officer. That looks bad," said a bystander in Spanish to a disrobed comrade.

"An army man, eh?"

"No; I was, years ago. At present I am merely a Wall Street broker, and this is my wedding-day," was all he could stammer. There was a strange pause.

"He is insane, your excellency. His wedding-day—piff!"

"Insanity is sometimes a good cloak," said the leader in Spanish. Then to the prisoner, "How did you come here?"

"I fell from Brooklyn Bridge, sir," was the prompt response.

The general ground his teeth.

"I warn you, be careful! I have the power of life and death over you. Such senseless replies as these drive me frantic——"

"But I protest, sir, I am telling the truth——"

"Silence! Why did you come here—what was your object?"

"I tried to save a friend from committing suicide on the big bridge. I reached for him, missed him, fell, and landed in the sky-topsail of your brigantine."

"You landed *where?*"

The general fairly frothed at the mouth. Laying down one of his revolvers, he drew his sword and slapped the stranger straight across the face with the flat of the blade. It left a scarlet mark across the drawn whiteness.

"Coward, traitor, spy!" he screamed, "what have you to answer to that?"

"Nothing," said the other, "except—except, sir," he added in scathing tones an instant later, "whatever happens to me through your brutalities must be answered for to my government. I rather think you know 'the great white republic of the north' by this time——"

"He insults you! Run him through——"

"Cut him down, the spy!" cried another.

"At your peril!" said the stranger, straightening, for he saw that the mere mention of that phrase which serves as a firebrand to all Latin republics had inflamed the conspirators beyond their control, and most of all their chief, who stood perfectly rigid, evidently wavering by a hairbreadth whether to commit murder or suffer the stranger to live and elucidate the mystery of his presence. Finally the better sentiment ruled.

"I spare your life for the moment," said the leader in solemn tones, "not through any fear of any consequences should I shed your piggish blood, mark you that, but because there is some mystery here, and I wish to unravel it."

"What do you mean?" cried an elderly man from the rear, advancing with some authority. "There is no mystery here. He is a plain madman——"

"Madman or knave, he may have confederates," said the chief in Spanish. "Are you alone here?" he added, turning to the prisoner and speaking in English.

"Save for yourselves, I am alone."

"No aides or confederates?"

"Not that I am aware of. When men fall from bridges into the sails of passing vessels, they are not usually accompanied by comrades."

"No more of that bridge business," commanded the leader. "We are neither children nor fools. You will discover that before you are done with us. Men, bring the irons. We will shackle him down here and study his case like surgeons at a clinic; and if we have to use the knife to diagnose his malady, well, then—the knife, that's all."

"If you use the knife on me, you will have to cut clean through the Stars and Stripes first," admonished the captive.

"Great God! he understands Spanish——"

"And I perceive you undertsand English," answered the man in his shirt sleeves, bitterly.

The mainstay of the new republic merely glowered and waved his hand. "The irons, I said," he commanded. Then to the prisoner, "Do you know who we are?"

"No; but I can imagine. You are men of spirit and good intentions who are bound to free some country from tyranny," was the diplomatic answer.

"He seems to grasp the situation," interposed an officer.

"But beware lest you supplant a worse tyranny in its stead," added the captive.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that a stranger, unarmed and without even a penny or a passport, and yet a gentleman of honor, finds scant welcome among your people under your new administration. Such treatment as I have received, for instance, does not encourage the most desirable foreign immigration. You have probably noted that our people's welcome is much more gentle and brotherly."

The Spaniard was touched on the Latin's sensitive spot—pride in his liberality and hospitality toward strangers.

"But we are not yet a nation—we soon shall be, but until then we lead—what you call it?—the strenuous life." He showed his teeth with savage irony.

The chains were brought. They clanked ominously.

"See here!" said the man of expedients, grasping at a straw. "I tell you the truth of my coming; you do not believe. Very well. I admit that it is most amazing—unprecedented, indeed, almost beyond belief.

"But truth has that advantage over fiction, for we can work from fact back to imagination. Now, do I not look like a man of intelligence? Well, then, were I indeed a spy, could I not have invented some better—some more plausible tale to account for my presence here?"

"To what end is all this argument?"

"Just this. Investigate my story. If you do not find every word true, I will renounce my allegiance to Old Glory and become a subject of your new republic. How is that?"

The chief leered.

"We will go into consultation on that," he said craftily. "In the meantime, the chains."

"Chains!" echoed the prisoner, stiffening haughtily. "No man shall chain me——"

"No?" was the cutting retort. "Why not?"

"Chains for criminals," argued the stranger. "As for me——"

"Then perhaps a spy is a guest of honor, and should be given the freedom of the ship, the bridal suite, the larder, the wine-cellar. Well, you shall have all that is coming to you, my fine interloper. Sergeant, the chains, I tell you," he continued in Spanish to the aide at his left. "If there is resistance, you know well your business."

Instantly two of the insurgents leaped upon the unarmed captive. There was a struggle, and a third advanced, shoving the muzzle of a six-shooter full into the defiant countenance.

Two handcuffs of antique design, with a foot-long chain connecting them, were locked upon the white wrists. Then came the query, what were they to do with their white elephant, now that they had secured him.

"Below with the informer!" called out a graybeard insurgent. "He is already hearing and seeing too much here."

"Yet in the lower decks we drill, and there he would see and hear more. What's the matter with the forward quarters?"

"Too near the crew. He might stir up a mutiny."

"Overboard with the renegade!" said one rebel, more persistent in his fury than the rest. "Sharks tell no tales."

"Yes, yes! Overboard with him!" came the chorus.

Hands were laid upon the prisoner. He saw their intentions. "If I go overboard, some others go with me," he said in English, proving that he had understood their murderous resolve. "And first, there will be others to suffer——"

Snatching a short sword from the nearest of his enemies, he dashed to the deck and, turning about, defied the band, hampered though he was with the irons.

"Come on, you cowards! Come on, I say!"

Crack! crack!

The revolvers sputtered in the darkness as the band poured from the cockpit and made a dash for the escaping prisoner, slashing wildly as they advanced, steel striking steel and sending sparks along the deck.

Fortunately the shots went wild, and the skill of an expert swordsman kept the furious crowd at bay for a time. But their numbers increased, and the man in his shirt sleeves was obliged to fight more desperately at greater odds, though firing was stopped for fear that the rebels would wound their own men.

The decks were in an uproar. A screaming, bellowing mob had taken possession, and the sailors, piling pell-mell out of their quarters, skurried over the decks and darted into safe nooks below.

The man in his shirt sleeves, seeing himself about to be overwhelmed by numbers, threw down his sword and took refuge in flight. Right forward of the foremast, he fell exhausted against the door of what seemed to be a forecastle.

The door was locked, but, lunging against it, he succeeded in bursting it open. Leaping in he closed the door again, feeling about in the gloom for some movable piece of furniture of size and weight for a barricade.

"At last!" he cried, finding a heavy packing-box loaded heavily, and with all his remaining strength edging it over against the door.

Then another chest, containing what he knew not, and still another reenforced the larger. Bracing himself against the whole, the beleaguered prisoner sank to the floor as he murmured:

"If I am to be taken, it will be only after a struggle. Let them come, the rebels!"

And come they did, scuffling down the decks and peering into every cranny and nook, ready to fire at the first sign of a white shirt sleeves, till finally one of the insurgents made the discovery that the man they sought was safely fortressed in the little cabin. He rushed back to his leader.

"The spy has broken open the wire-

less telegraph station and barricaded himself in. What shall we do?"

"Ah, there could not be a better prison," said the leader, running forward. Instantly the little cabin was surounded by the infuriated band.

"Shall we drive him out?" called one.

"No, no! We will let him lie there and starve him into submission.

"But at Turk Island we are to pick up a pilot and a man who can work the wireless to communicate with the land forces. What then?"

"Time enough," was the answer.

"For the present, let him stir out of there at his peril."

The leader went to the tiny window.

"Renegade!" he called out threateningly, "you have saved yourself in the nick of time. You will remain there until we can dispose of your case with fitting dignity."

He gave a hard laugh.

"Fool of a spy," he added, thrusting the muzzle of his revolver through the open rift, "stir at your peril. It will mean instant death."

The leader turned to his men.

"It is better so," he said. "I haven't the nerve to shoot down a shackled man who puts up such a good fight against odds. Ho, captain, is that you?"

"Yes; what's the riot?" said a gruff voice from beyond.

"Oh, only a scoundrel whom we had to put in the brig."

"There is a better brig than this below," said the captain.

"This will do for the present," rejoined the leader guardedly. "I say, captain, can you spare me a man to stand guard over this prisoner for the present?"

"Yes; choose your man."

"The biggest and brawniest as well as the best shot," said the insurgent chief.

"Ho, Tom! Come here. You are wanted."

A square-shouldered seaman shuffled forward. "Carry out the orders of the general," said the bearded skipper.

"Aye, sir!" responded the sailor, saluting. "What is it, sir?"

"Take this pair of pistols and patrol the deck around this little cabin. If the prisoner inside attempts to move out, shoot him down, do you understand? Shoot to kill!"

"As you command, sir," responded the sailor, taking the weapons.

The insurgents filed down the decks. "A day or two of confinement there will put him in a docile mood, I think," said the chief. "Come; this is a most unfortunate affair. The crew will begin to wonder what it all means. Let us go below and solve the problem. Come; all hands below!" His voice died in the distance.

The man in his shirt sleeves heard the retreating footfalls and felt a deep sense of relief.

"At least I am safe until daybreak," he mused aloud, trying to gain his feet. Torn, bruised, and bleeding, he crawled toward the little window, reaching up and drawing his body forward till he stood staring out at the starlit sea over the bowsprit.

He was trembling, breathing hard after his struggle, perspiring at every pore, but hopeful still of seeing some solution of his problem with the coming of the dawn.

Once or twice he made a circuit of his little den, passing his hands over the various objects, but gathering little knowledge of the various implements and chests strapped together here and there and piled up on all sides.

However, he was alone and, save for a few cuts and bruises, none the worse for his late encounter. The chief's bullet had barely broken the skin of his elbow. With the coming of the gray of morning, he began to feel a return of his fighting spirit.

"I wonder what my sailor jailer looks like?" he said to himself during one of the moments of loneliness and meditation as he saw the armed man pass and repass the little port which gave the interior its only shred of light. Then he drew himself up closer to the window and awaited the coming of the warder on his next round.

Suddenly their faces stood opposite each other, and in the first gleams of the morning each bent forward, staring. For a full moment the burning eyes of guard and prisoner met.

The mutual recognition was instant

and overwhelming. Then the prisoner thrust out his blood-streaked hand toward his armed custodian.

"Hello, Tom!" he said nonchalantly.

"Great God! Lieutenant Mountjoy—not you?"

"Yes, it is I."

"May I be struck dead in my tracks——"

CHAPTER XII.

A THREATENING SECRET OUT.

"SH-H-H! Not so loud. Let no one see you talking to me. It is forbidden, on penalty of my life."

"And it is you who are my prisoner? I cannot believe it."

"And yet the impossible sometimes happens."

"But what is the meaning of it? I can't understand. Did you know these people—these in the aft of the ship——"

"Not till yesterday. I wish it had been otherwise, but it was a toss of a penny between that and a bath in East River after a hundred-and-ten foot fall. Heads came up, and here I am."

The sailor crept closer.

"I must understand."

"First tell me about yourself," said the lieutenant. "Your enlistment at Fort Donaldson was for three years, if I remember rightly. How about it?"

The sailor dropped his eyes. It was an unexpected question.

"Not a deserter, Tom?" pursued the prisoner.

"You will not report me, will you, lieutenant? Say that you will not, and I will do anything on land or sea for you——"

"Did I intimate that I would report you?"

"No, but every deserter always fears that, above all. A man never thinks of the consequences when he makes the dash to break parole. Yes, I deserted. In fact, lieutenant, when you and Sergeant Haydon Barr——"

"Sergeant Barr!" echoed the man in chains.

"Why do you look so strange when I mention that name?"

"Go on, please."

"Well, when you and the sergeant left, it seemed as if there was nothing left in the regiment for me. I heard that you had gone to the Klondike. 'If I could only reach him,' thought I, 'he would befriend me.'

"Then I deserted, and nearly perished in the Northern wilderness. I searched the Yukon, but you were gone, and the sergeant had gone to Nome. I then went back to Portland and shipped as common seaman down coast; later, around the Horn and up to New York. Here, in terror of being recognized again, I signed papers on this brigantine bound for Bath——"

"Bound for where?"

"For Bath, Maine."

"But you are sailor enough to know by this time that you are sailing almost due south."

"I know it—we all know it. However, it is not a sailor's business to inquire—only to follow orders. The pilot certainly knows his business——"

"Yes; shall I tell you why?"

"Well——"

"There is a man sitting beside him in the pilot-house watching both pilot and compass. He is armed to the teeth. Five points to the east or west, and the pilot gets a bullet through him."

"What do you mean? Mutiny?"

"No; the most perfectly planned filibustering expedition that ever left a peaceful port."

"Filibustering? We are on a filibustering expedition? You are mad, lieutenant."

"Verify my statement, if you will, but keep close-mouthed. It has nearly cost me my life to discover it. Mark you, I know what I am talking about. Keep it very secret, or there is sure to be bloodshed on board——"

"But does our skipper know the truth?"

"He met the alternative of accepting a ten thousand dollar bribe, or walking the plank. He took the ten thousand."

"And we, poor devils! where are we?"

"You are at the mercy of one hundred and sixty armed rebels against the government of Santo Morro, who are bent on returning to their native land and butchering the administration, and

setting their chief who ordered you here —one General Roderiguez—in the presidency."

"But will the United States permit such a thing?"

"Governments no more than individuals can meet situations they know not of, nor hinder belligerents they do not recognize."

"Ho, aloft, topgallant an' royal-yard men! Aloft, topmen! Lay out, lay out!" reverberated the skipper's voice from afar. It sounded weird in the misty air.

"Tom, you will stand by me—you must, old comrade, or I will perish. You wish me to keep your secret, so keep mine. Each will help the other in extremity."

"To the end of the earth, with my very life!" exclaimed the seaman, seizing the shackled man's arm. "Why, lieutenant, there is blood!"

"Yes; I got it last night when they caught me. Only bad marksmanship saved my life. If they continue to shoot as badly as that at short range, I see the finish of this administration——"

"But this vessel will never reach Santo Morro, I swear to that!"

"What makes you think so?"

"There will be mutiny on board the minute the sailors know that we are bound on any such expedition."

"And you will tell them?"

"Certainly. It is a duty I owe to my comrades before the mast——"

"But first your duty to me."

He eyed the sailor, who made a military sign of obedience.

"There is time enough to inform the ship and 'let slip the dogs of war,' if necessary. But first of all, I must inform the United States Government."

"How, in heaven's name—how is it possible?"

"I have a plan. Will you help me?"

"On my oath!"

"It will not jeopardize you in the least, and it will be my salvation."

"You are going to try to escape in a life-boat?"

"Madness! I am not going to leave the ship—I cannot. But I am doomed to be burned at the stake, mistaken for a spy, Tom. On arrival at Santo Morro——"

"You—burned at the stake? Good God! lieutenant——"

"But I never shall be. My government will attend to that, never fear."

"But how can you inform them of your predicament?"

"I have made a discovery here in my prison," said the other. "Keep my secret till to-night, then I will unfold the plot to you."

The voice of the captain sounded nearer.

"Go now, Tom, or we shall be discovered talking together, and it will mean disaster."

"Keep courage, lieutenant. Your secret is safe, God bless you!"

He seized the prisoner's hands and clenched them in silence.

"The clouds are breaking," mused the captive, with a glow of renewing comfort in his heart. "Thank God! I begin to live again.

"Now for the test! Let us see what wit and despair united in one enterprise can accomplish for a man shackled in midocean among mutineers and in hourly peril of his life, with but a single ray of hope, and that from a deserter from the ranks of his country's defenders."

Later in the morning was heard the tramp of feet along the decks, and through the little window was passed a half loaf of black bread and a little pail of water. The captive seized his rations and had quite refreshed himself when there appeared at the only open port a cluster of insurgent faces. The man in his shirt sleeves arose and faced them. The chief was in the van.

"Sir," began the leader, in a voice now tempered with diplomacy, speaking in acceptable English, "who you are and what your business here may be, we have no means of knowing. That we do not believe your absurd story goes without saying. We shall, however, spare your life——"

"Thank you, general——"

"for the present. Until we confer with our comrades when we reach land we cannot tell what disposition to make of a spy, although we can well imagine what their verdict will be."

"Why not tell him at once what we do to spies?" said a voice in the rear.

"No; finish the business now," broke in another, more desperate in his hatred of a supposed betrayer.

"Burning at the stake on shipboard is not a safe proceeding," said the commander, "even if there were no danger from mutiny in consequence as well as fire."

"Why burn?" persisted the other. "The sword is efficient?"

"We have accepted the constitution, we must abide by it. The decree is plainly, 'spies shall be tried by a court appointed by the chief executive; and if found guilty, shall be burned at the stake.' *Voila!* The matter stands." He turned to the culprit.

"Spy, as I decreed before, you shall remain a prisoner in chains until we reach land. What disposition will be made of you then will depend upon Providence and the will of our comrades.

"I may say, however, that at any time you feel like rendering a strict and accurate account of yourself, tell who you are, how you came here and what your business is, even if you betray principals in so doing, be they who they may, you have the chance of saving your life and being accorded treatment more in harmony with mercy at the hands of those whom you have sought to wrong. Have you anything to say, sir?"

"Nothing. If you do not believe me now, how would you then? Man can tell no more than the truth and stand by it to the end, come what may," answered the prisoner with a challenging glance through the little window.

"A pretty speech, but desperate business such as ours admits of no time for such dalliance. Nothing more?" asked the insurgent.

"Nothing!"

"Then rot there in your dungeon, spy! Some day somebody will have the time and patience to discover who you are. As for us, we have business more important."

The speaker led his band away again, leaving the prisoner to his solitude.

The man in his shirt sleeves now passed one of the most terrible days of his life. He counted wearily the bells throughout the long day, then into the night—eight o'clock, nine, ten, eleven, and at last midnight, when, to his infinite relief, he heard the coming of his armed warder, and when all was still, the rapping at the tiny window.

"Thank God!" he murmured softly. "At least one friend proves true." He seized the casement. "Ho! Tom, how is it?" he called.

"Careful! Not so loud, lieutenant. I may be watched."

"How is it, I say?"

"Good—and bad."

"How so?"

"Wait and I will tell you. First of all, are you hungry?"

"As a lost pigeon in a snow-storm. Have you food for me—real food?"

"Plenty. Wine, bread—everything."

"You are my life-saver, bless your heart! What's the matter?"

"I hear the captain bellowing. The wind has changed."

"Well, what of it?"

"It means that I cannot talk to you here but a few moments more. The sailors are coming on deck."

"Don't go till I have had at least a morsel, Tom."

Down through the window a wine-flask, some rolls of bread, and a cake of chocolate fell into welcoming hands.

"How's that?"

"Like a raindrop on the tongue of a shipwrecked sailor," said the prisoner. "Tom, you will be well paid for this, if God spares us both——"

"Don't talk like that, lieutenant. There is much in store for us before we see land, if we ever do."

"What? What's the matter?"

"I never saw the barometer cut such capers—yes, I did, once. It was just before a typhoon struck us off the Barbary coast. We shall be plunging into the jaws of hell before the week is out, mark you that!"

"Well, what of it? We shall bob up serenely on the other side, I fancy. The vessel is well manned, is she not?"

"That's just it. They are a lot of sap-hearted, unlicked hyenas, these sailormen. They would steal the last life-boat from a hospital ship. Well, what could you expect, recruiting for such an expedition?"

"But do they know?"

"I have suspicions that some of them do—at least, they suspect. They know

that something strange is on, and that we have a queer lot of cargo on board. You can't fool these old sea-horses."

"Here, Tom, take this flask, I have emptied it, and it must not be found in here. What call is that?"

"The captain again. I must not let him grow suspicious. I must keep up my guard duty, lieutenant."

"But I have something to ask you. It is most important."

"No time like the present. Out with it!"

"I want an ax, chisel, files, and crowbar, if you can find them."

"What can you do with them?"

"Prepare to signal to shore," answered the prisoner.

"You are mad," rejoined the sailor, after a pause.

"You shall see that I am very sane before this voyage is over."

"But how is it possible? Why, we are a hundred miles or more from land."

"I care not if we are fifteen hundred. I can signal to the coast and the message will go to Washington. By the time we arrive at Santo Morro, perhaps sooner, we shall be intercepted by a United States man-of-war."

The mariner sniffed, but he was indulgent.

"I'll do what you say, lieutenant," he acquiesced after a moment's hesitancy. "But I do not understand."

"But you will, mark my word, you will. And what is more, so will some others on board who least suspect."

"So be it," was the prompt response. "I will keep you posted as best I can. You trusted me of old, trust me now."

"I trust you—I swear by you now, Tom."

He reached his hand through the window. Tom grasped it heartily. Then the sailor went back to his duty, and the prisoner settled down to plan the most daring and ingenious expedient that ever man devised.

(To be continued.)

THE CYLINDER.

By George Allen England.

A STORY that is nothing more, nothing less, than a a dire tragedy in real life.

I.

"LOOK here, Malcolm, you've *got* to tell me! She's my wife, and——"

"Hush! Not so loud!"

"She can *hear*, then?"

"Yes, she's conscious—how much longer she will be I can't say."

"Sinking, Malcolm?"

"Now, now, no questions! You'd better go out in the hall."

"Never!" Mark's reddened eyes glinted defiance. "No, no, I'm not going to leave her while she's gasping like that!" His voice shrilled hysterically.

"But you're only harming her by staying!"

"No, no, she's my——"

Malcolm slid a broad palm over the protesting mouth; his other hand gripped Mark's elbow.

"Out you go!" he commanded, trying to thrust Mark into the hall, but Mark clung and the doctor could not shake him off. He had perforce to drag him out. When they were both in the hall and the door was shut:

"Hang you!" said the doctor in a voice tense as steel, "you get out and *stay* out! Don't be a crazy fool!"

"Mally, Mally! She's my wife and you're my friend—my best, oldest——"

"All the more reason why I'm going to keep you out of there till she—rallies! Till then, I'm *not* your friend—I'm the doctor, nothing else, *nothing*. Remember!"

The hand-grip was gone from Mark's angular elbow; the hall-door was shut, the man was alone. He leaned against the wall for a minute, shivering as he

heard the windows rattle with the January gale; then he shuffled to the stairs and sat down.

His air was that of a man who has been painstakingly mangled on the rack and then given five minutes' respite. The gas flame over his head cast a high-light on his salient cheek-bones. After a while he nodded and dozed, with pendant arms.

Malcolm's hand on his shoulder wakened him in half an hour; he started up wild-eyed and shivering.

"What—what time is it?" he stammered in confusion, "Is Dorry—is she——"

"Come, now, pull yourself together," said the doctor sternly. "I've got some work for you. Get your things on quick! You've got to go down to the dispensary."

"What! And leave——"

"Yes. *I* can't go, Miss Abbott here can't go, and somebody's got to go, so you see how it is. We've got to have a tank of oxygen, right off!"

"What?"

"Oxygen. It comes in big steel cylinders like soda-water tanks, painted blue, with a valve at the top—*you've* seen 'em. The quicker you can get one up here, the better it will be."

"What—what are they for, those tanks?"

"Well, when there isn't anything else to do, we giv oxygen to aerate the blood and stimulate the heart; sometimes it keeps the patient up until the congestion begins to resolve, and then——"

"Her lungs, you mean, are——" he began; but Malcolm interrupted.

"Now you see here, Mark, if you want your wife to die, stand right there where you are and discuss things. If you want her to *live,* hustle into your overcoat and get a wheelbarrow and bring up a cylinder of oxygen from the dispensary just as quick as the Lord will let you! Understand?"

"Yes, yes—but can't you telephone? Can't I? We can save no end of time that way."

"Tried it, and can't. Central says the wires are going down all over Hampton. This storm's a record-breaker. No, you've got to go for it yourself. Hustle out with a wheelbarrow and follow the car-tracks. The snow-plows have probably kept 'em clear. There's a fellow named Timothy Foley for night-orderly down there this week. He knows me. Just say I sent you, and he'll let you have it all right. Now get along! If you're not back in half an hour——"

"All right! All right!" said Mark, and tiptoed shakily down-stairs.

II.

Tim Foley, reading an old magazine in the dispensary office, under the yellow circle of a hooded electric light, became vaguely conscious of a curious sound as of some one struggling and floundering up the steps with a burden; then, after a minute or two, he heard a fumbling at the door.

Tim dropped the magazine and listened; then he got up, went silently to the door and opened it.

Through the snow-eddy that swirled in he saw something that looked like a man standing outside—a snow-man, thin and tall, with teeth that chattered like castanets.

This man had neither hat nor gloves; he was gripping the handles of a wheelbarrow. He stammered with bloodless lips:

"Oxygen! I'll take it home on this."

He tried to drag the wheelbarrow into the vestibule, but Foley restrained him.

"Hould on, man—hould on! Youse can't bring dat in here!"

"Eh?"

"I say youse can't bring dat wheelbarrer into de hall, see?"

The man stared, but said nothing.

"Say, what d'youse want, annyway?"

"Malcolm sent me."

"*W'at?*"

"It comes in blue tanks."

"Say, youse is *way* off, ain't you? Drop dat autermobile of yours, an' come in an' tell me all about it! I can't keep dis here door open all night—dey's sick folks in here, see?"

"That's so, that's so!" Mark let the barrow handles fall and came into the corridor blinking.

"Now, w'at is it youse want? Who sent you?"

"Malcolm—that is, Dr. Miller."

"Yes?"

"And he said for me to get oxygen in a tank, right away."

"Say, are you Mr. Andrews?"

"Andrews? Yes, that's my name. My wife's sick—pneumonia——"

"Oh, yes, *now* I know. Say, sit down a minute. I'll get it!"

He padded away on his rubber soles. "Plumb dotty!" he said to himself as he unlocked the storeroom and switched the light on.

Mark, left alone, stared unblinkingly at the incandescent, clenching and unclenching his bony hands. Once he swallowed hard and tried to wet his lips with his dry tongue. After a certain time he heard a metallic rolling noise, and saw in a dream the orderly propelling a long blue cylinder down the hall.

"Here you are!" said Foley, "an' here's de tube an' inspirator. I'll put 'em right here in your pocket, see? Now you wait *one* minute, an' I'll fix youse a good dose of whisky an' git a hat an' some gloves. I guess one pneumonia case at a time's enough for *anny* fam-'ly!"

"No, no! I don't want it, I won't have it! Let me——"

"Shut up! If youse goes hollerin' like dat you'll wake up all me patients! You keep still, see?"

Mark, cowed, leaned against the wall and waited. In two minutes he was hatted, gloved, and ready for the home trip, with a gill of whisky burning his stomach.

"Lend a hand now," commanded Foley, "an' we'll load it on de wheelbarrer. *That's* right. Easy down de steps now! I'd send somebody wid youse, if dere was annybody here, but dere ain't. Now den, I'll hold de door open till you reach de tracks. All right? Got it? Good luck to youse!"

III.

It was a nightmare, that freezing dark wallow back through the blizzard. Shrieking wind-devils buffeted Mark and snatched the breath from his lips; snow-devils clogged the barrow-wheel; cold-devils shot him through and through with long stinging arrows.

His clothes, stiffened and frozen, made every movement doubly painful. Twice he was blockaded and had to kick the snow away with numb feet.

Once a snow-plow jolted past, glaring and sputtering; it forced him to drag his load off to one side and almost buried him in a smother of snow. The man's reason and thought staggered down and out; he became nothing more than an automaton, lunging onward, sobbing, thrusting the barrow on and on through the tumult.

Sight and sound faded; cold faded; darkness and wind and everything faded from his consciousness—everything but the lash of his idea. Time, too, was blotted out; the universe was just a whirl, a whirl, a whirl.

Suddenly a light broke through the whirl and stopped it; then the man saw some steps and felt a thrill of recognition—the steps were *his!* Some one was coming down those steps—a voice was calling (it seemed miles and miles away):

"Hurry! Hurry!"

Oh, it was Malcolm, dear old Mally, and—the cylinder was lifted; it was carried up the steps. Mark followed. Then his own self surged back again, with sickening pains of memory, and Mark stood shivering, gasping in his own house.

See! Malcolm was carrying the cylinder up-stairs on his shoulder. Mark followed again, shuffling up the stairs. At the sick-room door the nurse repulsed him.

"No, no! You can't come in here!" she whispered, laying her hand on his thin chest. "No, no! You're all wet and cold. Keep out!"

Mark made no answer, but stood silent at the door.

"*Quick!*" he heard Malcolm whisper to the nurse. "Hurry! Get that inspirator on! She'll be gone in a minute!"

Then there came a little silence and the click of a metal snap.

"Now let's have it—easy at first! Just turn the valve till you hear it hiss!"

Another silence.

"Well, what's the matter? Why don't you turn the valve?"

"I *am* turning it, doctor!"

"You *are?* H-m, *that's* odd; there's no gas coming. Throw it wide open!"

"There, it won't go any further!"

"Say, *what* the—— Why, there's nothing in it! Foley must have given him an empty!"

"An *empty?*"

Mark appeared in the doorway. His face was the color of old ivory.

"Empty, was it? *Empty?*" he shouted.

"Hush! Get back!"

"And she's dead—*dead?*"

Malcolm started toward him, but the man tossed up his arms and whirled about and laughed, laughed, *laughed*—screamed:

"It's an empty one! It's *empty!* Ha, *ha! What* a joke! Ho, *ho!* He gave me an empty one, and she died! Ha, ha, *ha!* Capital! Cap——"

His arms dropped, his head dropped, he doubled up like a pocket-knife and fell distorted on the carpet.

Malcolm jumped to him, knelt over him, tore open his clothes, put his ear to the narrow chest.

"Hypodermic?" asked the nurse.

"No, no, not the slightest use," Malcolm answered. "Cardiac rupture. He was stone dead when he struck the floor."

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, thirty of the 79th Cavalry, 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 another lady 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.

Longaker informs Devoges and his subordinate, Perigo, that the transport, contrary to custom, will remain in the bay until the expedition returns. In the light of these remarks, it seems to Forbes hardly a coincidence that after the little expedition is landed on the beach, a flash of light is seen, and, with a dull boom, the transport becomes the center of a terrific explosion.

CHAPTER XI.

"MAN OVERBOARD!"

A QUARTER of an hour before the occurrence of the incident described at the close of the last chapter, Lieutenant Tappan, leaning against the deckhouse of the Bojeador, puffed a Manila cheroot and looked thoughtfully toward the shore.

The members of the party that had just landed were in the shadow of the cliff, and, therefore, were invisible to his eyes; but sounds travel fast and far over the water, and Tappan, who secretly had little faith in the success of the expedition, was listening for some audible indication of a hostile reception.

The apprehensions of the commander of the Bojeador had so far got the better

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of him that he had ordered twelve of his bluejackets to arm themselves and stand ready to lower a couple of boats at a moment's notice. But for twenty minutes the stillness of the night was unbroken. Then he heard the voice of the lookout.

"Two sampans from the shore."

Tappan remained motionless. The boxes and bundles which were to be sent ashore were on the deck, and the ten cavalrymen who had been left behind by Longaker were below. There was nothing more to be done until the sampans came alongside, so the lookout's information was received with the same stolidity with which it was given.

Suddenly Tappan started as a murmur rose from a little group of sailors who were in the bow.

"Man overboard!" came the cry.

"He's all right—swimmin' strong!" shouted another, who was evidently attempting to persuade his comrades that there was no necessity for leaping in to the stranger's aid.

"What's up, boys?" called Tappan, as he hurried forward.

"Man swimming to the ship, sir," explained a bluejacket who was in the act of flinging a life-buoy over the rail.

"Lower a ladder," the lieutenant commanded.

The life-buoy, hurled by a strong and accurate hand, had struck the water about thirty feet from the vessel's side. In a trice the swimmer had it in his grasp, and while a ladder was being lowered a half dozen arms were hauling in the line attached to the buoy.

A score of bodies leaned over the rail as the dark head of the swimmer came to the ladder. They saw a well-thewed arm reach upward, and the hand of its owner closed around one of the rungs. Then a pair of bare shoulders, gleaming white in the moonlight, rose from the water, and the swimmer looked up to measure the distance he had to climb.

"By God, it's Forbes!" Tappan exclaimed. "What has happened, man?"

But Forbes did not answer then. He mounted the rope ladder slowly and sturdily, but with the awkwardness of a landsman. Not until, puffing heavily as a result of his exertions, he stood, as naked as when he was born, on the deck of the Bojeador, did he speak.

"Tappan, they're coming out to sink your ship."

The commander of the Bojeador glanced toward the approaching sampans.

"We've got eight or ten minutes yet," he drawled, and started toward the bridge, then he added cheerfully: "Come with me, and tell me about it."

They quickly mounted the steps to the bridge, but before Forbes had a chance to offer any further explanation, Tappan was pressing one electric button after another and calling orders down various speaking tubes. These orders were to the effect that the anchor was to be hoisted immediately and that the Bojeador was to be made ready to get under way in two minutes.

"Now, Forbes," said Tappan, quietly, as sounds indicative of a suddenly awakened activity began to rise from all parts of the ship.

"That's all right as far as it goes," Forbes answered grimly. "The Bojeador's safe enough now, I guess, but we want those brown devils over there on the shore to think she's gone down."

Tappan glanced up at the moon.

"It's pretty bright I know, but I thought of all that while I was swimming out," explained Forbes. "All we want is smoke. Fill your galvanized fire pails with oil, and——"

"All right," said Tappan, whose mouth already was at one of the tubes.

The dripping mustache that Forbes was stroking failed to hide the grin of its owner as, cocking one eye toward the sampans, he heard Tappan elaborating his plan—an elaboration which, expressed through different speaking tubes, took the following form:

"Walsh, call to quarters, and fill all fire buckets with petroleum and bring them on deck. McGrath, send up all your oakum to the deck. Nelson, cover your fires with wood and coal—we want smoke—yes, the hell of a smoke—got to have it quick. Simpson, get up your iron coal barrows and fill 'em with the oakum you'll find on deck."

Then, turning to Forbes, he added wearily:

"Coming out to sink us, eh? How were they going to do it?"

"They are sending out a loaded sam-

pan. The Bojeador is all Devoges is afraid of just now. He knows Longaker is on to his game, and he thinks you are in communication with some despatch boat or transport out yonder. He won't let you get away from here if he can help it."

"If he's afraid of us, why do you want him to think we've gone under? What good will that do Longaker?"

"It will make the little brown devil less wary, give Longaker a chance to see his hand, and cause Devoges to think there is nobody on his trail."

"You are going after him then?"

"Yes."

"With only your corporal and ten men?"

"We'll make them do."

Tappan chewed his cigar thoughtfully for several moments, then he said:

"I'm a little short of men myself just now, but I'll lend you five."

"Thanks," Forbes replied. "I'll take them."

"Well, here are your sampans. The anchor's up. Now what's your game?"

"Sink the boats, but——"

"All right. A couple of shots through their cargoes from one of our three-pounders ought to do the trick."

"They'll see the flash from the beach."

"We'll get them around to starboard—our offshore side."

"They'll hear the report."

"The explosion will come too quickly afterward."

Tappan picked up a megaphone and, in Spanish, shouted to the crews of the sampans:

"Ship your cargo on the starboard side."

As Forbes looked about him he saw a dark figure crouching by each of the Bojeador's guns. Others, moving quickly and silently to and fro, were placing buckets and metal wheelbarrows on the side of the vessel that was next to the land.

By the time the sampans had weathered the stern of the gunboat everything on deck was still. Slowly the little vessels wore around to the starboard, and as they did so Tappan left Forbes' side and walked over to where a midshipman stood by the starboard rail. The Bojeador's commander exchanged a few quiet words with this young subordinate, then hurried to the bridge. A few moments later Forbes felt the vibration of the slowly-turning screw. The the midshipman spoke.

"All ready—Number Six—Number Seven—Fire."

Two guns flashed almost simultaneously, then there came a crash and roar with a concussion that sent Forbes reeling against the deckhouse. A hot, fiery blast, charged with noxious odors, swept over the Bojeador with a force that wellnigh smothered all who turned to view the great crater that seemed to have opened up in the sea.

A great wave threw the Bojeador almost on her beam-end. Though almost deafened by the sound of the explosion, Forbes heard a vigorous voice shouting above the tumult, and he knew that Tappan was speaking.

"No fire on the oil till the sea goes down!"

Two or three more heavy waves rocked the ship, and moved shoreward.

"Now, the blaze, boys—altogether!"

Two or three minutes later, Tappan, bolting into the cabin, saw Forbes rubbing his bloodshot eyes. The Bojeador's commander chuckled.

"Think the smoke will do?"

"Do!" Forbes gasped. "Gad, man, it makes one think he's sitting on the chimney of Hades!"

"Things move quickly on your Uncle Samuel's ship of war," said Tappan with another chuckle. "But, say, old man, how would you like to have a suit of clothes?"

Forbes gave a start.

"Great Cæsar, Tappan!" he exclaimed. "I quite forgot that I had left my outfit on the shore!"

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT THE SMOKE-CLOUDS BROUGHT.

Of the two sampans not a vestige seemed to remain on the surface of the sea. Several seamen who were watching them at the time the shots were fired from the Bojeador asserted that only one of the little vessels appeared to have been laden with explosives. Its con-

sort was so near, however, that the force of the explosion completely annihilated both.

Fortunately there was a fairly strong breeze blowing toward the land, and as the Bojeador moved slowly southward the dense smoke that rose from her deck and funnels rendered her invisible to all who were on the shore.

A few minutes after the destruction of the sampans, and while the Bojeador was off the promontory, four boats were lowered from the port side of the vessel. These contained Forbes, ten cavalrymen, the five seamen who had been assigned to short duty, twenty extra rifles, fifteen thousand rounds of ammunition, two weeks' rations, three signal lanterns, and enough men from the Bojeador to take the four boats back.

Under cover of the smoke of the Bojeador, the four boats made their way to the point of the promontory. As the bow of the first boat grated on the narrow strip of sandy beach, a voice issued from a group of bushes.

"Don't fire, boys. I'm Yost."

"Come on out, corporal," commanded Forbes, in a low, sharp voice.

The sturdy figure of the cavalryman stepped out into the moonlight.

"Are you alone, Bill?" Forbes asked as he leaped ashore.

"Well," drawled Yost, "I've got your clothes."

Forbes, whose only garment was a pair of seaman's trousers, looked searchingly around the beach.

"What have you done with them?" he growled.

"Just took 'em into the thicket, lieutenant," Yost replied. Then he led the way to the place of concealment from which he had emerged. "Is the Bojeador on fire?"

"No."

Yost heaved a sigh of relief.

"I thought you'd win out. When I saw your clothes on the beach I knew you had gone to warn them of something."

"How did you know the clothes were mine?"

"The captain told me I was to meet you here. Then, too, when I examined the coat I saw the places where the chevrons had been."

"How long has it been since you saw the captain?" asked Forbes, who was now quickly donning the garments he had doffed when he started to swim out to the Bojeador.

"About ten minutes before the sampans put off. He was standing on the beach with the boys. All's been quiet, over there since then, but since the explosion there have been several lights moving about the beach. What was it that blew up, Forbes?"

"The sampans. But we haven't time to talk of the explosion now. You had a look at the horses?"

"Yes. There were about sixty of them, and, so help me God, Forbes, ten of them have the 'U.S.A.' brand on their hides."

"Eh?"

"And one of the nags is wearing a saddle-cloth of the Seventy-Ninth Cavalry."

"The devil! It looks as if Forrester had come to grief, then."

"Major Forrester! Has he been here?"

"Yes—came up six weeks ago with thirty men."

Yost gave a long, soft whistle.

Forbes, who had now finished dressing, laid a hand on Yost's shoulder.

"Let's sit down here on this rock, Bill," he said. "I've got something to say to you, and it must be said quickly. It's just as well, perhaps, that the boys should know what sort of game it is that we are up against."

When they were seated, Forbes resumed:

"The situation is this: We've been ordered up here to take Pacheco—a task that was secretly assigned to Forrester six weeks ago. The military department of the Philippines seems to be a bit up in the air, and our expedition has been sent off half-cocked.

"Nothing was said to Longaker about Forrester's expedition by the colonel, but in his written order there are some forged lines that make it appear as if Longaker was to report to a renegade Spaniard named Carrero. Purdy seems to have been completely taken in by Devoges, one of Carrero's agents, for Purdy thinks that Devoges is working in our interests."

"Is that the fellow who met our party?"

"Yes. Though Longaker knows that Devoges is playing double, he and his ten men are going off with the mestizo into the hills. Devoges says they will be with Carrero in four hours. He also says that Carrero will aid us in our attempt to capture Pacheco."

"It looks bad for Longaker."

"He'll take care of himself—there's no fear as to that. The captain may be a little slow sometimes in finding a trail, but when he gets it—God help the man he's after."

"Well, what are we to do back here?"

"We're going to shadow Devoges and Longaker."

"They are mounted."

"So will we be when we cut out the horses we need."

"But they're started already."

"Some of Devoges men will stay to watch the beach. Anyhow, they've brought more horses than they need, and if they are going to take those buffalo carts with them we can soon overtake them."

"We'd better be getting off then."

"Yes. But there is one other thing that I'd better tell you, for only Longaker and I know it now, and if we get put out of the game, you fellows will have to play out our hands. After we left Manila Bay, Longaker and I learned that two American women had been kidnapped in that city by agents of Pacheco. They were put ashore here yesterday and taken inland, where they are now held either for ransom or as hostages."

"Two American women! Damnation! Who——"

"The name of one we have been unable to learn. The other, Bill, is the daughter of the colonel."

Yost gasped and leaped to his feet.

"Miss Harriet! Great God, Forbes, are you crazy?"

"No, but I guess you can about size up my feelings by your own."

For several moments Yost was speechless.

"But how the deuce did they——" he faltered.

"We'll learn all that when we get Pacheco in our grip. But first we must see the captain safely through to Carrero. Then it may be necessary to wring the necks of Carrero and Devoges before we get the truth.

"If we don't find the women with Carrero, why we'll probably have to wait until we come to our grapple with Pacheco. In the meantime we'll have to keep our eyes and ears open for signs of Forrester."

"I thought you told me Forrester was dead?"

"That's the story Devoges tells, but there's some chap out there among the hills who is working a heliograph in a fashion peculiar to the American army. I want to find him before I reconcile myself to the idea that Forrester and thirty boys from the Seventy-Ninth have been caught napping by these brownies."

"Well, lieutenant, where do we begin?"

"With the horses. I think you and I can cut them out if we find them over in the valley."

"What are you going to do with the boys?"

"Take them with us as far as they can go without being seen. I don't want the brownies to know they've landed. They know, however, that we are somewhere along the coast."

"If we make off with the horses, won't they send in to Devoges and tell him to look out for us?"

"They may try, Bill, but I guess we can give the messenger an entertainment on his way that will keep him from disturbing the peace of mind of Señor Devoges."

The smoke blown ashore from the Bojeador now hung like a pall over the cove and beach. The four boats had discharged their passengers, and the impedimenta was piled on the narrow strip of sand. The men, huddled together in a group, with their rifles in their hands, were gasping for breath in the murky atmosphere and looking impatiently toward the thicket when Forbes and Yost emerged.

After directing a couple of his men to bury under a light covering of earth in the thicket the box containing the three signal lanterns, Forbes, with Yost and eight cavalrymen, climbed the prom-

ontory and started, by way of the top of the cliff, toward the little valley in which Yost had seen the horses.

Despite the firmness and evenness of the ground over which the little party now made its way, its progress was so slow as severely to try the patience of its leaders.

Though the growth of bushes and low trees was less formidable than that which usually is encountered in the lowlands of tropical countries, it was sufficiently dense to offer a series of serious obstacles. Nearly half an hour passed, therefore, before Forbes, pushing aside the branches of the last bush, saw the site of Devoges' encampment.

A moment later he stepped back suddenly and caught Yost by the arm.

"Look!" he said.

The corporal saw that they were by the side of a road. Scarcely more than twenty paces from where they stood, a big water buffalo, drawing a rude, heavily laden cart, was moving slowly after a little party of white-clad horsemen who were disappearing around an angle of the road.

"They're off," Yost muttered.

"Not all of them," Forbes answered in a hoarse whisper. "They've left a——"

He stopped abruptly as he heard the hoof-beats of a horse. A few moments later two mounted men, riding after the buffalo cart, reined in their steeds directly in front of the place where the Americans were crouching.

The riders were Devoges and Perigo.

"No, don't leave the beach until you run them down," Devoges said vehemently. "They can't have gone far. They evidently expected a boat to put in from the Bojeador to take them off. Now that she's gone, they'll come back to look for their captain. They'll be here by dawn. Shoot them down without any preliminary ceremonies, then bury them in the sand. When this is done, ride after us."

Perigo nodded and turned the head of his horse toward the sea. Devoges rode after the buffalo cart.

"Plain talk that—from General Purdy's friend, eh?" Forbes muttered.

"I wonder if they've begun to dig the holes!" said Yost.

Forbes waited until the hoof-beats of the two steeds had died away; then, finding that all was still, he stepped out cautiously.

As he peered about him he saw several horses tethered among the trees on the other side of the road.

"I wonder how many of these Filipinos we have against us!" Forbes soliloquized. "We've got to have some of that stuff that we've landed over at the point, and we can't get any horse through the jungle we've just left. Yost, we'll have to clear the beach as soon as Devoges and his people are far enough away to enable us to fire without being heard."

On the farther side of the road, among the trees to which the horses were tethered, Forbes saw the outlines of a long, low building thatched with nipa palm. Against the lintel of the opened door leaned a man, clothed in white, who was lazily puffing a cigar or cigarette. In front of the house a buffalo, hitched to a cart, stood munching some forage that had been placed in front of him.

"We can't get out of here while he is watching," Forbes muttered, but even as he spoke the Filipino turned and disappeared inside the house.

"Come when you hear me whistle," Forbes said abruptly, and the words had scarcely passed his lips when he stepped to the side of the road. After looking cautiously to the right and left, he disappeared from the view of his companions.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW SOME HOLES WERE DUG.

THE minutes dragged on slowly as Yost and his eight companions, crouching in the bushes, awaited the reappearance of their leader. Clouds of mosquitoes hovered around their lair and attacked them with such persistent vigor that several of the cavalrymen removed their coats for the purpose of shielding their heads and necks from the onslaughts of the voracious pests.

At length, at the expiration of nearly a quarter of an hour, a low whistle reached their ears. The coats were quickly replaced, and each man gripped

his rifle. Then, as the whistle was repeated, Yost led a crouching khaki line in the direction from which the signal came.

Half-concealed by the trunk of a palm, about fifty paces from where they had been lying, the members of the little party saw the figure of Forbes. By a gesture he commanded them to follow him, then he entered the undergrowth.

For five minutes they fought their way through the brushwood. Occasionally, however, they came to openings that commanded a view of the sea. Glancing through these, the men saw, far in the distance, a mass of dark smoke. But the outlines of the Bojeador were no longer visible.

Suddenly Forbes stopped.

"When I give the word, rush the men I am going to point out to you, but do not fire," he said in a low voice.

The cavalrymen moved forward more cautiously for a distance of about fifty feet. Then they saw that they were at the line at which the woodland stopped at the beach. Twenty paces distant a half score of natives were standing in a group around Perigo.

A hoarse whisper issued from the lips of Forbes.

"Charge!"

If leaves rustled or twigs snapped as the Americans cleared the forest's fringe, the sounds failed to reach the ears of the chattering Filipinos.

"Guns down and hands up!" cried Forbes, leaping forward with an army revolver in his right hand.

The command was expressed in Spanish, and was obeyed almost involuntarily, as the brown men, gasping with astonishment, turned toward the cavalrymen.

Assured that every hand was in the air, Forbes spoke again.

"Back—ten paces—all of you!"

The smoke of the Bojeador had cleared away, and the moonlight was gleaming on nine leveled rifle barrels.

The limbs of the natives were trembling, but the ten paces were measured fairly, and no word was spoken.

"Señor Perigo," Forbes said quietly.

For several moments there was no response, then Perigo stepped forward from the group.

"Yes, Señor Lieutenant," the Tagalog replied politely.

"Señor," Forbes went on, "it was my privilege a few minutes ago to overhear your parting instructions from our friend Devoges. You have remained behind, I believe, for the purpose of digging some holes in the sand."

And by the great start Perigo gave then, the Americans saw that he appreciated the significance of the lieutenant's words. But the Tagalog was game.

"Alas, yes, señor," he answered sadly. "Señor Devoges saw the tide was coming in, and it was his wish that we remain here to give decent burial to such bodies as might be washed ashore from the unfortunate Bojeador."

"That is what he meant, then, when he said: 'Shoot them down without preliminary ceremonies, then bury them in the sand'?"

Perigo shrugged his shoulders slightly, as he answered:

"It is a custom of the Tagalogs, señor, to put a ball through the head of every man who, appearing to be dead, is buried on the field. The Señor Lieutenant is aware that many hapless soldiers are buried alive."

"It is a pleasant custom," said Forbes approvingly. "But while you are waiting for the bodies, why do you not dig the holes?"

Perigo hesitated, then he glanced seaward.

"Well, señor, it has just occurred to us that perhaps the Bojeador is not destined to go down off this coast."

"There is no telling, Señor Perigo. It is better to dig the holes."

"We have no spades, señor."

"Some of these boards and flat stones that strew the beach will serve the purpose. The sand is light and easily turned."

"How many shall we dig?"

"One apiece will do."

Perigo turned away disconsolately and addressed a few words to his men. Then, still covered by the American rifles, they collected the boards and stones of which Forbes had spoken.

As they began to dig, Forbes bade them pause; then addressing Perigo, he said:

"Señor, masked by your pretended friendship, you planned to get us in your power, then, in defiance of all rules of civilized warfare, shoot down, like dogs, your helpless prisoners and bury them in the sand. For this the officers of any other army than that of the United States would line you up against yonder cliff and shoot you down without mercy. But it is contrary to our practise to slay in cold blood unarmed men."

Then, turning to Yost he said in a voice that was heard by Perigo and his men:

"When the holes are dug, move with your men two hundred paces down the beach, leaving the rifles of Señor Perigo and his companions here where they have dropped them. When they have regained their weapons, open fire and pursue them until all are slain. As I am going to take two men with me, Señor Perigo will have the advantage of numbers."

Then, calling by name the men he wanted to accompany him, he led them to the head of the little valley.

Having succeeded in corralling the leader and the more active members of the Filipino band, Forbes promptly decided to carry out the rest of his scheme without any attempt at concealing his purpose. Accordingly he and two men boldly approached the low building in front of which the meditative buffalo was still munching its hay. Three Filipinos, hearing their steps, came hastily to the door.

"Americanos!"

And as the cry rang out, one of the Tagalogs raised a revolver, while the others reached for rifles. But the natives never drew the triggers. Forbes and his companions fired almost simultaneously and the Tagalogs fell to the floor.

Entering the building, the Americans found that it consisted of one large room in which many stools, three cots and several tables were placed. This was now deserted.

As they left the house and looked around no other native met their view.

Hurrying to the little cluster of trees on the seaward side of the house, the cavalrymen found six horses, apparently of an American breed, and fourteen native ponies, all of which were saddled. The buffalo turned a pair of pensive eyes toward the men in khaki and continued his munching.

Forbes turned to his men.

"Well, boys, our work here is done I guess," he said. "The buffalo has awaited a long while for his load, so I think one of you had better drive him along the beach to the men on the promontory. There are some impedimenta down there that may find him useful. Woodville, mount one of these nags, ride down to the beach and promontory and tell all the rest of our comrades to hurry up here as fast as they can."

The man was scarcely out of sight when there came from the beach the sound of two rifle volleys, then a series of scattered shots.

Forbes' companion looked at him questioningly.

"Wait," said the lieutenant. "To return now after what has been said would be a breach of faith. Yost is capable of handling them alone."

Forbes, gazing watchfully up the road along which Devoges had gone, smoked silently for several minutes. He did not turn his head until he heard the hoofbeats of a horse approaching him from the direction of the beach.

It was Yost.

"The holes in the sand are filled," the corporal said.

CHAPTER XIV.

"AMIGO—MUCHA AMIGO!"

When the moon attained its meridian that night, a Filipino of middle age, clad in a badly soiled white shirt which hung down over the tops of his trousers, emerged from a cluster of high ferns, and stepping cautiously on a rude roadway that wound along through the tropical forest, looked around him searchingly.

From the branches above him came the expostulating squawks of drowsy parrots, but all else was still. After assuring himself that he was not likely to be observed, he advanced boldly into the road, and bending over it, he examined its surface attentively.

Suddenly he gave a start, rose quickly

and looked along the road to his right. Then he shook his head gravely and once more made his way into the thick tangle of the wilderness. For a distance of fifty feet he had to struggle with a mass of tangled vines and bush-branches that barred his way. At length he came to a small, round clearing about twenty feet in diameter. Here the bushes were either uprooted or beaten down.

From this clearing a little path, two feet in width, led in through the brushwood. Along this path the Filipino now made his way at a rapid trot till, about sixty yards farther on, he came to a second clearing, at one side of which rose a tree that is peculiar to the Philippines.

This tree, in many respects resembles a mangrove. The roots grow out of the trunk above the ground in a manner which gives to the base the appearance of that spider which is familiarly known to juvenile America as the "daddy-long-legs." As the tree increases in age new roots grow out above the old so that in course of time the bottom of the trunk is often as much as twenty feet above the surface of the ground. At the ground the roots sometimes have a projection of thirty feet, and form a series of roofless chambers.

Into one of these chambers the Filipino crept and, stooping, he raised from the ground a short, thick and heavy club. Stepping back he smote one of the roots with the club at irregular intervals, thereby producing a series of deep, booming sounds that reverberated through the forest in a manner that had the effect of distant peals of thunder.

At the expiration of five minutes he stopped and, with one of the overhangs of his shirt, he wiped the beads of perspiration from his brow. Then squatting on the ground at the foot of the tree, he lighted a cigar and waited.

At length, with a quick movement, he snatched the cigar from his mouth and, falling forward he placed one ear to the ground. Then he heard a low "chug-chug, chug-chug" that resembled the hoof-beats of a galloping horse. He leaped quickly to his feet, ran down the path, through the clearing and plunged into the tangle which lay between the clearing and the roadway.

Many minutes went by—five, ten, then twenty. The parrots ceased their chatter. Doubtless they thought the man who lay with one side of his head to the ground, and with only a thin fringe of brushwood between him and the road, was sleeping, or had crawled into the tangle to die like other natives they had known. But assured that he meant no harm to them, the birds grew still.

From a distant point somewhere in that mighty forest there suddenly rose a succession of sounds similar to those which this watchful native had produced from the strange tree. The Filipino raised his head, and listened attentively. When the sounds ceased he put one of his ears to the ground again.

A few more minutes passed, then once more he started and raised his head. Now he heard the sound of human voices—the voices of two men who conversed in ordinary tones. At first the words were indistinguishable, then they became more plain.

"There are no more, señor," one voice said.

"No. One was all he dropped."

"He expects his lieutenant to follow him."

"Ha, ha, ha! The lynx-eyed Perigo will see to that!"

"But if another is found along the road and is taken to Devoges, what are we to say?"

"It is night," replied the other, petulantly. "In these shadows it is as vain to look for a little shell as to seek at this hour a lost ruby among the sands and stones of yonder beach."

"True. Let us return to Devoges."

Creeping farther forward the Filipino saw two figures, clad in white, standing in the road. Each of the men was leading a horse by the bridle. And, as the old native gazed, they mounted and rode away to the right.

As the sound of the hoofbeats died away, the Filipino stole out cautiously.

"A shell—a shell!" he muttered in the language of the Tagalogs. "They were looking for it in the road."

Almost involuntarily his gaze swept the ground around him. Then something caught and held it. The object was lying in a rut in the road. The na-

tive moved toward it, stooped, and picked it up.

It was an empty cartridge.

The old Tagalog looked at it meditatively, turning it over and over in his hands. He held it to his nose, then scratched his head.

He was about to throw it away when a new thought srtuck him. He raised his shirt that overhung his trousers and took a small revolver from his belt. From this he abstracted the little rod that held the chamber cylinder in position, then he thrust the rod into the cartridge. A moment later a little slip of paper was before his eyes.

He gave utterance to a little exclamation of disgust.

The written words were English, and he could not read them.

He was still fingering the paper dubiously when he was startled by a series of sounds that came to him from the left. He listened for a moment, then he forthwith plunged again into the bushes. From above his head there rose harsh mutterings. The parrots also had heard the sounds—the hoof-beats of approaching horses.

This time the Filipino had not long to wait. The sound of pounding hoofs rapidly grew louder, then around a curve in the road there swung two horses and their riders. The riders were white and were clad in khaki.

"Amigo—mucha amigo!" cried the man in the bushes.

The riders drew rein with an abruptness that almost sent their mounts back on their haunches.

The men were Forbes and Yost.

"Amigo—mucha amigo!" (a friend—a great friend) the unseen Filipino cried again.

"A friend of whom?" Forbes called out, in Spanish.

"Señor Forrester."

"Come out, then," answered Forbes, as, turning, he saw his little band sweeping toward him along the road. Then, in a low voice, he said to Yost. "Ride back and put the boys on their guard."

Yost had scarcely wheeled around his horse and started back, when the Filipino left the bushes and advanced with upraised hands.

"Where is Forrester?" Forbes demanded as he directed a searching gaze, full of suspicion, on the Filipino.

"An hour's journey over there," the native answered, pointing to the lieutenant's right. "He is hard pressed and needs your aid."

"He knows that we are here?"

"Yes, señor."

The expression of distrust deepened on Forbes' face.

"We only landed to-night. Who has told him?"

"I, señor."

"But if he is an hour's journey from here how could you have covered the distance between the beach and his camp?"

"I've made the trees talk, señor."

"The trees!"

Forbes shook his head incredulously.

"Who has sent you here to stop me?"

"No one, señor. I am a scout in the service of Major Forrester."

"What is your name?"

"Sanchez, señor."

"Ah!"

It was the name of the man mentioned in the heliograph message—the name of the man who was to be trusted.

"You can make the trees talk, you say?"

"Oh, yes, señor."

"Then tell Major Forrester that you have seen Crosby Forbes—that our detail is divided, and that the second division is following the first, which is with Devoges. We are going to join Carrero. The division detail cannot leave the first."

The Filipino leaped backward, and an expression of alarm crossed his face.

"You know you are going to Carrero? Do you go as friends?"

Forbes stroked his mustache thoughtfully, then he answered:

"Yes, we go as friends."

"My God, señor! You walk into the open mouth of the serpent!"

"That is my suspicion, Sanchez, but——"

"Carrero is the arch enemy of you all."

"He has promised to aid us in our attempt to take Pacheco."

"Pacheco is his slave."

"He has two prisoners—American women."

"Carrero will wed one to-morrow. He has captured a priest. It is very terrible."

The face of Forbes grew livid.

"Which one does he purpose to make his wife?"

The Filipino shook his head and shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know," he said, "but it is the more beautiful of the two!"

"The devil!" Forbes muttered, then looking over his shoulder, he said: "We must push on then."

The eyes of the Filipino brightened, as he said:

"Carrero is with the force that is now surrounding Major Forrester, and the major's ammunition is gone."

"How many men has he left?"

"Only ten, an hour ago."

"But if Devoges is going to meet Carrero——"

"I know a shorter way than that Devoges has taken, señor."

"We will overtake Devoges by the way you know?"

"Perhaps. But you will see Major Forrester first?"

Forbes hesitated, then shook his head negatively.

"We must ride on," he said. "Our men ahead may need us."

Sanchez gave a little start as he suddenly thought of the cartridge and piece of crumpled paper that he held in one of his hands.

"Two of Devoges' men came back looking for shells in the road," he began.

"Looking for shells!" Forbes exclaimed, with an accent of alarm.

"Yes, señor. I heard them talking. They abandoned the search. Then I found this."

And as he spoke he gave to Forbes the cartridge and slip of paper.

By the light of the moon Forbes read:

> The mask is off. We are disarmed and covered by the rifles of the enemy. Under the circumstances a fight was hopeless, but we would have gone to the end did we not believe you would relieve us. Why they have spared us I don't understand. LONGAKER.

Underneath this was written the word "durable." This corresponded with the ninth day of the month, in the manner indicated on the list Forbes had given to Longaker on the Bojeador.

Forbes slipped the note into his pocket, then bending down he extended a hand to the Filipino.

"Up with you, Sanchez!" he cried. "Give me your hand—now, your foot on my stirrup. We'll ride on a little way together, so climb up here behind me. Forrester shall see us before daybreak, but he will see our whole detail together."

As the little Filipino, sitting behind him, gripped him round the waist, Forbes wheeled around his horse and addressed his men.

"Longaker and his boys are taken!" he cried. "They're on ahead of us. We must get them. So let us ride—ride and fight as we have never done before, for the honor of the Twenty-Third and the daughter of its colonel!"

* * * *

Several hundred yards in the rear, two American bluejackets, driving a slow-plodding buffalo, which drew a cart filled with rations, rifles, and ammunition, heard a sudden clatter of hoofs ahead of them—a clatter that grew fainter and fainter and finally died away in the distance.

"I wonder what struck the boys ahead of us," one muttered.

"Hanged if I know," replied the other stolidly. "Danged if I ever thought I'd come down to driving a white elephant and a rhinoceros. But when I'm told to keep him going right along this road, why right along this road he goes. We don't know nothing. But orders is orders."

CHAPTER XV.

THE TALE THE TREES TOLD.

"ANOTHER, señor."

And the speaker placed a cartridge shell in the hand of Devoges, who was riding at the head of his little cavalcade.

The brow of the leader darkened as, reining in his steed, he allowed his men and their prisoners to move past him.

"This is the second," he murmured. "Señor Longaker has one of the qualities of an excellent correspondent, for he

does not wait for answers to his communications before he writes again."

As his two buffalo carts moved by him, he drew a slip of paper from the cartridge and read as follows:

> Devoges has picked up ten more men. There are now sixty in his force. LONGAKER.

And underneath was written the word "durable."

Devoges seemed to be lost in thought for several moments, then thrusting his spurs into the sides of his horse, he rode on rapidly until he came to the side of Longaker.

"Señor," he said, "if you are so unfortunate as to drop another of your empty cartridges in the road, we will be compelled to leave your body beside it."

Without waiting for an answer he rode on until he reached the head of his troop.

"Señor Perigo is late," said one of his lieutenants.

"Yes, Senderon, his search on the beach has taken him longer than I thought," Devoges answered gloomily.

There was a pause, then Senderon said:

"These Americans do not seem to be greatly affected by the loss of their rifles and the knowledge of the fact that they are our prisoners."

"They are a strange people," Devoges replied. "It is hard to read their thoughts. Sometimes I think——"

He stopped suddenly.

From a point directly ahead of them, and apparently scarcely more than three hundred yards distant, there came the ringing notes of a bugle!

Every Filipino bridle came back with a jerk, and a murmur of alarm spread through the ranks.

"What does it mean, señor?" Senderon asked breathlessly as he looked into the startled eyes of Devoges.

"Forrester is out!" Devoges gasped.

"He doesn't know that we are here, else he wouldn't sound——"

There was a sudden raising of frightened voices behind them. Then there came the sound of a rifle shot—a babel of shouts—then a rifle volley—a volley that seemed continuous.

It was in vain that Devoges drew his sword and called to his men to stand—that they outnumbered the enemy. His white-coated adherents flung down their rifles and as, with uplifted hands, they started toward the brush, they fell to the earth like singed flies.

The panic of his followers gripped the heart of the leader, and, smiting his horse with his spurs, he pressed forward. Once more the notes of the ghostly bugle rang out ahead of him. He hesitated and looked over his shoulder. Amid the plunging, snorting steeds, and the mass of shrieking, cursing, praying Filipinos, the men who had been their prisoners were grabbing rifles. The fire slackened, and, charging with drawn sabers, Forbes and his cavalrymen and three bluejackets rode into the frenzied mob.

Devoges hesitated no longer. Once more he turned the head of his horse toward the place from which the notes of the mysterious bugle still were rising. As he rounded an angle in the road, a jet of fire issued from a thicket on his right. His horse stumbled and he saw a single horseman move forward from where the shot had come. The steed of the Filipino leader went down, and, as he freed himself from the stirrups, he heard a shout of triumph.

"Well done, Yost! You can rest the bugle now. You've winged the man we want. Now you little, lying runt——"

And Forbes, leaping from his horse, seized Devoges by the collar.

"Here—take him, Yost," Forbes went on. "There's plenty of good clean work cut out for him to-night. He's promised to take us to Señor Carrero and, by God, we'll see he keeps his word!"

Then, delivering the trembling mestizo into the hands of the corporal, Forbes remounted his horse and rode back to the scene of carnage.

It was ugly saber business—this work of the men of the Twenty-Third, for only one prisoner was taken—Devoges.

In less than five minutes all was still, and the cavalrymen and bluejackets were collecting fallen rifles and rounding up the best of the uninjured horses. While the men were thus employed, Forbes turned to Longaker.

"How did it happen, lad, that you and your men of the Twenty-Third gave up your arms?" he asked coldly.

Longaker turned to his friend a face that was expressive of grim reproach.

"Eleven of us were looking into forty rifles, Forbes," he said. "They had us in a bunch. There wasn't one of the boys who wouldn't have died game, with his gun gripped in his hands, if I hadn't commanded them to give them up."

"You gave the order to surrender, then," Forbes muttered, as he pulled at his mustache.

Longaker hesitated.

"There's a woman over there with Carrero or Pacheco——" he began.

"Yes. I know," sighed Forbes. "There's always a woman at the bottom of it."

"Well, I thought of Harriet Secor, and I knew that if she was to be taken out of the hands of her captors, no American soldier that is up here now could be spared from the task," Longaker went on.

"When the explosion occurred, I had an idea that you had suspected that Devoges was going to destroy the Bojeador, and had planned to save her. You fooled the brownies, Forbes, but I know that if an explosion like that hits a ship, she isn't going to drift out to sea on an incoming tide."

"True, lad—true. I hadn't thought of that."

"So I felt sure you would be after me with your men. When I saw that those brownies had us covered, I didn't tell my men to surrender. 'Let 'em have the guns, boys,' I cried. And by the way I spoke they knew we would have them back again in a little while."

"You lent the rifles, then?" Forbes queried.

"That's all," Longaker replied.

"Bravo, bravo, lad!" Forbes exclaimed, as he slapped his comrade on the back. "I knew that no man of the Twenty-Third——"

He stopped and listened.

"What's that?" he muttered.

From a point somewhere near them in the forest there came a succession of booming sounds like those of distant thunder or the breaking of heavy seas.

Glancing toward Devoges, Forbes saw that he was listening attentively. The lieutenant gripped the mestizo by the shoulder, as he said:

"Speak, you little weasel! What noise is that we hear over yonder?"

"It is some one making the talking trees tell of your victory."

Forbes, releasing Devoges from his grasp, heaved a sigh of relief.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "It is only Sanchez talking to Forrester."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE HANDS OF CARRERO.

THE first faint glints of dawn were beginning to appear above the hills as a young Filipino horseman crossed the ford of a clear mountain stream, and drew rein in front of a large nipa shack.

At the door of the shack sat a drowsy Tagalog sentinel who, hearing the approach of the horseman, quickly roused himself and brought his rifle to his shoulder.

"Who goes there?" he demanded in a tone that plainly indicated that the challenge as well as his belligerent attitude were more or less perfunctory.

"A friend," the rider answered.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," demanded the sentinel, with a yawn.

The rider laughed lightly and leaped from the back of his Timor pony.

"Is Señor Carrero sleeping?" he asked.

"No," the other answered, as, turning, he rapped on the door. Then, thrusting in his head, he addressed a few words to some person within.

"Señor Carrero will see you, Oppas," the sentinel said.

Oppas, without further ado, pushed open the door and entered the hut.

The room was lighted by a couple of wicks that floated in cups of cocoanut oil. This light revealed a tall, admirably proportioned man, seated beside a rude table that was covered with papers and writing materials. His dark, oval face was well molded, his brown eyes were large and lustrous, his chin was firm and his mouth was partly concealed by a carefully trained black mustache.

He appeared to be about thirty-five years of age, and his erect figure indicated that at least a part of his life had

been passed in military service. This was Juan Antonio Carrero.

As Oppas entered, Carrero quickly raised his eyes from a paper that he held in his hands.

"Well?" he asked abruptly.

"I come from Señor Devoges," Oppas explained.

"I am aware of that," the other retorted curtly. "If you have a message from him, let me have it as quickly as you can."

"It is a verbal message, señor. He did not have time to write."

"Then tell it."

"Señor Devoges has met Captain Longaker's party from the Bojeador. Besides the leader there are ten men. All are prisoners and are disarmed. Señor Devoges is bringing them to you."

Carrero smiled faintly and nodded in a manner that was expressive of thorough satisfaction.

"What time am I to expect them?"

"By dawn, señor."

"Was there a fight?"

"None. But Señor Devoges destroyed the Bojeador and all who had remained aboard after Longaker's party disembarked."

Carrero started and bit his lower lip.

"That is a little too serious, I am afraid," he muttered, with a grave smile. "These Americans are more sensitive concerning the loss of a ship than of a whole army corps. If the Maine had not been destroyed at Havana the Spaniards would still be in Cuba."

Oppas started to speak, but Carrero silenced him with a gesture.

"It is now almost dawn," he said. "I will get the details of his work from Señor Devoges himself. Does the information you have just given me cover all that you have to tell?"

"Yes, señor."

"That will do, then."

Carrero nodded, and Oppas turned toward the door.

"Wait," said Carrero.

Oppas drew nearer the table. The Spaniard looked meditatively for several moments at one of the walls, then he went on:

"Go to the quarters of Señor Fernandez and tell him it is my wish that he inform Señora Endicott and her friend that I will visit them in ten minutes."

"Yes, señor."

"When you have done this, return here."

Oppas saluted and withdrew.

For several minutes Carrero sat immovable, staring at a pile of papers on the table. He was in this position when Oppas returned.

"Señor Fernandez directs me to say, señor, that the ladies will see you."

Carrero nodded.

"Wait here till I return," he said.

He picked up his hat, and as he placed it on his head he left the hut. A short walk along the banks of the stream that flowed through his camp brought him to the door of a nipa hut that was somewhat larger than the one he had just left. He found a little group of armed guards on duty. He returned their salutes, then knocked on the door. There was a pause; then a woman's voice bade him enter.

He opened the door, and, removing his hat as he crossed the threshold, he bowed profoundly to two women who stood together in the middle of the floor.

Both of the women were of medium height, but one was at least ten years older than the other. The older was the woman who had been observed by Forbes while he was conversing with Bandmaster Kumpel on the Luneta, in Manila.

To-night, however, as she stood with one arm around her younger companion, she seemed even more beautiful than she had been in the capital. There was something haughty in her mien; her cheeks were flushed, and her dark eyes flashed ominously, as, with a slight inclination of her head, she acknowledged the profound bow made to her by Carrero.

The woman who stood beside her was of an altogether different type of feminine beauty. Her slight figure lacked the queenly dignity and magnificent outlines of the widow of Major Endicott. Indignation had given to the features of her companion the color of a rose, to her it had given the whiteness of the lily. While the dark eyes of Flora En-

dicott flashed with proud, uncompromising scorn, the deep blue eyes of Harriet Secor were clear and cold. Her delicately molded features were those of a carefully reared girl, but, withal, a girl who was the daughter of a brave soldier.

Carrero, the first to speak, addressed the two women in perfect English.

"Ladies, we change our camp to-morrow," he said. "It is better that before we go we arrive at an understanding on the subject which I submitted to you yesterday. Let us sit down."

As he finished speaking he placed two chairs near his fair prisoners.

The two women hesitated, then seated themselves.

"I shall not detain you long," Carrero went on. "But it is essential that what I would have you do be done to-night."

The Spaniard took from one of his pockets a paper which he unfolded with perfect deliberation. Then turning to Miss Secor he said:

"Señorita, yesterday I suggested to you the propriety of writing to your father, Colonel Secor, for the purpose of informing him that you are in the hands of Carrero, and begging him to use his influence with the Department of the Philippines in such a manner as to cause the Washington authorities to give me a clear title to fifty thousand acres, the location of which I have specified, in Central Luzon—a title which the revolutionists have consented to give me in return for my support."

"The American army needs no support of the character that Señor Carrero is prepared to give it in putting down the insurrection," Harriet answered coldly.

Carrero nodded and smiled gravely.

"I believe that is the substance of what you told me yesterday," he said. "For your sake I regret to say, however, that you are not altogether well-informed concerning the needs of that organization. It will surprise the señorita to learn, therefore, that Juan Carrero holds the honor of that army in his hands."

Harriet shrugged her shoulders.

"Señor Carrero is not strong enough to hold his own," she retorted coldly.

The Spaniard's face grew pale with anger. But he answered quietly:

"When you know him better you will not be so bold, my charming señorita. In your army there is no secret so well covered that I cannot dig it out.

"I do not deal with underlings. It is only among those of higher rank that I work my will. A score have been dishonored through my agents. Honorable men, you say? Ah, but not sufficiently astute to learn the workings of my game.

"They know my name, but don't know me. They feel my hand, but never see it. They know that I am in Luzon, why do they not attempt to take me? They are striking at Pacheco now, but, señorita, how wildly they are striking! They trust men who are my lieutenants—men who lead their paltry, perfunctory expeditions into the snares I spread for them.

"I have threatened that I will ruin any civil or military officer who leads or sends an expedition after me. So, believing me to be in the west, they strike at my poor Pacheco, who is in my service in the east."

Chuckling as he leaned further forward, he went on:

"Important documents have been missed by those in authority—documents whose loss means a loss of the tenure of office of those responsible for their keeping. Can these military and civil departmental chiefs prove that they were stolen and not sold to me? If they were stolen, what have their custodians to say of their vigilance, and their ability to keep state secrets?

"Among these high officers who tremble at my name is your father, señorita. But he and General Purdy have been bold enough to send two expeditions after Pacheco, and I have resolved to punish them."

"It is for them to punish—not a renegade from the Spanish army who, having a price put on his head, dares not show his face where European civilization holds sway!" said Harriet, rising with flushed features.

"Ah, the señora has been exerting her influence over you, I see," replied Carrero, who also rose. "Well, then, señorita, since you have partaken so much of the Señora Endicott's spirit, you shall share her happiness. When she become my wife, three hours hence, you

will become the bride of my dear friend, Señor Pacheco."

Harriet gave utterance to a cry of dismay and ran to Mrs. Endicott, who caught her in her arms.

Mrs. Endicott, now trembling with emotion, turned her flashing eyes on the Spaniard.

"You coward!" she said in a low, vibrant voice. "Your successful destruction of Major Forrester's expedition has turned your brain. Beware of the fate that will be meted out to you by a second."

Carrero smiled as he bowed low before her.

"The second has come, señora," he said. "Captain Longaker and his command have been taken and are on their way to die at your feet this morning, if you and the señorita turn back from the altar when I bid you go."

Then, with another courtly bow, he left her.

(To be continued.)

ON THE STEEPLE.

By Charles Francis Bourke.

OF a remarkable and thrilling situation on a church spire that pierced the very clouds.

ONE job brings on another in my business. That's the advantage of working in the open air, "in the eyes of all men," as the Good Book says.

It was on Monday morning that I rove the new halyards to the flagpole on the Trinity Building. Twenty-two stories from the sidewalk it was, and ten thousand people jamming the streets watching.

And there I was snappering 'round up there on top of that forty-foot pole, like a toy monkey on the end of a mighty slim fishing rod.

It was blowing a gale, and the flagpole bent over with my weight—I'm not very heavy, either—so that I teetered right over the middle of the street, which looked about two feet wide. It was ticklish work, but just the same I had to laugh to see 'em making plenty of room down there for me to drop.

I only mention that to show you how a steeple-jack does his own advertising. Very next morning after the Trinity job I had a call from the sexton of St. Paul's.

"You're the man that climbed Trinity flagpole yesterday?"

I had to own up.

"Can you work up on top of a church steeple without scaffolding?" he asks again.

I knew what was coming. I'd had my eye on that St. Paul's job since last summer.

"I can rope myself up the steeple and sit on top of the cross, if that's what you mean," I said.

"They don't want you to sit on it; they want you to gild it," he says. "Vestry pays fifty dollars and stands the gold leaf. I've brought the surface measurements."

"I'm your man!" I said, jumping up. "I'll get the leaf at Simonson's and be on the job at noon."

"Simonson can send the bill. I'll meet you at the church. Don't hurt any of my pigeons. Good morning!" And out he goes.

There was a mighty good business man lost in that sexton.

I needed a helper on the job, so I started out hunting up "Diver" Larsen.

Carl Larsen, his real name was, but he was a deep-sea diver before his lungs went back on him. He said if he couldn't live 'way down below, he'd live 'way up top, so he took to helping me, odd jobs. He was a big husky bully, lithe as a panther on rope work, though.

I found him at Connor's Corner, half asleep over a pint. He began to make excuses.

"You know hot days hurts my head,"

he said. "It is so since the Morocco Prince, when those greenhorns pumped too much air into my helmet. I dived after the Morocco Prince——"

"Then you can go back to diving, for all of me," I said sharp. I wasn't going to pass up a fifty for his laziness. He took it all right though, and that's what surprised me a little at the time.

"So?" he said, looking at me more puzzled-like than mad. "I shall go, and I hope we shall not be sorry."

He went off after the tackle and tools and I got the gold leaf and met him at the church door. The sexton let us in and took us up into the belfry where the big "open work" lattice windows are. He looked close at Diver Larsen.

"You know your business, but I know faces," he whispers. "Watch out you don't come down faster than you go up. There's cross-pieces on the center beam to climb up by," he says. "Mind what I told you about my pigeons."

He trotted off, and Larsen and I got on the platform over the big bell. There was a stampede up there right off; the place was full of wings and whistling.

That's the worst about spire work; all the city pigeons live in church steeples and when you climb the center beams they go on crowding ahead of you until they can't get up any higher; then they just fold their wings and drop like a bullet—and look out you don't get one on top of your head!

Diver Larsen and I was dodging them all the way up the beam. There was one thing funny—he kept mumbling to himself.

"They was a whole crate of 'em on the Prince," he says. "They was blue rocks an' they was pouters, too, an' they was carriers. Them had notes tied on their legs from the passengers. . . Pore devils! All drowned an' wet, they was."

"What the deuce you growling about?" I sings out finally. "You want to let the beer alone next job," I says. I just thought he was sojering on me.

"It ain't beer," he says, scrambling up after me. "It's the air they pumped into my helmet. . . But they was all drowned, every one of 'em. . . . There goes a blue rock now. He was drowned along of the pouters an' carriers."

"Hold your yarning," I told him, half thinking I'd send him back. We'd got up top, though, far as I could work, and I went boring through the sheathing to cut out a man-hole. When I pulled out the first plank I saw we were ten feet from the foot of the big gilt cross.

"We'll run out a string-piece and lash it to the center beam," I told him. "You steady it while I lasso the cross-arm and swing a straddle seat."

St. Paul's was mighty high from that man-hole! Either that or Diver's grumbling got on my nerves. It was blowing great guns up there, too, and the up-draft from the steeple nearly pulled me through the hole.

I wasn't taking any chances, so I rigged a waist line and fastened it inside higher up, in case of missing my footing: The spire swayed a good five feet, too, though I didn't mind that, being used to flagpoles.

I missed the cross-piece first throw, but made it the next time. Then we hauled up the block tackle and made fast to the beam inside. I stuffed a roll of gold paper in my pocket and strapped the size box round my waist.

"I'll do the top arm first, Diver," I said. "That'll be enough for to-day. Haul me up to the cross-arm, and I'll give word when I want to come down. Look sharp now, and see you don't keep me waiting."

"I'll look sharp and see you ain't kept waitin'," he said in the same queer way, looking out through the man-hole at me where I stood on the stringer. "Just give the word, an' I'll let you down."

"Then hoist away!" I sings out.

I don't know if you ever did work on a steeple top; if you didn't I can tell you it's crampy up there, with the wind cutting your face, and the swaying 'round, and the sizing sticking up your hands, and the gold blowing off just at the wrong time.

When your head gets singing you've got to quit work and look 'way off in the distance to straighten up again. Up there you could see the river winding miles up into the hills, and the whole panorama of the big town, and the streets running like white threads away off and losing themselves.

About two hours is all an average jack can stand, and it took me that to do both sides of the top arm of the cross.

Then something struck me that I hadn't given a thought to all the time. I had signalled Diver once or twice the first hour, and once he had stuck his head out of the man-hole, looking up and nodding. Then he went to hammering awhile, and I got busy and forgot him.

I now slapped the rope against the side of the steeple. He didn't make any move.

"Suppose he's gone to sleep and fallen down inside," I thought. That wasn't comforting, so I slapped the rope some more.

No reply, and a little chill ran up my back. I took a turn of the hoist over the cross-arm and began cautiously to pull in. It came!

"He has gone to sleep, or he has fallen down," I thought. "Only I'd sure have heard him. What's he cast the hoist rope loose for?"

I was getting cramps bad, and knew I had to get down, if I ever expected to make it. I didn't really need his help for that, only it was safer, and it made me mad, the way he'd let the fall get cast loose.

I didn't want to risk scaring him off that scantling, either, if he *was* asleep; I needed that for a foothold, and I just made up my mind, pretty quick, to give it to Mr. Diver Larsen when I got down there.

I cast loose the lashings, took a half turn round my leg, and lowered away. It was no child's play, either, for, mind you, it was a good twenty feet from the cross-arm to the man-hole; and it was the longest twenty feet I ever made in my life, too!

Half way down, my feet caught the out-slant of the steeple and I gripped it with the inside of my shoes to take the strain off my hands. I looked down and saw the end of the scantling—just four or five inches—sticking out below and aimed to land on it.

I saw the scantling—and I saw something else!

Diver Larsen's big hand shot out and grabbed the hoist rope, jerking it out of my grip. It snapped up against the spire as he jerked it in and made fast, and then Diver's big red face leered up at me from the man-hole, just on the level with my shoes, where my legs dangled down from the swing-board.

"What the devil you up to?" I yelled when my heart quit jumping.

"I'm makin' you stop there when I talk to you," he says perfectly calm. "You wouldn't let me tell you about the Morocco Prince, so now you *got* to listen. Then we're both goin' to dive right down to the bottom of the sea an' see what them pore folks is doin' all this time in the wet."

Then I knew Diver Larsen *had* gone mad—high-climber's madness.

I tried to keep a grip on myself. That's part of my trade, too.

"This ain't no time for foolin'," I says, trying to grin it off. "Let me down; I'm all cramped up."

"It *is* crampy, in deep water," he said, nodding slow and solemn. "Especially in cold weather. I been there. Them pore passengers on the Prince was all cramped, an' wet—*mighty* wet. They was lots o' pigeons too, on'y they comes back here to the steeple to see us dive."

I saw how it was, and my stomach went cold, cold as ice. It all came back to me in a flash: his talk and his crazy way, and about his head and the air-pump.

I thought quick—mighty quick. So would you if you was swinging good and fast between the sky and the street and a looney helper half way between.

Steeple-jacks have got to think fast, most times, and I saw he wasn't going to do anything right away; steeple-jack madness always starts cool—nothing wrong only the talk.

"All right," I said, pleasant and cool; "I always wanted to know about that Morocco Prince. You went down and got the gold and the bodies, didn't you?"

"That's just what I did," he said, nodding again at every word.

"She went down in twenty fathom and they blowed air into my helmet and choked me so I couldn't see.

"They was a box of pigeons and boxes of gold, and sixty passengers, all dead and wet. She was French and the women an' children was in the cabins.

They wasn't no boat, an' they wasn't no crew."

"Crew jumped the boats—I see," I said, when he stopped. I was measuring the distance all the time.

Then I thought of something. It came to me like a flash—though I knew it was either him or me, I didn't want to kill him if I could help it.

"Take a turn of that hoist line round your middle and make it fast to the center beam," I said careless like.

He looked surprised and some suspicious.

"What's that for?"

"And you a diver!" I says, trying to laugh, though my side was pounding like trip-hammers. "How are you going to signal up top 'less you take down a rope when you dive?"

He brightened right up. "That's right," he answers me. "We don't need air pipes, 'cause my helmet is too full now. Wait a bit!"

I heard him fumbling inside; then he puts his face out again, working with one hand at his waist, knotting the rope. I knew there wasn't more than six-foot play of line between him and the end round the beam, because he had to cast it loose and he held the hoist in his hand, only just below where I was hanging on to it myself.

I was ready for him then, but didn't dare let go too soon. That kick meant life or death to me—and maybe to him, if the rope let him down inside. I played for time, coaxing him.

"Now tell me about the Prince, like you started," I said teetering with my toe against the spire.

Lord, but I was glad I hadn't changed my street shoes!

"The Prince went down twenty fathom," he says, leaning his chin on his hand (his eyes right level with my toe, too).

"I goes down in twenty fathom where she knocked her bottom out on the rock. . . One fat gentleman in a w'ite wesket came floating right out o' his cabin door and bumped into me. I couldn't see 'cause they was givin' me too much air.

"'Who might you be?' says I.

"'I owns the pigeons an' I'm guardin' the treasure down here,' he says.

"'I ain't goin' to have no one interfering with my job,' I says, an' pushed him back in the cabin.

Then I goes on to the saloon cabin. A awful sight that was!

"The steward he says to me, 'Have you got a ticket?' he says. . . 'Divers don't need tickets,' I tells him. . . 'Then down below you goes, an' shovels coal,' he says. So I goes to the captain, drowned up on the bridge——"

I couldn't stand *that* any longer. He was just mumbling along you know, talking slow and never moving. I felt myself going looney too, and I know enough about men going mad up high to know he would make me take that dive with him when he got through. So I breaks in, very cautious and cool:

"Are you sure you got that hoist rope good and fast on you?" I says. He holds off a little and lets me see it round his waist. That scared me—his moving back—but he put his chin back on his hand, and I breathed deep again. His squinty eyes burned like two coals.

"Don't interrupt, 'cause you ain't got much time," he growls. "I sees the captain on the bridge——"

It was now or never!

Thud! I let him have it.

The toe of my heavy shoe caught Diver between the two red eyes, right where I aimed. He just gurgled and went back slow. Then the hoist rope jerked like a mule kicking; I could feel the big cross up top wabbling, and I went up three feet with his weight pulling me up on the board. But it's funny—a regular picture went through my mind of Diver Larsen hitting the bell!

He hit the cross-piece instead, because the rope slacked, and my feet came down on the end of the scantling. I knew it was all over then, and I got loose and crawled in through the man-hole.

Limp?

I just doubled over a cross-beam like an old coat. Things floated between my eyes, and I thought I was going to flop right there; only a minute, though, because I heard him stirring right under me and beginning to gasp. But he was fast to the hoist line, so I knew he was safe for a few minutes, and I didn't want that much time to shin down and go hunting the little sexton.

The sexton was in the vestry, when I came wobbling along, holding on to anything in reach.

"I thought you'd have some trouble," he says as soon as he saw my face. "Where's the crazy man?"

"Up top," I gasped. "Get the fire boys over." Then I tumbled—first and last time since I've been climbing.

* * * * *

Well, that's all. The laddies found him counting his fingers and talking of the Morocco Prince to the pigeons up there at the man-hole. They let him down in a sling and took him to the hospital, where he was out next week O.K. Doc said he had temporary brain congestion.

He isn't my helper now, though—not with that kind of a head! Steeple-jacks have plenty to bother them without looney helpers with helmets full of air. Diver Larsen's working for Connor now, at the Corner—and that's the best place for him!

LITTLE DUNNY WEAVER.*

By Philip Verrill Mighels,

Author of "The Inevitable," "Bruvver Jim's Baby," "The Ultimate Passion," Etc.

A romantic love story of the Western mountains and lumber-camps.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

SYLVIA WEAVER and her six-year-old brother, Dunny, are on their way to Tamarack, in the mountains of the West, where her father once lived and where she is to marry Jerry Kirk, a middle-aged friend of his. On the train she meets Allan Kennedy, and a mutual love springs into being, though loyalty seals her lips.

Sylvia and her brother take up their abode in Tamarack, and Jerry, with silent suffering, sees the obvious situation in which Sylvia and Allan stand.

Tid Flack, the Tamarack cobbler, in the recesses of his shop, comes upon a pair of boots which belonged to Sylvia's father, and, in the toe of one, discovers his long lost will, which makes Asa Craig, Jerry's partner, guardian of Sylvia and her brother, until she shall marry some man of over thirty-five years of age. The property—timber country—will enable Craig to drive Jerry out of business.

Kennedy reports the state of affairs to Sylvia, and she insists that it is her duty to marry Jerry immediately. In spite of Allan's fervent declaration and protestations, she sends him to the mill some miles distant to bring Jerry home.

CHAPTER XXI.

JERRY'S HOUR ARRIVES.

JERRY KIRK and his partner, that Sunday morning, had been having a bitter engagement of words, in the interchange of which Asa Craig had revealed the full extent of his power. The man's amazing cleverness and ingenuity had proved to be second only to his jealousy and frankly avowed intention to thrust Jerry out of the business.

A new sort of Jerry, somewhat stunned, but wholly calm and self-reliant, greeted Allan Kennedy when at last the younger man appeared again at Mill-site and delivered Sylvia's message.

"Miss Weaver wishes to see you at once," was all that Allan said.

Already beset by accumulated troubles, Jerry believed that more were now

about to be added to his burden. The flash of emotion in Allan's eyes, as he thus fufilled what he felt to be a final service to Sylvia, was interpreted by Jerry as a sign of the younger man's success in love. He was certain that Sylvia wished to see him only for the purpose of asking to be released from her promise to become his wife.

He merely said, "All right."

But the ride to Tamarack was a long, hot ride, and conflicts raged in the breast of the mountaineer, leaving his heart in soreness that he felt could have no healing.

Yet when he came at length to Hank's abode and beheld little Dunny, back by the shed, petting and fondling his blinded burro, a change came upon the man and brought him something that was almost happiness.

His horse he had left at the stable. Standing there in the road, to watch little Dunny for a moment, he was unaware that Sylvia was coming toward him from the porch till she opened the gate, a rod or so away.

"Why—how soon you came!" she said. "Isn't it glorious, a day like this? I wanted to tell you something, Jerry. Shall we walk up the trail, to the tree with a seat?"

He saw that she was nervously excited. The color was burning radiantly in her face; her eyes were shining in all the luster of which their gray was possessed. He had never seen her look so beautiful.

"All right," he answered. "How are you?" and he held out his big, strong hand.

It seemed to do her good to feel the pressure of his grip upon her fingers. She was steadied.

"Let's go around the other way," she said, "and Dunny can stay with his donkey."

Jerry's heart was beating with a heavy stroke. He felt confirmed in his former belief that Sylvia wished to tell him of her happiness with Allan Kennedy.

They walked in silence toward the pine tree where they had paused that day when Jerry had come to Tamarack to talk of their marriage. He wondered why she would seek the place, and vaguely he wished she would not. Yet why should an item so insignificant matter to him now?

"Jerry," she said, before they came to the tree, "I didn't know my father's will could make such a difference to you. I didn't know it till to-day."

"Your father's will?" he said. "But—I haven't said it makes any difference to me."

"I know you haven't. Of course you haven't," she answered. "You never would. But it does—it does make a very great difference indeed. Mr. Kennedy told me about it this morning. I never knew till then."

"Kennedy—ought not to talk about company business—I mean my affairs—the will—anything, outside of school," he stammered.

"He had to," she said. "I'm glad he did! He wouldn't have been your friend—or mine—if he hadn't let me know."

"He may not have known what he was talking about," said Jerry. "The will is all right. What has Allan been telling you anyway?"

"Everything!" she said.

They had come to the tree, at the base of which the seat was provided, but they stood beside it, face to face.

"There—wasn't much to tell," Jerry faltered.

"Yes there was—if you are being ruined!" she insisted. "He likes you so much he had to tell. He'd have been such a coward if he hadn't. Jerry, forgive me for all my thoughtlessness, but I didn't know—I couldn't know of all this going on. But—you can handle all the property. You can beat Mr. Craig—and be trustee and guardian—and everything!"

She was blushing hotly. To her it was almost as if she herself were proposing marriage to Jerry, but her sense of right and loyalty and gratitude bore her out in it bravely.

Jerry looked at her, puzzled. He failed to grasp her meaning, so many and so poignant had been his feelings recently.

"But—but Craig is guardian—trustee," he stammered.

"Yes—of course—I know," she said courageously, "but the will says if I should marry a man over thirty-five

years of age, and you—I wrote you I would. I wrote it, Jerry—and I meant it—only—only—— Don't you see what I mean?"

"Sylvia—let's sit down," he said in a voice grown suddenly thick.

He took a place on the seat and stared at the ground. His face was red, but it paled peculiarly.

"Let's sit down," he repeated, as he strove to collect his thoughts.

A great wave of joy had surged so swiftly through his being that it made him weak.

"Sylvia—tell me," he said, speaking with obvious emotion, "did Allan know why you sent for me to-day?"

She colored instantly.

"Yes," she confessed, "he did."

He was silent for a moment, then he said:

"No wonder you like him, Sylvia."

"But the will," she insisted. "We came here to talk of that."

"And you could do it—marry me?" he said, looking fairly in her eyes.

She returned his gaze unflinchingly.

"Oh, Jerry," she said, "I ought to have done it before, but I couldn't help—— I want to, now, I mean. You've been so good to us—you've done so much! I've been selfish and thoughtless and—everything else. But I couldn't let you be ruined. I won't! I won't!"

Jerry was gazing on the ground again. His two big hands were tightly clasped together. A wonderful happiness possessed him, touching his nature with sublimity. His hour had come.

"I knew it, Sylvia—I knew you were always just this kind," he said slowly. "I knew it—even when I felt the worst."

She was very pale. The implied confession hurt her conscience deeply.

"I am sorry if I made you feel unhappy," she said. "Forgive me, Jerry—please."

"Oh, don't say that," he begged. "I didn't want you to say a thing like that. I knew at last—I mean I sort of felt I didn't have the right, dear child, to ask you to—go ahead with the notion of marrying me."

"But you did have the right," she answered warmly. "Of course you had the right. And any day you say——"

He raised his hand in a kindly gesture of interruption.

"If Allan hadn't shown himself a man—it might have been another story," he said. "God bless you, Sylvia, you've made me feel like a boy again—happy as yonder singing lark—but I'll have to be a sort of father, I reckon, to you and Allan and Dunny."

"Oh, no, no, no!" she said. "You can't throw away your property like that. I came all the way from the East to—to be Mrs. Kirk. I couldn't let all your life work go. I couldn't be happy anywhere in the world!"

He took her hand for a moment and, laying it in his palm, placed his other hand above it fondly.

"Sylvia, don't be thinking of any mere property, or business, against the things in your heart," he said. "Don't make that mistake. I couldn't let you do it. I've been getting to like Allan better and better in spite of myself. I like him mighty well—to-day. It's got to be you two. It couldn't be helped."

"Please don't say it—please," she said. "Think how I should always feel. Give me a chance to do a little something, Jerry, please."

He put down her hand and leaned against the tree, gazing off at the mountains beyond—the mountains that to him were mother, counselors, all.

Sylvia looked at him, conscious of the struggle of emotions going on in his being. Never had he seemed so splendidly strong, so vigorous, so handsome in his way of rugged beauty.

"No," he said slowly, "it wouldn't be fair to you, in the years to come. The day would arrive when you would reach your very prime, and I should be old and tired.

"It isn't so much for just the present; we could sort of pretend there wasn't so very much odds, but you see, folks should marry for to-day and to-morrow and twenty years and fifty years from now, and you and I, in twenty years from this—it couldn't be fair.

"I'm happy—that's enough. I never knew I was coming in for such a happy time as this in all my life."

"But I came here for this," she insisted earnestly "And if Mr. Craig——"

"Don't worry, Sylvia—don't worry," he interrupted. "He can't scare me out of the country. I'll get on my feet all right. I did it once—I can do it again. And work is what I like."

He did not deny that Craig could and would accomplish his ruin. She noted this. She could fancy him starting afresh with his naked hands, toiling to build up the structure of a business once again, in his patient, steadfast way.

It hurt her to think of such a labor, after all he had done with his life.

"I mustn't let you do it!" she said. "I couldn't accept the sacrifice. Jerry, don't try it, please. Let me help you now and do my part."

"But what about my standing by and seeing a sacrifice?" he asked. "What is a handful of property or gold, compared to a handful of hearts? You and Allan——"

"Please don't speak of me—and Allan," she implored. "I can't endure to think of it now."

"But don't you like him, Sylvia?"

"We can't have everything we like," she answered, crimsoning, yet meeting his gaze courageously. "I'd rather you wouldn't think of Allan any more."

He smiled reassuringly. "Can't help it," he said. "But by the way, speaking of having what we want reminds me that Craig wants little Dunny sent to Millsite right away. He says he wishes to see him."

Sylvia turned pale. Asa Craig to her was a monster whose every intention was sinister.

"Is he doing this to irritate you further?" she asked.

Jerry smiled grimly. "It sounded a little that way," he admitted.

"Then Dunny cannot go. I won't let him go!"

Sylvia rose to her feet in sudden anger.

"He's got the right," said Jerry. "I thought I'd take the little feller up there in the morning, for I'll have to go off on a three-days' trip pretty soon."

"Oh, Jerry—why don't you make yourself Dunny's guardian?" she cried. "Why don't you beat Mr. Craig?"

"Why?" repeated Jerry, smiling peculiarly. "Why, I guess because I'm most too fond of you to do it."

He too was standing. He took her face between his hands and kissed her on the forehead.

"Come on," he said. "We'll go back down to the house and you can write for Allan to come and see you soon."

"I can't!" she answered. "I can't. I don't consent to that arrangement. I want you to change your mind."

"I knew what kind of a girl you'd prove to be," he answered. "Bless your heart, I'm glad."

And so the two went home, but she would not, and did not, accept his self-denial.

CHAPTER XXII.

DUNNY MEETS MR. CRAIG.

IT was not without misgivings that Sylvia kissed little Dunny good-by, on the following morning, and placed him in Jerry's charge on the seat of the buckboard in which they would drive to the summit.

"You must be real nice to Mr. Craig," she said. "He must be a good, kind man, or papa would never have liked him so much."

"I'll tell him about my donkey," answered the little fellow earnestly, "and tell him he can have a ride."

He was very much excited by the enterprise, for Jerry had told him wonderful tales of all the things to be seen at Millsite camp.

"I'll come home pretty soon," he called to Sylvia when at last the buckboard started. "Good-by."

She stood there to see them go, the big fond-hearted man, with all his cares, and the quaint little chap, with all his joys, sitting together on the seat.

The ride was a wonderful experience to Dunny, for the road nearly paralleled the flume and the path it took was fraught with engineering marvels.

The flume was a wooden "ditch," as Dunny described it, half filled with swiftly running water. It was really a V-shaped trough, over fifteen miles in length, winding around the massive base of the mountain range and up through a cañon of tremendous proportions, to the heights above.

At times it lay on the level of the earth, supported in its brackets; again it dived through a tunnel. Across a

number of chasms and ravines it spanned the distance like a slender bridge, on its stilt-like trestles, frequently as much as a hundred feet in the air.

Now and again the road lay fairly beside the flume; here and there the wooden trough lay beneath a bridge that the buckboard passed, so that Dunny had many opportunities to see it close at hand.

He saw that it was as wide across as he was long, while its depth was about two feet. Along its length, at distances varying from a mile to three miles or more, were stationed little cabins, and in each of these a man was living.

All these men were "lookouts," paid to remain at points where troubles occurred from time to time, and to do their utmost to prevent catastrophes.

In reply to Dunny's questions, Jerry explained that the floating wood that came so swiftly down, and sometimes the lumber as well, would "jamb" in the flume and halt.

At such a moment the "lookout" must hasten to the spot and work like a giant, with his hook, or "picaroon," taking out the wood as rapidly as possible, to prevent very serious complications.

At times these "jambs" had wrecked whole sections of the flume, the four-foot logs of fuel-wood leaping and ramming like panic-stricken animals, and piling up in chaos and damming the water till it rose above the sides of the structure and began to sluice away the sand and rocks beneath, till a hundred yards or more of the slender trough, with supports and all, would buckle, collapse, and fall to pieces like a thing constructed of straw.

Already this morning the lumber was coming down that wooden ditch in planks nearly twenty feet in length, that lay together in "drives," like narrow rafts, held together by the weight of the planks themselves.

These drives were scudding downward with amazing rapidity, tossing up a spray of water from their noses, and trailing foam behind them as they went. The darkish water was redolent of pine, as it seethed and slipped along in the trough; and the wonder of it never ceased for little Dunny Weaver.

All in the mountain world about was gloriously huge and warm and inviting. Far up on the slopes were splendid forest trees. Here in the bed of the cañon were alders, willows, and aspens, sweet as hay.

Prodigious turrets and walls and battlements of rock stood on either side at one of the passes and everywhere on the acclivities the *mazanita* flourished.

Here and there the cañon's floor was flattened out to form a little meadow. Through it all, in its endless way, the flume continued, like a wooden serpent of incredible length.

At last they came to the one superb and amazing plunge that the waterway took in its course.

Here the flume came down a hill that a horse could scarcely climb in an hour. It was built as straight as an arrow, and its water gleamed from afar like a polished lance of steel, for it raced so swiftly as to foam to snowy whiteness.

Up this hill the road was made, but it zigzagged back and forth, so steep was the climb. Three times it crossed the flume on bridges, and then wound tortuously hither and yon along its way to the summit.

Down at the foot of this hill big Jerry halted his horses for a moment of rest before they should face the ascent. And Dunny, seeing the drives of lumber shooting down that fearful track, held to his fond protector in alarm.

What if the planks should leap from the flume and hurtle, spear-like, at a fellow's head? He was awed and fascinated.

Flinging its spray six feet to right and left, a raft of planks came down the watery chute as if from a cannon. The speed of the thing increased at every second.

It shot ahead of the water itself. Mere water was incapable of dropping down so swiftly as the raft could move.

Therefore when it presently arrived at the bottom, where the grade was easier again, the "drive" slowed its awful flight and slowed and slowed till it actually stopped, for sheer lack of water to tide it along. Then the foaming liquid glided down upon it, took it up in the force of the current, and swept it onward as before.

This was the hill that one of Sylvia's admirers, he of the snow-white hair, had described that night that Dunny remembered so vividly. This was the thing down which that man had ridden when his hair turned gray with fear.

Dunny nestled closer to Jerry's side as the sweating horses started up the hill. He clung on tightly till the climb was finished, and then at last they came to Millsite, on the mountain's top, and he found himself too thoroughly engrossed and excited to think.

The camp was not particularly large. It consisted of a score or so of cabins; a lofty trestle on which the locomotives hauled the cars to be unloaded; a flagpole with a semaphore on top, to be used as a signal to the "lookouts" below—in cases of emergency; the sawmill, shrilly screaming at its toil, and heaps of wood and lumber, piled on a slanting platform ribbed with skids, at the base of which was the flume.

A score or more of men were swarming here, moving lumber down the skids and dropping it into the flume in raft-like "drives," so soon to shoot that fearful acclivity

All this in his childish way little Dunny saw with wonderment and swiftly increasing interest. He had never seen anything like it, or a place that promised so much pure delight or so many marvelous localities for a busy little man to explore.

But Jerry, nodding to the men they passed, drove on to the office, where Asa Craig held the reins and wires of government by which the lumber enterprise was conducted and controlled.

And the reach of those wires extended far into virgin forest and far across the ranges of mountains, where other men were sweating and toiling with axes, saws, and teams of oxen that they goaded to frantic endeavor.

"Good morning, Craig," said Jerry, as he and Dunny entered the insignificant appearing place. "I've brought your ward. This is little Dunny Weaver. Dunny, this is Mr. Craig."

Dunny went up to the iron-hearted man without the slightest hesitation and screwed his tiny fist inside his guardian's hand before its owner was aware of what was happening.

"I'm awful glad I came," said the little fellow eagerly. "I'll let you ride on my donkey, if you'll let me ride on the cars."

"'Dunny'?" said Mr. Craig, with an ominous scowl on his overhanging brow, "what sort of a name is 'Dunny'?"

"It's the kind that's easiest to say," replied his small and unembarrassed visitor. "You can call me 'Dun,' if you want to. Tid says 'Weaver.'"

"What's your real name?" demanded the hawk-nosed man in his brusk, uncompromising way.

"When I go to Sunday school it's Donald," said Dunny. "What did they call you at Sunday school?"

"Donald," repeated the man. "All right, Donald, how do you like the place?" he inquired somewhat severely. "How do you like your guardian—me?"

"One thousand thousand dollars." answered Dunny in childish candor, placing his estimate very high indeed.

"Me and my father like nice people all to pieces."

He had suddenly remembered that Sylvia had told him his father must have liked Mr. Craig very much indeed; hence his observation.

"Well, sit down, Donald—that chair over there," said the man, pointing to a bit of office furniture six or seven sizes too large for his guest. "We'll get acquainted in a minute." He turned to Jerry. "Anything to talk about this morning, Kirk?"

"Not just this minute," answered Jerry. "I've got to look for Croson. Be back a little later." He cast a glance at Dunny, sitting already in the office chair, and went his way.

Mr. Craig sat down at his desk and, taking up his pen, began to drive it as he drove his men. Dunny sat there contentedly, studying everything in sight, from the maps on the wall to knots on the floor; while waiting in patience for the further process of getting acquainted to commence.

From time to time Mr. Craig cast a furtive glance in the little chap's direction. He began to wonder what he should do with a child so small, now that he had him at the place.

Perhaps his plan of piquing Jerry Kirk was about to prove a species of boomerang. He finally concluded in a vague, uneasy way that the child would probably be diverted to some extent by a look around the camp. He would presently put him through this process, and then could have him returned to Tamarack somewhat promptly.

But inasmuch as he could not seem to work, with Dunny sitting there so quietly, the man grew restive, and almost immediately put on his hat.

"Donald," he said, in his way of harshness, "we'll go out and see the place."

"All right," said Dunny; "I'd like to see the thing that makes a noise."

He came to his guardian's side, and possessed himself of two of the man's bony fingers, to which he held stoutly, in confidence and trust.

Craig looked down at the sweet little face upraised to his own. A flush came into his own cheeks at the thought of permitting the men to see him hand in hand with the little boy. But he shut his jaws and determined to see it through.

Out into all the glory of the sunlight they went, and the scent of new-sawn lumber came on the breeze to give them royal greeting.

"The thing that makes a noise?" repeated Mr. Craig. "Sawmill, Donald; come on."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN A HEART BEGINS TO SOFTEN.

THERE being sixty healthy men and seven healthy dogs in Millsite camp, little Dunny Weaver had sixty-seven friends at the end of three days of residence here upon the summit. Asa Craig himself had a friend or two more than formerly among the men, and this gave him possibly four in all the place.

He had not sent Dunny home. Indeed he had entertained no such thought since the first morning of the little chap's arrival.

The man was amazed at the way in which he was going about all day with his small companion.

As a matter of fact, however, there was no such thing as going about alone, for Dunny could apparently detect his intentions from afar, and darting to his side at any moment of the day, would get him by the fingers and trudge at his side in the greatest delight.

He liked his guardian just exactly as he might have liked a bear or an eagle, captured from the hills and safely caged. As any little fellow is pleased to hear the growling of a big, harmless pet, so he liked the grumbling, cross-sounding manner of Mr. Craig, who never, as far as he could see, was guilty of scratching or biting.

Moreover, Mr. Craig knew everything and every one about the camp. He called the workers "Jack" and "Bob" and "Tod" and other familiar names, so that any small and optimistic boy would presently know them for himself.

Mr. Craig was likewise "boss," and where is the normal little chap who doesn't like to know the boss so well that he can lead him around by the fingers and put him through his tricks?

Never had Dunny found a settlement affording such a gorgeous field for explorations in his life. It was one grand excitement all day long to live in such a place.

He chatted from morning till night with Asa Craig, asking his quaint, boyish questions and making his even more quaint observations in a way that was all his own and forever irresistible.

A spark of feeling awoke in Craig's bony fingers. If he started off by himself, his hand felt peculiarly as if he had left off a glove. But his heart was apparently as cased in steel as ever, while his face became, if possible, more scowling and forbidding than before.

The scene of never-ending fascination for Dunny was the one presented by the men at work on the great plank "apron" of the flume, where they tossed the wood or lumber into the powerful stream of water, to be floated down to Tamarack below.

Here there was always sunshine, activity, smell of pine, and the turgid, magnetic water itself. A dog or two of the camp was ordinarily about, helping to start off the cargoes of wood by lusty barking, while now and again a chipmunk or a squirrel appeared and frisked his tail and saucily invited a race.

To lead Mr. Craig to the platform, and stand there clutching his fingers, while watching the labor of loading the flume, was the little fellow's greatest joy.

The flagpole, topped by the semaphore was here, and at its base stood a small loaded cannon, to be fired whenever there was need that attention be directed to the signaling apparatus proper.

The hope in the breast of Dunny Weaver was that something might happen to necessitate the use of cannon and signals while he was watching, but he waited in vain expectation.

Jerry Kirk had gone twenty miles or more away in the mountains on a mission to raise the necessary funds to oppose his partner's aggressions. Daily Asa Craig was closing in upon the business, bending his every resource to the purpose of crowding Jerry out.

Kirk was battling for his very existence in the company. The fight he was making aroused a certain sort of admiration in the mind of Asa Craig, and lent a deeper grimness to his smile as he planned to overwhelm him at the end.

Jerry had gone away without suggesting Dunny's return to the home in Tamarack, aware that Craig would have balked the plan at once. A letter had therefore been forwarded to Sylvia, explaining that Dunny would remain at Millsite for at least a week, and that meantime all was going well.

Neither Jerry nor Dunny had seen Allan Kennedy, owing to the fact that he was off in the forest, superintending the work of securing water for the flume from the Weaver possessions, now in the hands of Mr. Craig.

But he came the morning after Jerry went away—and he came in a way that thrilled little Dunny to the marrow of his bones, for he rode down the flume on a log, standing straight upright, a figure of dominating power.

This was a method of traveling frequently employed by the men on the flume, either above or below that dreaded hill where the water made its plunge. It afforded a swift, safe, pleasant way of moving in the down direction, provided a man had steady nerves and the ready ability to jump, should occasion arise.

When Allan arrived at Millsite and lightly leaped out of the flume, at the upper end of the apron, Dunny and Asa Craig were standing there by the skids in the morning sun.

No sooner had the little man discovered who the daring rider was than he dropped the fingers to which he had just been clinging, and ran with all his might to meet his loved acquaintance.

Craig beheld the meeting of the two; the gladness of the clasp in which the joyous Allan caught the little fellow up against his breast, and the sheer delight and admiration betokened by little Dunny himself.

A sharp pang of jealousy darted into Craig's very inmost being. Never had Dunny so run to his protection, never had he thrown his stout little arms about his neck like this.

The man was staring fixedly at the picture presented by the two. The eager flood of questions that Dunny was asking fell on his ears, but were hardly heard, for Craig was utterly perplexed.

He wondered what it meant to have himself perturbed by such an incident—to have some mad, unidentified desire come stirring up his nature.

His face was flushing at the very thought of ordering Kennedy to put the little fellow down and return to his work, where he could not again win the small boy's hand from the two bony fingers, feeling so oddly naked and deserted.

Shutting his jaws together rigidly, the man denied the presence of emotion in his heart. He advanced to meet Allan Kennedy calmly, bruskly demanding his mission here at "home," and how the work was progressing out beyond.

Dunny, having found a hero who dared to ride in the flume, as well as a friend whose qualities and traits were firmly established, clung to Allan's hand with all his strength as the two men stood conversing.

He remained at Allan's side, looking up at both his friends, patiently waiting for the business talk to cease and thus permit a chat about that wonderful venture on the log.

Craig, despite his utmost endeavors, could not concentrate his mind upon the business of the water. It was not pre-

cisely that Dunny intervened; it was more that a species of hunger preyed upon the man.

He had hardly realized that a little chap could leap to a pair of arms in utter abandonment to natural affection in such a way as he had seen, and now it seemed as if his own starved nature demanded just such a boon.

In his crabbed way he tried to squeeze the longing from his breast, to drive such a silly sentiment afield, but the thought was there and it would not go. Nevertheless the dominant will was present and if yearning came it could be denied, even as a beggar would be told to seek his needs in other quarters.

In his stubborn way the man made up his mind that nothing could drive him, now to take little Dunny in his arms, even should both the invitation and the opportunity be afforded.

In earnest of his harsh resolution, he sent his ward and Allan off together for their lunch. Yet something almost wolfish in its fierceness prompted the spirit of tyranny in which he ordered Kennedy to get again to the forest at his labors so soon as the noonday meal should be concluded. He wanted the quaint little chap once more to himself.

Meantime, Dunny had a wonderful hour in Allan's company. Perhaps because of the scanty encouragement received, he repeated faithfully, from time to time, with worthy reiterance:

"Allan, I wish I could ride in the flume. You can't stand up on a donkey. I'd like to ride on a log."

But he did not get the ride in Allan's company.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DUNNY'S FEARFUL EXPERIENCE.

ALLAN went, and Asa Craig was once more all-important to his little visitor. Two long days of that summer month went by with work neglected at the office, while the man controlling all the enterprise was drawn into courting the friendship of a stub-tailed dog that heretofore had met but scorn and epithets from the source of local government.

The dog was a friend of Dunny's and occupied a canine sphere of influence not to be ignored or despised. And reluctantly as Craig began his overtures, he nevertheless found himself enjoying certain sensations of pleasure in the new experience, in a shame-faced, guilty way inseparable from any such maneuvers.

Toward various men whose rough and candid demeanor had endeared them to Dunny the guardian was also softening. He found there were joys of labor in the outside air, exactly as he found there were keen delights in grinding less at the office affairs and breathing more of the tonic zephyr from the mountains.

He caught himself cudgeling his memory for words and tune of a song at which, unawares, he began to hum as he and little Dunny made the rounds of the camp together.

This morning, as they came hand in hand from the sawmill toward the flume, the man was unconsciously droning at his tune when he presently heard his small companion at his side joining happily in on the over-repeated theme.

Across the harsh old visage a smile of amusement played in a wistful way of uncertainty strange to see. His heart-beat dared to increase its measure, and the hunger of his arms came suddenly upon him. He looked alertly about and saw that they were quite alone.

"Donald, what would you like to do this morning?" he inquired. "Would you kind of like to ride on my back?"

"I'd rather ride in the flume," answered Dunny candidly. "Any feller can ride on somebody's back."

"Well, maybe that's so," agreed Craig, not a little disappointed. "But you'll have to grow for a few more days before you should ride in a flume. It's dangerous."

Nevertheless, he secretly wished he had the youth of Allan Kennedy, and the strength and daring which would readily enable him to take the small man up in his arms and give him the coveted ride. His thought must have someway communicated itself to his little companion.

Dunny said: "Couldn't you ride and hold me on? We could have a bully time."

"I guess—I'm most too old," the man

confessed, with a twinge in his stiffened form as he spoke. "We'll see if we can't do something else."

"Maybe we can catch a chipmunk," Dunny suggested readily. "I'd like a chipmunk first rate. Tod says he had one once and kept him in his pocket all the time."

"We'll see," replied the man, planning to have some one of the men trap a squirrel without delay, but when they had come to the flume where the men were at work he found a sub-contractor waiting there for a consultation.

Dunny called the stub-tailed dog and ran to the downward end of the great plank apron, where he knew a number of chipmunks were always to be found. Craig and his man sat down to talk.

Square-cut timbers, fully twenty feet in length and twenty inches through, were being skidded to the flume and sent upon their way.

The thudding noise of their falling, as the men rolled them roughly down the way, came incessantly.

One after another they were dumped into the purling stream of water, splashing it widely as they fell to place and began to forge ahead. In their bulk they nearly filled the flume, riding in the V-shaped "ditch" with a corner for a keel and, therefore, with the opposite or diagonal corner uppermost, as a sort of dorsal fin.

Like white, untapered whales they floated, starting at first at a leisurely speed, and then swiftly gathering momentum and scudding away with the force and swiftness of a ram.

Dunny had frightened a chipmunk from one of the heaps of lumber to another. He knew the timid bit of fur and animation would be anxious to escape to safer lodgings, hence he ran about the loosely constructed pile, with the dog, in lively spirits.

Craig was watching the quaint little figure intently as he listened, or pretended to listen, to the talk of his sub-contractor. He presently saw the chipmunk darting from cover toward the flume.

Calling for the dog, little Dunny scampered swiftly in pursuit. In a twinkling the tiny squirrel disappeared at the edge of the apron. Dunny raced the faster.

Just at the brink of the flume he suddenly stubbed his toe and plunged headforemost, arms extended, toward the water.

A monster timber, taking on its speed, was moving by. The little fellow landed face downward, full length, upon its top, and clutched it frantically with his hands.

Like a madman Asa Craig leaped up and screamed at the top of his voice.

"Dunny! Dunny! Dunny!" he cried, chasing insanely after the timber with its helpless little burden on its back.

A half dozen stalwart laborers yelled in chorus and ran, as if in abrupt stampede, to overtake the log.

It shot away and gained with fearful swiftness; it flung up a spray from its blunt, half-buried nose and swung about the curve—the little figure flat upon its ridge.

Craig was nearly crazy. He ran, he shrieked, his face as white as chalk. He fell on the apron, bruising hands and knees, and men raced past him in frenzied might.

It was Craig who knew they could never catch up with the timber; Craig who thought of everything at once; Craig whose heart was tied in a spasm of anguish and horror.

"Ten thousand dollars! Ten thousand dollars," he screamed, "to any man who'll save my little boy!"

He wrung his hands; his face was distorted with pain. He thought of the semaphore—the signal to the men far down in the cañon. True, every "lookout" was far below the awful hill—true, they could do no good unless the little man should take that hideous plunge in safety, but it was something!

He ran to the pole and threw down the lever that hoisted the arm.

"Fire the gun! Fire the gun! Fire the gun!" he bawled, and, madly throwing off his hat, he ran once more down the way of the flume and disappeared.

That Dunny could ride in safety down the hill he knew was out of the question.

A slip, a little roll aside, and the timber would grind him to death in an instant between itself and the planking of the trough; a flutter of fright, or the momentary twitching of a muscle no longer in control in the little fellow's

dizziness, and the end would be horrifying!

A man could hardly ride a timber such as this, and many a timber leaped the flume entirely when half way down that declivity. But the man, in his madness of despair, ran on, and the cannon behind him boomed out its ominous signal to the startled mountain world.

A single horseman, two hundred yards or more on the up-hill side of the terrible chute of the flume, was riding in the road toward Millsite when the cannon roar came clattering on the air. It was Jerry Kirk.

With an instinct of protection for the flume he turned his horse aside from the road and galloped hotly to a cut through which the waterway was laid, dismounting instantly and peering up the length of the curving trough.

Around the bend came the timber, little Dunny holding on with strength that was fast departing in his terror. A clammy sweat broke out on Jerry's brow. He knew that little form.

And he knew he would never dare attempt to snatch the little fellow from his place as the timber passed. Such an error would be certain to be fatal—perhaps to them both, for the log's momentum was tremendous, and the second of its transit past himself would afford no chance for clutching anything in safety. He knew the one and only thing the moment demanded.

Like a panther crouching to spring upon its prey, the mountaineer leaned forward where he stood beside the flume, his head so turned that he could see the oncoming timber, now so nearly in reach.

A second later the huge white thing was shooting past. He lurched abruptly forward, made a motion of diving, and sprawled full length upon the log behind little Dunny's tiny feet.

The jolt of the sudden acquisition of speed all but rendered him helpless. His leg was slightly scraped by the planks of the flume before he could right himself and find his balance.

"Dunny, Dunny, don't be frightened!" he cried above the swish of air, and he crawled slowly forward on the beam till he had the two little legs in his powerful hands.

Then he knew they were come to the brink of the awful hill down which they must shoot in a moment, and the strength seemed swiftly to fade from his thews, and his brain began to reel.

He shut his eyes involuntarily for a moment and caught a gasp of breath as they swung about the last great curve to take the fearful descent.

The timber was going already like a white torpedo, mad for destruction. It quivered from end to end, and shouldered from side to side as it entered the seething froth of the chute.

Feeling, hearing, seeing — all the senses save a consciousness of dropping through a rush of air—abruptly ceased. There was something akin to a roar in the ears, although the flight was well-nigh noiseless.

Spray flew right and left and back upon the stiffened figures on the timber. A chaos of green and gray flung by, as if the hill itself were lifting upward in meteoric devastation.

Faster, faster, faster dropped the log. A horrible winking out of daylight occurred—a bridge had been left behind.

Rigid, immovable, paralyzed by fear that he could not overcome, Jerry Kirk remained in place by sheer inertia. But Dunny was suddenly limp as a string. His senses had gone. He was slipping, starting ever so slightly to roll against the edge of the flume.

With strength galvanic and wholly instinctive, Jerry held the helpless little form in place, and then began himself to feel a horrible blackness—a sinking death of his will-force—descending upon him.

With a harsh and deafening increase of the roaring, one, two, three more bridges were run, each one winking out the light for the fraction of a second, like a photographic shutter.

Subconsciously the man was aware that the bridges were those of the wagon road, and, therefore, that the timber was nearing the base of the hill.

He gathered the flickering strength of desperation upon him by a mighty effort, and down they shot the last remaining hundred yards of awfulness, and the quivering timber, like a creature that knows it has finally outstripped the hounds—having distanced the water in the trough—was slowing its speed.

Incapable of moving, Jerry Kirk remained full length upon the beam, holding the limp, unconscious little Dunny in his rigid arms.

Slowly and yet more slowly glided the timber. It was presently powerless to race, so far had it left the water up the hill. It halted, moved a yard, and came to a stop.

Trembling in every thew of his big, strong body, Jerry rose to his knees on the timber, and, weakly lifting little Dunny, rolled himself out of the flume to the sand and lay there, white as milk, and closing his eyes as if for very life.

The water, foaming and gnashing in its rush, came down and caught the log again, and, raising it up, in its lust of power swept it along on its way down the winding trough and past the wondering "lookouts," waiting to see some sign of calamity, due by now, since the signal gun had spoken on the summit.

For nearly half an hour big Jerry lay upon the earth and clung to the child. He was cold as iron. He arose to his knees at last, and weakly flirting water in the white little face, beheld the two dulled eyes slowly open.

They closed again, however, almost at once. The man then bathed his own dizzy head and stood on his feet, but his legs were shaking in palsy beneath him and his arms were heavy as lead.

At length he took the little man against his breast and started slowly up the hill toward the camp.

A yell from the trees above came shrilly on the air, and down through the shrubbery ran Asa Craig, hatless, torn, and wild of aspect. He had seen Jerry's horse above, and now he knew what had happened.

Calling incoherently he darted down the trail to meet his partner. He was crying like a child.

"Jerry! Jerry! Jerry!" he said in his wildness. "The little boy! My little Dunny! My little Dunny!" and he clasped the two in his frenzied arms and sobbed convulsively.

And when at length the little chap was slowly coming to himself again and Jerry and Craig were toiling up the hill to where the horse was waiting, the pale and weakened bit of a man was attempting to hold to both in fond affection.

"We—had a ride," he feebly announced. "We had a ride in the flume —all the same."

CHAPTER XXV.

A VISIT TO TAMARACK.

It was Asa Craig himself who brought little Dunny down to Tamarack and saw him fly to the arms of his sister.

The eager, wistful man that Sylvia presently had time to greet and notice had come without an announcement from any one, and no description heretofore supplied her of Jerry's partner came to her mind as she noted the visitor's appearance. She did not know him in the least.

"My name is Craig—Asa Craig," he therefore said. "I have come to meet little Dunny's sister."

"Mr. Craig?" she repeated in astonishment that was not unmixed with distrust and repulsion. "Oh, of course we had to meet at last—sometime—naturally."

She had not intended to say just that, and was, therefore, confused and ill at ease, as soon as the words were spoken.

"I'm afraid you didn't care to meet me—very much," said the man, smiling in a way that revealed a manner of pain and self-abasement. "I don't believe I've made a great many friends who would spread kindly stories of my character. I wish you would get an opinion from Dunny. He seems to like me—a little."

But Dunny had run to Mrs. Hank to give her a kiss, and thence to his donkey to give him a hug.

"I—I'm sure he would," said Sylvia, as a comprehension of betterment in Craig was swiftly vouchsafed to her intuitions. "He must have had a very nice time at Millsite, I am sure."

"I think he did—except for the—fearful thing that happened yesterday morning," said the man.

She saw him turn suddenly pale; she noted the beads of perspiration instantly appearing on his brow, and the shaking of his hands. A vague alarm made her heart-beat quicken painfully. His aspect gave her a fright she could not endure.

"What was it?" she asked him, fear-

ing to hear some dreadful story of accident, possibly involving Jerry Kirk or Allan Kennedy.

"He—took a ride down the hill—in the flume," said Craig in obvious horror of the episode as it rose in his memory.

And palsied by the ordeal of living anew the fear and semi-insanity that had claimed him the previous morning, he told her the story of Dunny's accident and Jerry's tremendous heroism.

He quite broke down. The frightened face of the girl before him, the strain and intensity of feeling that he underwent anew, and the weakening reaction of his nerves, left the man undone, exhausted—a pitiable spectacle in the tumult of his suddenly liberated affections for his kind and for Dunny and Jerry in particular.

"If Jerry hadn't saved him — I shouldn't have wanted to live," he added to the narrative brokenly. "I'd have flung myself in the flume like a man gone insane.

"I couldn't get along without him now. I want to have some one to like me —some one to think I'm human. Dunny and I are kind of chums. I want you to let me see him often. I wish you could like me a little yourself. I'm going to see that Jerry is his guardian—he deserves it all, and more—but please, Miss Weaver, give a cross old man a little chance."

Sylvia offered him her hand in her trusting way, so like little Dunny's.

"You Western men are all the same—at heart," she said. "I'd like to be a friend."

"God—bless you," he said in a faltering voice. "I don't deserve it. I don't —I know I don't—but I can change. I like that little boy. I like every man and every dog he likes. And Jerry and I are pards again—and more.

"We're like a pair of boys—and little Dunny Weaver did it all. I want to see him often—him and you. Can I come pretty nearly as often as Jerry does from the work?"

"I wish you would," answered Sylvia in the frank, straightforward way that reminded him so constantly of her little brother. "I am sure that Dunny would miss you very much if you should leave us out."

Dunny himself came running in, all childish delight and excitement over coming home.

"Unk!" he called. "Oh, Unk, come out and see my donkey and the calf!"

"I got him to call me 'Unk' for short," explained the man with a half apologetic smile, as Dunny clutched the two bony fingers that he loved. "It sort of gives me a chance with his 'Tids' and 'Jacks' and 'Jerrys.'"

"I'd like to go along," said Sylvia. "After you've seen the donkey I'd like you to see my little garden."

Out into sunshine and comfort went the three; and burro and blossoms and numerous wonders all came duly in for admiration.

Then finally Craig was obliged to think of departing and leaving the two here together. He took little Dunny in his hungering arms and held him in passionate affection to his heart.

"Good-by," said the little fellow, kissing the stern old face in his quaint, sweet way. "Good-by, Unk. And don't forget to come back pretty soon."

Sylvia said, "Wait a minute," and running to her flower-bed she plucked a beautiful pansy, with a leaf to bear it company.

This she pinned to their visitor's coat as she prettily confirmed little Dunny's invitation for him to come again without delay.

"Good-by—Uncle Asa," she said at the end. "Be sure to come whenever you can."

The man made no attempt to answer. He could not speak; but his lips were trembling, and Sylvia understood. He hastened away, only turning to raise his hat and to smile when he came to the turn of the road.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN LOVE HATH WAITED.

A LETTER had come from Jerry Kirk in which he told the barest little story in the world of Dunny's accidental ride in the flume, but in which there was much concerning Asa Craig and the new-made friendship between them, as a blessed result of Dunny's visit to the camp.

"And now that we are reconciled," he

wrote, "there will be no more trouble concerning the property. Craig is an altered man, ashamed of what he calls his greed, of the recent past, and willing to have me boss the whole concern, which I hope I'll never have to do.

"He's a wonderful fellow in many a way, and now that he's found his heart, we're as happy as chums in schoolboy days. The fondness between us is almost comical, but it's mighty dear to me, as you could guess.

"You will see now that everything comes all right for you and Allan. You will never know how much I appreciated all you said that last day I was down in town, and maybe you won't understand how it makes it all so much easier for me to like Allan better and better, but it does and I know I can care for you all as one a little nearer than just a friend.

"So be sensible, Sylvia—right down sensible. Take him, as you deserve, and be happy. I know you two will be happy. He's a fine young fellow—a man all through—and I'm proud to be able to say it. Craig and I would be tickled to death if we could both be sort of fathers, to give you away at the wedding.

"We're going to send Allan down on Saturday afternoon—and we don't want to hear of any foolishness about him coming back here unengaged."

An uncontainable happiness crept through Sylvia's heart. She sang, she ran out in the sunlight, she sped to the woods to throw her arms about a tree—in fact, her every look, every action, seemed to radiate joy.

On Saturday afternoon she sped away to the aspen grove in the cañon, where Allan once had found her by the brook. Never had all the world been so fragrantly warm, so pulsing with natural joy, so melodious with bird-note and with tinkling runes of the stream.

When Allan came he stood a little away, regarding her silently. She was dressed all in white, as light and dainty as the raiment of a wild, mountain blossom.

A vision more lovely he knew he should never behold. The flush of color in her cheeks, the light of love in her eyes, the flutter of breath that gently tossed her bosom, could never again be repeated, save by herself.

He came a little nearer. His face was pale. He trembled where he stood.

"Sylvia—dearest," he said in a voice that was shaken with emotion, "I gave you up. I gave you up—and don't know what to say. I love you so—but who will give you back again?"

She looked very steadily into his eyes in her candid way.

"Allan—I belong to you," she answered faintly.

She felt him quiver as he slowly took her in his arms. Then in a moment he placed his hand against her cheek—the caress of infinite tenderness—and raising her face, he softly kissed her on the lips.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TO SEAL A HAPPINESS.

THE summer was coming again across the mountains—coming in the same new way, so infinitely old and sweet. The world of lofty peaks and grassy valleys received again the heritage of beauty from the sun.

Jerry Kirk, the big, gray mountaineer, in whom a score of boyish traits had been made perpetual, came swinging up the little path that led from a new white gate to a new white cottage, standing surrounded by its garden full of early blossoms.

Across a field he saw a group, comprised of Asa Craig and little Dunny Weaver, hand in hand, and picking flowers, while just behind them, tagging faithfully in their wake, was the little dry-faced cobbler, Timonides Flack. Jerry smiled at the picture and went on into the house.

In the cozy little parlor, awaiting his coming, sat Allan Kennedy and Sylvia, she with a tiny warm bundle on her lap, filling her soul with happiness ineffable.

Something of chastening awe crept quietly to Jerry's heart as he noted the look of sublimity come to sanctify the face of the beautiful young mother.

He paused for a long time, bending down above the little stranger, contentedly moving its feet and sucking at its fist. Allan came and leaned on Jerry's shoul-

der in thoroughly established companionship.

"Pretty little rogue," said the mountaineer at last. "Fine little boy. Has he got any name?"

Sylvia's pretty white arm slipped quietly about big Jerry's neck, and she kissed him on the forehead as a daughter might have done.

"His name," she said, "is Kirk."

(The End.)

BRILL AND THE YELLOW PERIL.

By W. S. Rogers.

HOW a little love affair with an almond-eyed beauty wound up a certain Westerner.

"ME?" said Brill. "Why ain't I afflicted with a full tide of favor for a free and unlimited edition of the gentle foreigner—meaning unrestricted immigration in handfuls, ace-high, and hurrah for all the blue blood, tan, and mixed of all the countries of Europe, Asia, Canada, Chicago, and others remaining to be heard from? Please wait till you get the testimony.

"To begin with, did you ever hear disrespectful mention of a crucified town in Ohio named Hamilton? What was I floating in Hamilton? Well, myself, principally. But no matter. I might have been there on a visit, only I wasn't. I dropped down, I guess, from a canal boat firebox, an automobile, or a telegraph wire.

"But being there all right—all safe and partially sane—I thought I'd interrupt myself long enough to go around and supply the town with regrets and take a sober squint at its merits. The person I conspired with was the chief of police, and he was engaged in prying a sand wagon out of a fix, but he stopped his work to be sociable.

"Says he: 'There's an auction sale this day of the United States Express Company's humble stock of unclaimed luggage, and that's the only excitement I know of, unless you'd like to start some yourself.

"'You might go down there and do something useful,' he says—'stake some of your surplus conduct on a turn or two, you know. It's a cheerful matinée, I believe, and worth the expense-money of standing room.

"'If I was as big as you are,' he says, 'with nothing to do and no one to help me, I'd go down there and bid.'

"So I thought I'd succumb to the enticement of seeing how such things were carried out and oblige the chief of police of the most gullible town in America.

"I thought I'd like to see the struggle between a defective auctioneer and some of the partially free citizens of the United States, endeavoring to assimilate other folks' property by refunding the hold-up charges and some of the effects of competition—I thought an unsight-unseen inventory of some of the strange things people shipped to their unwilling friends might be worth paying attention to—and I chased myself around there to see how it worked.

"A mercenary cuss in a skull hat had charge of the performance, and he was standing in front of a table with boxes and truck around him, stacking the cards with one hand and dealing with the other two.

"He was a goer—he was throwing things loose about as fast as you could count—and his stock of goods was promiscuously piled up most all over everything, and holding overflow meetings on the floor, too. And there was a gang of American citizens present, some trying to bid, some trying to be funny, and some doing nothing in particular except spit.

"'Ladies and gentlemen,' says the auctioneer, 'don't be bashful. If you don't see what you want, ask for it, and if the price don't suit you, buy it anyhow.

"'Now, then,' he says, 'here's a similar small obstacle wrapped up and ready, neat, natty, and needful, supplied with brown paper, string, and sealing-wax in spots.

"'Who wants it? Addressed to Mr. Uriah Uppengutter, 1608 Blotch Street, Huckinsburg, Indiana. *Now*, who wants it? Get quick, somebody,' he says. 'What person of distinction has got the insight to bid on the little package addressed to Mr. Uppengutter—containing gold dust, pants buttons, soap, or sedition? Who wants it? Stretch up here somehow and strangle yourselves making a bid on this offering.'

"That was his graceful style, and he was principally driving himself crazy and the rest of the population insane by his powers of conversation.

"He didn't seem to worry any with thoughts of pain and sudden death, but kept up a conservative use of the English language at about the rate of a mile a minute, and threw out good advice and suggestions.

"'Ladies and gentlemen,' he says, 'purchase something before you forget it. Beware of substitutes, and take no imitations. Here's a maladministered melodramatic effect left over for a Christian lady in Kentucky. Never got it, never will.

"'Who favors an aquiline proposition sent by mysterious prejudice to wrong address before failure of health and subsequent inability to locate? Who wants it?'

"He urged it and sent it flying, whatever it was, and never stopped for breath, but grabbed something else, and kept on grabbing, six in the air and seven to come, till you could almost see the vibration.

"And that was the way he kept it up. He spilled out more miraculous stuff there in a short time than you could put in a circus parade, Sundays included, and march to the climate of California.

"There was symptoms of most every obstreperous outrage known to science, from pancake turners to eight-day clocks, hair oil, glue, and toothache gum, including agricultural implements, household motives, and different designs and disquietude.

"He had boxes, barrels, honeymoons, and homogeneous effects of every shade and longitude. And 'most everybody was disastrously happy and doing their best to make a riot over some of those chattels. It was a holy Moses, sweet kind of session of tangled trumps, triumphs, and tribulations.

"So it was up to me, and what I did for the honor of Arizona was to engage about an armful of those random prizes—and then one more. Toward the end of the festivities the auctioneer came out with a young-looking parcel endowed with pink paper, and held it up for everybody to take stock of and admire.

"'*Not* intrusive or noisy,' he says, 'but here, ladies and gentlemen, is an innocuous small specimen of deferred destination that ought to appeal to your habits. It's an article on the face of it that would make most any kind of a person wake up and vote. It's the giddiest little premium so far perpetrated from this occult collection—as any sober or willing person can easily see with both eyes shut.

"'Now, then, ladies and gentlemen,' he says, 'please all get rash and come up here and do something for the cause of freedom. Patronize beauty, morality, and the shiny side of your characters for a moment and you'll never regret it.

"'Step up and apply for the little emblem addressed to—addressed to—who the autumn breezes *is* it addressed to?' he says; and he had to shut off his ideas for a second and take another look at it.

"'Well, well, ladies and gentlemen,' he says, 'allow me to shake hands. This here is a demonstration of something entirely different. It's addressed to Miss—Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka—as near as I can make out without paralysis and a Japanese interpreter,' he says.

"'Are you next to such a significance as that?' he says. 'It's a spring-heeled cinch. Don't be deaf, dumb, and degraded in the face of the evidence,' he says.

"'This is the only Japanese express package on the American market! Must be. Then who wants it? Who cares for it? Who craves it? Superhuman chance of a lifetime,' he says, 'and the

highest bidder gets the little false alarm addressed to the Japanese lady with the hard name at Indianapolis, Indiana.'

"Well, that's the one I'm speaking of. I replevined it. It gravitated to me on the fourth ballot. I bought the miscalculation addressed to Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka (or words to that effect), and gathered up that and the rest of my plunder and came away from that mixed assembly and steered for home.

"I resided in the upper northeast corner of a non-partizan arrangement called a hotel at the time being, and there was where I enjoined myself to. I went to my room, and then spread that useful collection out and around on the furniture and dug down into it to see how it melodiously compounded.

"I opened it all out and it didn't especially disrupt my emotions any till I came to the little piece of detraction contributed in the interests of Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka, and when I got to that I arrested myself on suspicion for a minute and paused to faint.

"It was some kind of fairy-work jewelry, all packed in pink cotton, and it made me wink, almost, to look at it.

"It was most too radiant to be successfully gazed at by an ignorant person not accustomed to luxury—there was comets on it and star-spangled bunches of moonlight, and ensigns and attractions too vivid to describe.

"What it was for I couldn't speechify, not being educated much in female frills and expenses, but it was to put in the hair, I think, of a cloudless afternoon, and strike people stiff with. And it was solid rolled gold or brass plated and worth either a whole lot of money or next to nothing—and I didn't care which.

"'Cause that wasn't all I had to deal with in conjunction with that little pink-complected box—and the rest was different but just as invigorating.

"What I dished out next was a little fancy pasteboard card, about the size of a postage stamp, and this was what splashed the real color for some of my subsequent paradoxes.

"There was handwriting on it, and it said: 'To Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka, 8 Amsley Street, St. Louis, Missouri, from her American friend.' That was what it contained, and I lit a new stogy on the strength of it, and sat down to try and intimidate the thing and see what it maybe all meant.

"I thought most of it was about as clear as mud. It seemed to be a birthday present, or something, gone wrong—but I couldn't quite make even on the observances in the case.

"Not to put it too heavy, Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka's American correspondent seemed to be a little strange and diffident in the way he set out to accomplish things; and I wondered why he hadn't had the presence of mind and the necessary firmness to embellish the outside of his offering with the same address that he used in the dedication of his works—that he put inside where nobody but a train robber would be liable to get the good of it.

"I couldn't quite see what maybe he was trying to line up to unless it was a bad case of forgetfulness or he was afraid some vulgar person would see Yokolado S. Kamchatka's correct address and want to write to her and that was his way of dodging it.

"But, anyhow, it didn't matter particular to me. It wasn't my singular funeral altogether, what his bright ideas were—I thought I had something else to attend to. And so I didn't sit still and do absolutely nothing for more than six hours in the face of an emergency like this. I flustered that paraphernalia all up again, and bunched it and put it in my pocket and went down to talk with a telegraphing outfit.

"It was on my mind to correspond with Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka at her advertised home in St. Louis and tell her I'd just subconsciously come heir to some of her property by means of an auctioneer in a skull cap, and to please let me know how bad she was interested and if so to state shipping directions by return freight.

"I thought that might induce things a little if she was partially authentic, and I blazed away at it once for luck, anyhow. And then I went back to my headquarters to smoke for a necessary period till I thought something ought to happen.

"It happened all right—without fear of jealous doubts. I got an answer to my simple telegram that made me generally resolve to swear off and think twice before taking.

"It shirred me down to the boot-heels and caused a reaction. Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka sent me a reply that was short but sensational. She despatched me just one small common-sense Anglo-Saxon word, but it fetched me colder than if I'd been hit in the stomach with the whole unabridged.

"She said, 'Come!' and that was as far as she committed herself.

"Well—for a few minutes I guess I saw things too multiplied to know which from which. I was so immorally astonished that I 'most fell out of my chair and sunk through to the basement.

"Such a top-heavy result as that was a little too much for my sensitive nature. But I recovered. I reckon I've been set down on and cruelly outnumbered a few times too often to throw up an easy sacrifice to a little commodity like a one-word telegram. But it made me set up and whistle for a minute, and then I began to laugh.

"'Well, this is a little the worst yet,' says I. 'What do these foreigners naturally think we are? A mutual distribution society?'

"But I surmised that most likely Miss Kamchatka was new to the country and didn't comprehend the ways of freedom—nor the geography of it, either—and probably wasn't making a sagacious lead like that with the intention of doing damage to our institutions or hurting anybody's feelings; and I admired the situation, and in about six minutes more made up my mind to shy out to St. Louis and try and carry out the joke.

"I thought I'd shoot out there for an experiment and see what the young lady was like. I couldn't help but think well of her from the form of her request, and I wondered if that was the general satisfactory way she did business at home, and if so, I thought I'd like to discuss politics with her.

"Anyhow she showed pretty good judgment in picking out a person like me to carry out her plans—a person not afflicted with any common sense to speak of or holding any engagements such as work or being married. If I'd have been married, now—— But excuse me. I can't speak of it.

"So I took a train and punctured Indiana and Illinois, and bumped into Missouri and the town of St. Louis in a fair state of health pretty early the next morning. Then I geared myself up with a clean face and a new and joyful-looking necktie and went around to seek for Amsley Street.

"I found it without hurting myself seriously—and likewise Number 18. Both were as pat and easy to come at as the wrong-sized shoe in a meat store. Miss Kamchatka's residence was a slashing, four-gored flat, ascending high to heaven and trimmed all up in the latest art and beatitude.

"A colored lady in a white cap obeyed the door-bell, and we looked on one another without special terms of reproach for about a minute, and I asked for the nearest news and intelligence of Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka. And then she began to get remorseful, or something, and backed out of it.

"'Who?' she says, looking kind of strange and askew-like, 'who you say?' She took me for a grave robber, I guess, in search of a cemetery, and wasn't disposed to countenance it.

"'Which I'm not a profuse linguist,' I says 'and was never brought up to it, but the party I'm trying to gather is fortuitously understood to be Japanese, and this is where she signs in at.'

"But that didn't bring any relief, either. That colored lady simply betrayed great grief and repugnance, and didn't produce any remarks.

"'Which I mean is, are there any Japanese in the settlement?'

"'Which dey *hain't!*' says she—and the door concluded the argument. It slammed so close to my hearing that it jarred my nerves.

"Well—then I thought I'd better go for a long smoke and recover the use of my countenance. The way they received visitors in St. Louis didn't attract me, and I wondered what the Sam Hill kind of a wrong reckoning I was plastered up against.

"So I branched out for a period; and then I went back to my so-called apart-

ments and began to tear up letter paper. I manufactured an epistle directed to Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka, Number 18 Amsley Street, and entrusted it to the care of the United States government.

"I informed Miss Kamchatka that I seemed to have arrived safely in the city, all trustful and according, but hadn't so far met with much success in trying to reach her by means of an Afro-American janitress. That was about all, yours to command, address as stated. And then I went out again in a general way to visit the city of St. Louis while I waited for the antidote.

"It came the next day and hit me. The next day I had tidings of Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka in the shape of a life-sized letter made out of blue paper and perfumery and a bunch of the English language all compromised and twisted.

"She sent me her regards and sympathy, and was mighty proud to hear that I was in town and hoped that my prosperity was still up to the average; and she asked me to please forgive her for the unmentionable crimes of her servants, and meet her, if I could do such a thing, on an honorable street corner the next day.

"That was it about as well as I could translate without standing on my head; and she didn't mention the amphibious jewelry whatever, and I wondered why but didn't let it prey on my mind.

"Whatever was satisfactory to her I thought would do for me, and I wanted to see Miss Kamchatka by that time, and so I accepted the challenge and was there to bear witness.

"I was there on the day and date—and all the good it did wouldn't do to put in a prayer-book. Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka didn't come—or if so, I didn't see her—and I had the happiness of waiting there all by myself as long as I wished to.

"Roosting around on street corners with sincere intentions didn't prove to be profitable, either; and I was overcome by this fact with a little reluctance—and then I went for another long smoke.

"I sort of wished for a few minutes that Miss Kamchatka was back in Asia, where her ideas of humor would be better appreciated. I thought that for a young person engaged in gratitude for the recovery of lost property she was really coming it a little strong.

"But I didn't expect to give up. Oh, shucks, no! Little troubles like these didn't alter my desire to persevere and be useful.

"I thought she really ought to have that piece of jewelry by that time and I made up my mind to hand it to her if I had to call in the fire department to assist.

"I couldn't help regarding Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka with a little surprise, but I didn't bear her any ill will; and I didn't like to have to write her that the only legal thing left to do was to pawn her American friend's love and regards and send her the ticket or, otherwise, resort to housebreaking—I didn't like to shatter her ideals in such a way as that—so next I began to get ready for something different.

"First I expected to stalk around in her neighborhood a little and see if I couldn't find out something about her or maybe get a detrimental glimpse or two to help out my imagination; but it wasn't very popular and I gave it up.

"And then I had another touching letter from Miss Kamchatka saying that she was sorry all the way down to the dregs of her constitution for the unfashionable way things had turned out, and blaming the unmanly conduct of her coachman, or somebody, and directing me to please try it all over again at a bigger and better street corner.

"And I respectfully declined, but didn't say so; and what I did do was to shimmer around at about the proper time near where she lived to try and see what her inhuman intentions might be as to hanging me up again.

"Well, things were about ready and I didn't have to wait. First come a description known as a cabman, in the company of a small horse and buggy, and he stopped out there somewhere in a polite way and waited; and then in a few minutes the house door opened up and a small spectacle in silk sashes, flowing pajamas, and general combined glory hallelujah came ambling down the stone steps and out to the street.

"That was the style and appearance of Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka (or significance to that effect) and she was an iridescent dream, she was, did up in a small package!

"It made me back water, almost, to look at her. I've been yanked over many rough roads, but never saw anything like that. She was the first page of a fairy story, all complete and perfect, but twice as pretty and enough to make an impressionable person see stars for a week.

"She was only about four feet high, but the most dazzling that was ever turned out of the factory. I was—switched; and I forgave Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka all of her preliminary crimes and vicissitudes on the spot and fell in love without further notice. She was the most innocent-looking, neatest, sweetest, demurest little pirate that I ever came near to.

"But she seemed to be in a hurry just at present, and didn't notice her humble servant standing there on the sidewalk. The light of Asia just perked up into her cab and was ready to drive away and disappear from my mortal view, and then I suddenly concluded that maybe I didn't desire to have it just that way. I decided in about a second to mix myself up with some of the outstanding cause and effect and go with her.

"The cab gentleman had already persuaded his horse-article to surge on a little, and was making dust, and I didn't interfere with his useful arrangements—I just skipped out and took hold of his outfit somewhere and touched a hub with one foot and came up alongside and asked him how he felt.

"'Hope I don't intrude,' says I, 'would it inconvenience you to take a close grip on a five spot and keep pretty generally quiet?'

"He did. He was willing to accommodate me as soon as he felt able, and he put the money out of sight and looked at me sideways. He wanted to know—that guy did—if I was a detective—and I didn't dash his hopes.

"'Well, don't advertise it,' I says. 'I'm just trying to see where you drop down your cargo.'

"So we skimmed along, peaceful as an after-dinner cyclone; and the voyage wasn't a very long one. We just mowed through a few of the strange streets of St. Louis and triangled around for a while without being arrested; and then came out pretty near the place that Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka had mentioned in her last affectionate letter. We hauled up by a curbstone; and it was me that jumped down and waltzed around to open up the door of the cab.

"And then Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka and I were able to diagonize each other's local disfigurements for a minute, and we did it without argument.

"She was all squidged up like somebody's doll on the edge of the seat—which was about a mile too high for her—and she looked at me with about as much astonishment as a perfectly healthy, unstimulated Japanese can exhibit without heart failure.

"I took off my sunshade and benefited her with a bright smile—and then it was all right. Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka lit up the atmosphere with an effort that put mine way back and behind things, and she reached me out a cute little hand about the size of a tea leaf, and I took it—and we were giddy fast friends forever.

"And 'Oh-h!' she says at the same time in a little bird-flutter of a voice, 'I so velly glad you come!' She took it all as a matter of course—made it seem like the most gratified occasion of a long life.

"Well—you needn't be surprised—the next thing that happened we went driving together—without premeditation, preamble or anything else—except the cab and driver. Miss Kamchatka just made room for me, and said, 'Come,' and that's all there was to it except the way that she said it.

"'Go most anywhere—Omaha for preference!' says I to the driver, and I climbed in beside that pocket edition of a young lady from Asia—and we started.

"That drive was a startling success in some ways, and in others it wasn't. There didn't seem to be any such thing as arriving at an understanding. Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka didn't think such a thing in the least necessary.

"She sat still and looked agreeable, and she kept on sitting still and looking that way—only more so—and that was about all she did.

"When I came out with my credentials in the case, and handed over her American friend's regards and best wishes and tried to tell her all about how it happened, she only laughed and stuck the jewelry-thing up into her hair without hardly an extra look at it, and that was the way we got on.

"When I tried to ask questions she only looked gratified and said, 'Oh-h, velly, velly much!' and all I had to do was to turn myself down and agree with her.

"I wanted to tell her how glad I was that I had come to St. Louis, and that I hoped that her American friend was entirely worthy of her, but didn't see how he could be; but it wasn't much of a success.

"Miss Yokolado seemed to be able to speak English a little without feeling the effects of it much, but when it came to understanding the thing she wasn't exactly all there unless she wished to be.

"She seemed to just calculate we'd come together by accident for the sake of a pleasant drive or to pass away the time. When I tried to speak up and find out a few troublesome things she agreed with me with all the charms she had, and surrounded me with sympathy and day-dazzling smiles—and that was as far as I got.

"We had an elegant time, but didn't specially know for any great interval where we were particularly at. Anyhow not me; and Miss Kamchatka didn't seem to consider it necessary.

"But after a while she had a happy thought, and she says, 'Oh, I now mus' go home!' and then we turned around.

"Was I going with her? I was blessed if I knew, but I was willing. I wanted to see more of Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka. She was a new and interesting kind.

"And besides all that—— But there didn't seem to be any hope of getting her mathematically straightened out. What could she understand of the graces of Ohio, and all I had sacrificed for her sake.

"But she seemed to know whether I was going home with her or not—and evidently I wasn't. She set me down on a street corner, and our journey was over. But she looked at me over the top of her fan from the stairway of the cab and says, 'I guess we go drive tomorrow, yes?' and left me standing there undismayed but a little dizzy.

"Well, that was just the beginning. My adventures with Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka lasted for several days. We went driving together and walking together, and when we drove she affected me clean to the roots of my eyebrows with her Asian toilette, and when we walked she wore corsets and high-heeled shoes and had trouble.

"She liked driving best, because then she wasn't quite so convulsively stared at. As near as I could make out about her she was in America studying, and the flat on Amsley Street was where she boarded.

"But she only laughed and couldn't conform when I tried to get some of our mixed circumstances smoothed out. She couldn't see the use of it.

"It didn't last. I hadn't any visible business in St. Louis that anybody knew of, and I couldn't imagine myself staying around there for more than a hundred years or so just to convene with a bright but incomprehensible young lady from Asia.

"So one day—we were in a Chinese restaurant, drinking tea, think of that!—I told Miss Yokolado that I was going far away and couldn't probably see her any more for a while; and then she sat up straight and took notice. She looked both surprised and regretful.

"'You go'n 'way—wha' for?' she says.

"I didn't explain very handy, and she looked still more regretful. She was sorry, and didn't admire it. Then she says:

"'You not likee me. I guess you not velly much likee me some more!'

"'Which I contingently do!' says I. 'I approve of you from every point of the compass. But the Anglo-Saxon style isn't to remain with its friends, but to move onward with regrets. I must move on.'

"'I guess you do' wanna marry me—tha's all!' says Miss Kamchatka.

"That was the little remark she made—just about that. And I—well, the clock stopped for a minute, I think, and I stopped with it. I don't think I made

any ornate statements for a brief period, and then I pushed the tea table out of my range and looked at Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka with concentration.

"'What you come see me for if you do' wanna marry me, say?' she says.

"'Me?' says I. 'Are you perfectly sure I'm the party you're talking about? I was thinking that I brought you a piece of jewelry.'

"She fetched the little trinket out of her hair then and looked at it with discontent. 'I sen' out *seven!*' she said. 'And only *one* come back! I don' t'ink *much* Amelican genelmen!'

"Well, I may have opened my mouth at this juncture, but I don't think I said anything worthy of notice.

"'You ought to be *shame!*' she says. '*Now* I'm sorry I have you come.'

"'Seven!' I says. 'What the blazes——' But I must have looked inquisitive enough without needing to finish.

"'Uh!' says Miss Yokolado. 'What you t'ink? I wanna get married—*course!*—same like Amelican girl. When I first see you from the window I guess mebbe you'll do, and then when you wait on the corner——'

"'Go on, please,' says I, folding up my arms. 'Then the lady patron of the door-bell up there had her urgent reasons, is that it? And the day I ruined my digestion holding down the street corner——'

"'Oh-h!' says Yokolado. '*Then* I watch you from the cab with an opera glass, you know!' Yokolado was beginning to smile and look happy again.

"Well, I don't know exactly how long I sat there—I had a few emotions hitherto unsubscribed to, but when I came out of it I went over to Miss Kamchatka and shook hands all over again.

"'You have my awe and admiration in chunks,' says I to Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka, 'and I wish you a whole lot better luck than getting married. But I wouldn't advise you to keep it up,' I says—'particularly not if the jewelry is anyways expensive. And you might be suddenly successful, you know, and live to regret it.'

"Well, Miss Yokolado Swinburne Kamchatka and I parted with true regards, and I came away from the morbid city of St. Louis about as soon as I could catch anything moving.

"I am 'most recovered now, but that's why I say the American is entirely too slow and bashful to keep up with the unrestricted gentle foreigner."

DON'T WORRY.

Anonymous.

DON'T worry—though above your head
The threatening storm clouds meet,
The rainbow as of yore shall spread
Its sign of promise sweet.
The flowers fled when winter gray
Proclaimed again his cruel sway.
Yet early blossoms smile and say,
"Don't worry."

Don't worry—though the noon-tide find
Your footsteps faltering,
The morn's glad hopes left far behind;
The day its joy shall bring.
When sunset's radiant curtains fall,
Sleep's angel, ready at the call
Of night, shall whisper low to all,
"Don't worry."

Don't worry—though with little good
Your eager quest seem fraught.
He that has striven as he could
Has striven as he ought.
Ask not how destiny was planned.
The little that we understand
Is eloquent with the command,
"Don't worry."

A WHITE STREAK OF DISASTER.*

By Edgar Franklin.

How the swinging pendulum of fortune came almost to a dead stop.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

JOHN GRAFTON has mortgaged his entire fortune to back a traction company promoted by George Colson. At midnight a few days before the settlement it is discovered that the papers showing the company's indebtedness to Grafton have disappeared from his office. Detective Burleigh is immediately summoned, and from various clues concludes that the package, sealed and addressed in one of the firm's envelopes, has been dropped down the mail-chute by the thief, and is lying in the general box on the lower floor.

Grafton persuades Brady, a politician, to secure the pass-key from the postmaster and open the box. His hand is almost on the letter when Brady reads the address, and pretending to be overcome with moral scruples, replaces the letter in the box.

Subsequent events point to Brady's having some personal interest in the envelope, and a similar one, addressed by Jennison, Grafton's secretary, is found in Brady's waste basket. Jennison, however, when questioned, appears entirely innocent and gives a satisfactory explanation.

Grafton at last resolves to trust himself to Colson's honor, but finds, when he seeks an appointment with him, that the man has utterly disappeared. Shortly after he receives a telegram to meet Colson in Chicago. This he does. Colson appears unusual in his behavior and takes Grafton to a hotel, where he begs him to remain until after the day of settlement, giving no reason. Grafton refuses. A queer drowsiness comes over him, and he wakens the next morning to the knowledge that he has been drugged.

He tries to escape from the wretched little room in which he finds himself, only to discover that it is guarded from below. Seizing a piece of furniture he breaks a panel of the door. Footsteps are heard in the corridor.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ARGUMENT AND AN ARRIVAL.

TO Grafton, waiting tensely as the steps climbed upward, the seconds dragged wonderfully.

His only means of defense stood ready for instant service, but he had no intention of putting it into use until peaceful means had failed. The person, or persons who were coming might even now prove amenable to reason and argument—if so, it was better than cracking their skulls.

The sound reached his landing, and quick steps crossed the intervening space. Through the shattered panel, an evil face leered at Grafton.

Kenyonville's millionaire recoiled involuntarily before the snake eyes and the blue-black jaw; but he caught himself and stepped forward again.

"Are you the owner of this place?"

"Well, if I am, d'ye think I'm givin' you the right to smash her up in little pieces?"

"Are you?"

"No. Get back there, and——"

Grafton's temper was rising.

"I want that door opened at once."

"Yeah?"

"Yes! Get the key and unlock it—unless you're looking for future trouble."

"Oh, I guess we ain't worryin' much about trouble."

"Go to work and unlock it, then."

"And I guess we ain't goin' to do no unlockin', neither."

"Unless you do, my man," said Grafton, crisply, "there's a warm time com-

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ing for you and the people who keep this den."

"I guess they'll stand it."

Grafton bit his lips; he seemed to be making little headway as concerned his release.

"Come!" he said, more sharply. "We've had enough nonsense as it is. Get that door open or I'll smash the rest of it down!"

The other merely smiled.

"Are you going for the key?"

"No."

"You refuse to let me out of here?"

"Ye might call it that, mister."

"I suppose you know that you're committing a criminal offense—that you are punishable under the law?"

The man in the hallway laughed outright.

"We don't spend much time botherin' with laws in this part of town, old man!"

"Well, you'll spend considerable time getting clear of them when I am once out of here, I can tell you that."

"Mebbe, mister, but you ain't out yet."

"But I'm going to be, very shortly," said Grafton furiously. "For the last time, are you going to open that door?"

"Say, d'ye see it opening?" inquired his jailer.

Grafton stepped back and raised his club.

"I'll be out there with you in about ten seconds!" he growled.

The post was swinging around his head and ready to descend, when a hairy hand came through the opening, and the voice cried:

"Hold on, there!"

"What?" Grafton paused, the club poised in air. "Changed your mind, have you?"

"Not special—but it won't do you much good to smash that door, mister. You may as well know it before you start."

"I'll see what good it will do!"

"Say, I gave ye warnin', didn't I?"

"Warning of what?" shouted the prisoner.

"This here!"

The hand disappeared for a moment, and came into view again with a revolver clutched tight.

It was one chance in ten thousand! Like a bolt of thunder, Grafton's club descended upon the fist and missed it by an inch as it disappeared once more through the panel.

An angry snarl came from without.

"Didn't suppose ye had brains enough for that!"

Grafton laughed angrily and raised his weapon once more; again the voice came to him through the break.

"Hey, now! You saw it, mister, an' I ain't the one to stop long about usin' it if you go to work and make it necessary. You get back there an' sit down an' there ain't nothin' goin' to happen to ye. But if you try smashing things any more, or kickin' up a row like that——"

Grafton's answer came swiftly. With another quick swing, his club crashed down upon the panels. New sections of the wood gave way—a larger opening had been made.

A sharp growl came from the corridor but he gave it scant heed. Stepping to one side, in preparation for a possible shot, the bed-post was whirled about and brought down. The upper half of the door crashed down to the dingy floor of the hallway.

The joy of battle set Grafton atingle. Once let him demolish that lower half and leap into the hallway, and he was ready and willing to try conclusions, even with the pistol. Surely with that heavy weapon in his hands, his chances of shattering the fellow's arm before he could shoot were almost even.

The club swung about and battered upon the lower panels; Grafton drew it back with a suppressed shout, for the woodwork had splintered again. Another rousing blow and——

He dodged back. The revolver and an angry face behind it had poked through his gap.

For an instant he faced them—then dodged quickly. And as his head dropped a spurt of flame and a bullet passed straight through the spot it had occupied!

He crouched lower and the gun followed him—he dodged again and another leaden pellet just missed him!

So it was to be warfare in earnest, with possible, even probable murder as the end! Considering it all with light-

ning rapidity, Grafton saw but one course to follow if he expected to see Kenyonville again outside of his coffin.

He must surrender. He threw the club from him, as the quickest sign of his defeat. The revolver was trained upon him for a new attempt—but as the big stick rattled to the floor across the room, the muzzle lowered. His antagonist stepped through the gap and confronted him with an angry scowl.

For a moment they faced each other; and Grafton realized bitterly that for the time he was a beaten man. The other shook his head angrily.

"Couldn't take me word for it, hey?"

Grafton did not answer.

"Git up!"

The millionaire obeyed.

"Now, go over on that bed an' sit down! Quick!"

Grafton rose and walked to the wrecked bedstead and with a stifled groan seated himself on the edge. His captor took a chair and with the revolver ready for use, stared at him.

"I guess you'll bear watching at close quarters, mister!"

"I guess I will!" snapped his victim.

"Well, we'll make 'em close enough, don't you worry! Here, that'll do! Don't try gettin' up again. I've got you where I want you and there you stay, mister."

Grafton regarded him silently. Plainly the fellow was very much in earnest and Colson's money had made him so. What was the plan—what should be his ultimate disposition? Were they going to kill him in this wretched hole and dispose of his body in one of the hundred possible ways?

Was John Grafton to drop out of existence in this low den to the nine days' wonderment of all his friends and fellow citizens and the eternal sorrow of his wife and his few other relatives? Or was he to be released when the worst of the damage had been done? The problem was of vital interest and as he grew calmer he resolved to learn, by diplomatic means if possible, just what the answer might be.

"See here, my man," said Grafton coolly.

"Well?"

"What is to become of me?"

"Become o' ye?" The other chuckled. "Dunno, mister."

"But——"

"Oh, I guess they ain't nobody goin' to hurry ye, if ye lie still and keep that trap o' yours closed."

"So those were Colson's orders—to keep me here, alive or dead?"

"Colson?"

"The man who brought me here."

"Oh, the other swell guy? Well——" the thug smiled dryly. "You seem to be pretty wise, mister."

"Left word to shoot me if it became necessary, did he?" pursued Grafton, thoughtfully.

The other laughed outright.

"You take it easy, anyway. I dunno. All he said was to keep you here."

"And he specified a time, of course. How long am I supposed to visit with you?"

"You'll see."

"I should prefer knowing at the present time. What earthly difference can it make? You're sitting there with at least one gun and for all I know half a dozen more. I am unarmed as you know perfectly well. Why don't you tell me?"

"Well—I guess you ain't in shape to leave, anyway, are you?" The other scratched his bristling chin. "You're just goin' to be here a couple o' days."

"Ah? To-day is the twentieth, is it not? I'm to be allowed to go to-morrow, then?"

"Not quite. The next day, I guess."

Grafton nodded casually. "The twenty-second, eh?"

"Somewheres around three or four in the afternoon, you kin go," he condescended. "That's the time he said we could cut you loose."

"Thank you for the information," replied Grafton, dryly.

He leaned back and studied the grimy ceiling for a while. If he were to leave it must be accomplished by a single means—bribery. Had he enough to get himself clear; could he promise enough to take him back to Kenyonville in time?

"What'll you take to let me escape?" he asked placidly.

"Hey?"

"How much is it worth to you to go to sleep?"

"While you walk out?"

"Certainly."

"Nothin' doin'!" The round head shook sadly. "It ain't me, boss. The main guy here took de job. Ye can't square him."

"Why not?"

"'Cause the gent what brought ye here had all kinds o' coin, an' the boss is one o' these fellers that does things on the level."

"On the level!" Grafton laughed in spite of himself at the phrase. "So he couldn't be bought off?"

"Not in a week!"

"But you could, eh?"

"Oh, say——"

"Look here!" Grafton sat up briskly. "I've got about two hundred dollars in my pocket. Why your friends haven't stolen it, I don't know—but they haven't. I'll give all but twenty dollars of it to you for that revolver!"

"So's ye can blow a few airholes in me, hey?"

"I won't touch you or try to injure you—I give my word of honor on that! All I want is a chance to leave this room with a loaded gun in my hand. I'll attend to the rest."

"Mebbe the rest would attend to you instead," rejoined the other. "It ain't no use, mister. There's six or eight o' the boys down-stairs, without the boss. They'd make hash o' ye."

"Perhaps they would, and perhaps they would not. Here!" He produced the money and held it forth. "Why not try it? You can say I overpowered you. I'm larger and heavier in every way and it is not at all improbable. You give me that gun and stay here for three minutes. That's all I ask, and it's an easy way to earn money."

His captor was wavering. Grafton saw it and his heart beat fast. Once let him get to the dark corridor, even without knowing the place, and he was ready enough to trust the rest to his own powers of fighting.

"Well—going to try it?" he asked crisply.

"I—damned if I know whether to do it or not!"

"You had better. Here's the cash—see it?"

His captor rose and walked slowly toward him, magnetized, as it seemed, by the green roll.

"You'll swear not to do me?"

"I will."

"And——" the weapon was poised before him, butt foremost. "Here, take it! Ye dunno what ye're doin' but ye want to do it—so go ahead. Only I'm tellin' ye this, mister—it's the morgue for yours, once ye try to go down them stairs and get to the street!"

"Very well. I'll take my chances."

"Ye're foolish—to-morrow or next day ye can walk out without meeting a soul."

"I understand perfectly." Grafton stood up and buttoned his overcoat with a steady hand. "I think I prefer leaving to-day, nevertheless. Good day."

The rough shook his hand with some admiration and a little sorrow. Perhaps it seemed a shame to let so calm a customer walk down-stairs to certain death.

Grafton did not pause. Stepping through the door he had wrecked, he stood in the corridor's gloom with leaping pulses. His first step to freedom was an accomplished fact. Now what should he do?

Was it better to make one grand dive for the lower floors and find his way out before the alarm could be given, or would it be better to steal slowly down and trust to fate?

At the end of a few seconds, he decided upon a compromise between the two. He must get down as quickly and as noiselessly as possible, make for the first door and—vanish!

He groped his way to the stair-head, illumined by a small window on the court. His foot felt cautiously for the step, found it and was followed by the other. Within a very few seconds Grafton had passed to the second floor.

But how the old boards creaked! A long drawn squeak fairly froze his blood, as he hurried to the head of the lower flight. What if it had been heard? He waited, hardly breathing. Some one below shifted a chair on the bare floor; then all was still once more.

He essayed another forward step; a louder creak ensued. And this one had been heard! There could be no doubt of that terrible fact. Below, a door opened and a head peered out. Grafton

shrank against the wall, but too late! He had been seen!

Well, it was do or die now! Two steps at a time, he made down the shaky flight. And before he had half accomplished the descent, a crowd of six or seven rough figures were in the hallway below him. He pulled up sharply and raised the revolver.

Three shots, and six men before him! Did they fire once, the end of John Grafton seemed a mathematical certainty. He drew a long breath, perhaps his last, and braced against the wall. It was all very weird and sensational, but he vowed that if he must be murdered in this den, one or two should go with him!

Beneath, he saw the flash of pistols. Now!

But at the very second he expected the shot, a door opened. For an instant, he caught a glimpse of the dirty barroom, he heard a muttered word or two. And the words were magic, for the men in the hallway melted away before them, and darted through doors which opened readily to them, even in the gloom.

A miracle had been worked for his salvation! Grafton gasped as he stared below; and, as he stared, the door from the bar opened again, and a blue-coated figure pushed through, and then another, until four officers of the police were hurrying toward him. A fifth figure, in citizen's clothes, came behind.

And as one of the policemen quickly lighted a gas jet, and another leaped to his side, the light fell upon the civilian. He was white and haggard, and he glared upward with wild eyes.

"Thank God! You're alive, sir!"

Grafton's shout came involuntarily.

"Jennison!" he cried. "It's you—Jennison!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STAB OF CONSCIENCE.

Of all the remarkable things that had happened to Grafton within the eventful day or two, the oddest, it seemed to him, was the opportune appearance of his chief clerk, Jennison.

That he should have covered the hundreds of miles between Kenyonville and Chicago, that he should have come so accurately to the very spot where Grafton was in trouble, was little short of miraculous. The man, saved by so bare a margin from actual murder, leaned against the wall and stared stupidly at his confidential assistant.

The officers were hurrying about; lights appeared here and there in the gloomy place until one could discern without difficulty the whole squalid scene. Jennison stared up at Grafton with a strange sort of dumb agony.

Then the spell broke as the policemen gathered again and talked quickly among themselves. Jennison leaped up the stairway and seized his employer's hand in cold fingers.

"Thank God, sir!" he mumbled. "Oh, thank God, Mr. Grafton!"

Grafton shook himself together.

"I'm inclined to think that the thanks are partly yours, Jennison," he said. "How under the sun did you know—what brought you here to the very place, at the very time?"

"That's what I've come to tell—that and more, and I shall have to tell it quickly, sir. Where can we go in this place, to talk?"

"I—well, I don't know. They have a very fine dining-room, if I remember correctly. Perhaps it's safe there now."

"It's safe anywhere now," the roundsman interposed. "They've left, even to the owner of the joint."

"Then we'll find it."

Grafton passed into the bar, Jennison at his heels, and in a moment or two had located the scene of his own disaster. With a long sigh of relief he settled beside one of the unappetizing tables and stretched himself. In all his life he had never imagined such delicious relaxation possible. Business troubles he had passed through and troubles of other kinds, sickness and personal sorrows; but this, a reprieve from death, was different from all.

And Jennison was the responsible party. He glanced across at the chief clerk with more gratitude in his eyes than words could express. The secretary flushed before the gaze and his mouth worked convulsively for a minute.

Then, to Grafton's amazement, Jennison's head sank to his folded arms and he sobbed violently!

"But, my dear fellow!"

"Just a moment, sir—I can't help it," came thickly.

"But, Jennison——"

"Mr. Grafton!" The other looked up miserably. "Don't try to comfort me—— It isn't the nervous strain that set me off, you know. It's—something a great deal worse."

"Worse, Jennison?"

"Infinitely. You—you've trusted me, sir! God help me, you've always trusted me!"

"Of course I've trusted you."

"You brought me out of a cheap, hopeless, futureless position and worked me into a business man. You gave me charge of matters involving thousands and hundreds of thousands, and you trusted me with them all!"

"Indeed I did. I——"

"Just a minute more, sir. I've come to tell you how I have repaid all your kindness. Mr. Grafton, I stole those Colson papers!"

"You—you did steal them?" Grafton sat back, literally horrified. Despite the episode of the envelope, his belief in Jennison's honesty had hardly been shaken. "You——"

"Yes, I stole them, sir—night before last." Jennison straightened up and brushed back his damp hair. "I'll give you the whole story as quickly and as briefly as I can, Mr. Grafton, and then we shall have to act."

Grafton watched him wonderingly.

Jennison, taking breath, glanced at his watch, and then spoke quickly:

"I may as well begin at the beginning, Mr. Grafton—you'll understand better. This whole Kenyonville Traction business has been one mass of graft, from end to end!"

"Graft!"

"Nothing else in the world, sir. The full details I can't tell, for I don't know them, but I have a very fair idea of how matters have been going. Colson, I think, went into the business originally for what he could make out of it, legitimately or otherwise. He has a criminal record!"

"Colson has?"

"Yes. It's a long way back, and I believe that he's been making more or less of an honest living for years; but I suppose this was too much for him. At any rate, Mr. Grafton, that is the fact.

"Well, and from what I have learned, Colson has been making a very good thing all through the business—on contracts and rake-offs and so on. He was involved in some of it with Brady, in a very quiet fashion, and after a time they got to talking over possibilities. How long they discussed the matter I cannot say, either, but between them they shaped a plan—the plan that has been worked out."

"To steal the papers?"

"Yes."

Grafton shook his head.

"So Brady was in it as well! I'm afraid my faith in human nature has been misplaced. Go on."

"They did not know how to go about it. The notes and the bonds and all were, of course, in the safe deposit vaults at the bank, and consequently where they never could be reached. It was a week or so ago that Brady took me aside one day, when I went to his office, and broached the subject.

"I'm not saying it to excuse myself, Mr. Grafton, for nothing can do that," said Jennison, "but I did refuse the offer he made at the time and announced my intention of revealing the plot to you.

"Brady was furious. He wouldn't let me out of the office—indeed, I have sometimes doubted if I was not in serious danger that day. He promised to make Kenyonville too hot to hold me, if I told you. On the other hand, he promised me a large sum if I would help him and Colson."

"How much?" said Grafton angrily.

Jennison avoided his gaze.

"It was one hundred thousand dollars, sir."

"And I've trusted you with more than that—fool that I was!"

"You can't make me see the matter in any worse light than I see it now," said Jennison wretchedly. "I understand what a contemptible cur I am, Mr. Grafton, and I'm doing what little I can to atone for it.

"Well, we compromised upon my promise not to mention the affair, and I left. I don't know how I faced you

for a week, every day, with that on my mind. However, day before yesterday, Brady was waiting for me at noon when I went to lunch. He knew that the notes were in your office, and he knew that I was the person most likely to see them. He renewed his offer to me, to steal them and hand them over to him and Colson. That was all he asked, and he doubled his original price for the miserable work. When I refused, he doubled his threats! He scared me, Mr. Grafton!"

Grafton's tight, shut lips offered no comment.

"In the end I accepted, sir. At least, we left it that if the notes could be had without breaking into anything, I was to take them. Then you went away that night and left them lying squarely on the front of your open desk!"

"Yes, that was an absurd trick, I'll admit."

"Up to the moment you left, sir, I had no intention of complying. I supposed, of course, that you would at least lock the wretched things in the safe, but when I saw them there the temptation was too much, somehow. Even then I conquered it and left in a hurry before it could return.

"But all the evening the idea haunted me—I may as well be honest—and I thought what I could do with two hundred thousand dollars of my own. I thought how easy it would be to go away when the first excitement had calmed down and live the rest of my life as I pleased. Up to eleven o'clock, though, I crushed it back; but then the temptation got the better of me.

"I went back to the building. By chance, Parker was in the basement. I managed to sneak in and up by the stairs. I found the papers, and was just about to pocket them when you came up in the elevator. I knew that it must be you, for no one else would be likely to demonstrate that emergency stop in the middle of the night.

"What was I to do? If you came and found me with the papers in my possession, it was all over. If you found me at all, it would have been bad enough. For a moment I felt panic-stricken. Then the inspiration came. I seized one of your envelopes, thrust in the notes, directed it to Brady, dropped it in the chute, and darted back into the offices. The fire-escape ladders, I found, had been taken away. I huddled into the corner, and waited for you to find me. You didn't."

Grafton nodded and smiled tartly.

"Then you went away and I climbed back and turned on the lights for a moment to see if there were any signs of my detection. The desk was closed; I turned out the lights, and hurried out by way of the elevator."

"So it was you, after all, Jennison!"

"Yes. The rest of that night's doings I have heard of course, from Brady. He had not expected the documents to come in that way, nor at that time. Hence, to keep up the appearance of perfect friendliness, he was willing to help you. He opened the box, saw the envelope with my handwriting, and—you know the rest."

"I do indeed. It was Brady whom we chased then?"

"Yes, he feared that you might be able to get the box open somehow, and he returned twice in his effort to unlock the thing. The last time he dropped the key."

"And Colson?"

"Brady saw him some time after he left you, told him that the documents were probably in their hands, and had him leave. It was Brady's idea that he might persuade you to stay here for a day or two, but Colson doubted it. Then they decided on the scheme of drugging you, and Colson knew this den of old. That is the whole story."

"And a very choice story it is," said Grafton bitterly. "The honest politician, the great and good and upright business man, and the trusted confidential clerk!"

"I was the worst of the lot," said Jennison. "I'm doing what I can to make amends now."

Grafton looked at him more kindly.

"I understand that, Jennison. Now that you've finished with the past, go on to the gang's present—or future—plans."

"After you had gone yesterday, sir, the thing hit me harder than ever. It tortured my very life out—I couldn't rest or eat or think of anything save what an unmitigated scoundrel I had been.

Colson reached town again this morning and we heard that you had been disposed of. That settled it, I'm glad to say. I ran for the depot, got here as quickly as possible, sought the help of the police—and we didn't come any too soon."

"You did not." Grafton shuddered slightly. "But what is the ultimate purpose of all this rascality?"

"That is all arranged. Did you ever hear of Fenmore Carvel?"

"Eh? No. Who is he?"

"A forger—escaped from Joliet three or four years ago," said Jennison. "Colson seems to know him, and Brady doesn't regard him as an utter stranger. At all events he had been somewhere in Kenyonville for nearly a week!"

"Awaiting the robbery?"

"Yes. The rest, as I know now, has been fixed. Colson, on the strength of his reputation, has arranged for some very large loans from the banks as soon as his notes to you are satisfied! With the notes in hand, Carvel will forge your signature wherever necessary, and the loans will go through within two hours after noon to-morrow!"

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Grafton. "The thing seems to be worked out in detail!"

"Not a thing has been neglected, sir. They reckon on leaving town by three o'clock to-morrow, with some three million dollars among them!"

Grafton sat back agape. The thoroughness of the whole plot, and the revelation of the true characters of the men in whom he and many others had had such implicit confidence, dumfounded him.

"Jennison," he said slowly. "You have been—well, perhaps no more than a very weak fool. You have come within an ace of ruining me, and you've destroyed my faith in mankind. But you have made all the restitution possible, and I thank you sincerely."

"I don't deserve that, sir."

"And now the thing is to use what we know. What is the time?"

"Just five."

"Ah! That leaves us ample chance to get the six o'clock train then," said Grafton. "We'll make Kenyonville by midnight. Where do you suppose Brady and his brother crooks are operating?"

"On the papers?"

"Yes."

"At Brady's office, I think. I know that Carvel has been there several times, and from what they said I believe the work will be done there."

"Have you told Burleigh about this business, Jennison?"

"No, sir. I had no more than time to catch the train that brought me to Chicago."

"Um—too bad. He should have known it. However, we can wire him at the depot, and he can at least watch the crowd until we arrive." Grafton regarded the other very thoughtfully for a few seconds. "You're sure that you have told me all there is to tell, are you?"

"I have given you the full account of the business. Oh, I don't blame you for doubting me, Mr. Grafton, but you'll find that I have been honest in this, at least."

"Perhaps a stronger man than you would have succumbed to the temptation, Jennison. You gave no hint to Colson or Brady of your intention?"

"Certainly not."

"But they'll remark your absence, and perhaps guess at its cause. Well—I don't know just what harm it will do now. The papers can hardly yet have been doctored and before banking hours we shall again be in Kenyonville if all goes well. I hope you've got money for traveling expenses, Jennison." He laughed shortly. "I invested in this revolver, you know, and it cost me one hundred and eighty dollars."

Grafton arose and looked about. One or two of the police were in the fore part of the place. He walked in to them to learn what had been accomplished.

Not a man had been caught; even surprised as they were, the habitués of the den had made good an escape among the alleys and byways of the forlorn neighborhood.

It mattered very little to Grafton. He was alive and free again; he knew the full story of the plot against him; he had still time to frustrate it if nothing went amiss. Later on, perhaps, when time did not press, he would return and identify some of the crowd that had been connected with his imprisonment. For

the moment, his sole desire was to return to Kenyonville.

With Jennison on one side and an officer on the other, he left the house and struck out rapidly for the depot. In ten minutes he stood upon his meeting-ground with Colson.

Half an hour remained before train-time. Grafton secured a handful of telegram blanks and sat down to the task of advising Burleigh as to the situation. When he had reached the end of his abbreviated message, Jennison was waiting with the tickets. The chief clerk's face was white and weary, but there was a quality of happy relief upon it which prompted Grafton to stop.

"Jennison," he said, "I may be foolish, but I'm going to make you a proposition. If you like, you may come back with me, remain in the office, and see the thing through. If I decide to prosecute Brady and Colson, it will mean that you are to be dragged through the courts and made to tell your own story to the public. It's going to shatter your reputation for honesty, for good and all. Or, if you like, you may stay here and go to work, and I shall not try to find you. It will be easier, certainly, and perhaps better in a good many ways. Which is it to be?"

"I'm going back with you, Mr. Grafton."

Grafton smiled suddenly.

"All right, Jennison. Come along."

CHAPTER XX.

BACK TO KENYONVILLE.

NIGHT closed in and the train roared along toward Kenyonville.

Grafton and Jennison talked but little. The latter sat, half dozing, and spoke only when Grafton addressed him. That was rarely, for Grafton had much to occupy his mind.

To all appearances, the end of his chase was in sight, and a remarkable chase it had been!

Was the trouble really not yet made? He turned to the chief clerk.

"See here, Jennison!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You are sure that none of the forging has been done?"

"To the best of my knowledge, they had no intention of going to work on the papers until late to-night."

"I wonder why?"

"The man Carvel suggested that. He said that so long as the papers were to be shown to-morrow afternoon and were supposed to be signed at noon, the ink should be as fresh as possible."

"Ah!" Grafton's eyebrows went up. "I'd forgotten that, Jennison. Your forger has a good head."

"He is an expert, according to Colson."

"And that is the same Colson who has had such a good reputation in Kenyonville this past few years?"

Jennison nodded silently.

"Do you know the details of the crooked work that has been going on?"

"Only that Brady and Colson have been making about fifty per cent on all the work that has been done—and arranging it so that they boast about detection being impossible."

"Pleasant!" Grafton sat back again.

The hours rolled on slowly; the train rumbled ahead with its monotonous clatter. At eleven they drew up at Hastings, and Grafton smiled. Just one hour more, just sixty more minutes, and he would be within reaching distance of the whole choice crew.

Toward the end of that hour he could hardly keep his chair. Had it been possible, he would almost have tried bribing the engine crew to greater speed; every second seemed dragged out to twenty times its usual length. They stopped for water, and Grafton drummed with his foot, watched the sleepy passengers, and swore under his breath until they were under way again.

But at last the first straggling lights of Kenyonville appeared, grew more numerous, and finally merged into the unbroken lines of street-lamps that Grafton knew so well. He leaped from his chair and walked to the door, with Jennison close behind.

As the train drew up, he was upon the step and before it reached a standstill he had jumped to the platform.

A figure ran out of the shadow of the station roof and hurried across to him.

Grafton held out a hand.

"Burleigh!"

"Well, Mr. Grafton!"

"Back again and alive, although at one time the prospect for that didn't seem overbright, I must say."

"Ah! and you brought back Mr. Jennison, did you?"

"Yes, he decided to come and see the end of the game, Burleigh," said Grafton, easily. "You received my wire, of course?"

"At about seven, sir. I was never more amazed in all my life!"

"That's not hard to believe."

"And Colson really took you to the place and managed to drug you, sir, as you said?" pursued the detective in a low tone.

"Just exactly."

"Well, it's the most daring thing in all my experience, sir. I've seen tough cases, but never the like of this."

"I hope you'll see no more of the like in which I'm concerned," said Grafton. "Well, what has been done?"

"All that was possible, sir."

"You have not given either Brady or Colson reason to think that they are being watched?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"But you've had them watched, just the same?"

"Every minute, sir. One man was after Brady, another was keeping track of the trains, so that I knew when Colson arrived this morning, at about nine."

"Good!"

"The other fellow whom I have had on the case was watching Jennison." Burleigh lowered his voice.

Grafton followed his example.

"Jennison, eh?"

"Yes. He was the best man of the three, too."

"But Jennison shook him?"

"He did nothing of the sort," chuckled Burleigh. "He returned on the same train with you. He left the smoker just as we were shaking hands, and went on home."

"But was Jennison followed to Chicago?"

"To the very door of the place where he went with the police," said the detective. "I waited an hour or two for further details, and I may say, Mr. Grafton, that I was on the point of starting for Chicago myself when your message came. A few minutes later my man's second wire arrived and I knew that you were loose again and safe."

Grafton shook his head with admiration that was past bewilderment.

"By Jove, Burleigh! I never had much to do with detective work before, but in the future you can have my business."

The detective laughed softly.

"However, Mr. Grafton, you are here, and that's the great consideration. Now for the rest of the crowd."

"Sure enough. You know where they are?"

"I had my man on the telephone not fifteen minutes before you got in, Mr. Grafton."

"Well?"

"The fellow you call Carvel appeared with Brady to-day for the first time, and he puzzled me very much at first. They've been together since morning, and the pair of them spent the afternoon with Colson. At six they went to the Grande, as bold as you please, and had dinner."

"Yes."

"They stayed there for a couple of hours, then came out and separated. I suppose that that was in event of their being watched. Well, sir, one of my fellows went after Brady and the other after Colson. They just wandered around town for a couple of hours, and then Brady steered for his office."

"Just as Jennison expected!"

"Yes; Brady got there first. Next came Colson, about half past ten. They had been together about fifteen minutes when along comes our Mr. Carvel, as you call him."

"And they are there now?"

"They were about twenty minutes ago."

A hard smile appeared on Grafton's lips.

"Come along, then, Burleigh. We'll interview them, and the quicker the better."

"You don't want to get one of the judges out of bed and have him issue warrants?"

"I don't think so." Grafton rubbed his chin. "What I want is that bundle of notes. As for giving them what they deserve—I don't know. It means sev-

eral things that do not appear on the surface, Burleigh. For one thing, a trial of the crowd would proclaim me in some ways the biggest idiot that ever lived in the State.

"For another, it would be necessary to sacrifice Jennison, and I'm not anxious to do that. For a third, it wouldn't benefit me to any extent that I can see at present. However, that is for time and circumstances to decide. We'll talk with them first, I think."

Grafton motioned Jennison, standing apart, and he joined the pair. They walked through the depot and stepped aboard the waiting car outside. The ride was short. Before many minutes they stepped down, outside the building where Brady's offices were located.

Burleigh looked about, and from within the glass storm-doors a man emerged—one of his detectives. He came briskly to Burleigh's side.

"Well?"

"They are up there yet."

"Sure?"

"I've been up twice by way of the stairs."

"Anything unusual going on?"

"Only that two pretty tough looking citizens have arrived since I had you on the 'phone."

"And what is that for, I wonder?"

"They're standing guard in the hallway, outside Brady's door."

"You don't say so!" muttered Burleigh. "Looks as if they were taking all possible precautions, eh?"

"And I made a trip up the fire-escape, on the other side of the court, as well, about ten minutes ago. I thought it was worth risking, sir."

"And was it?"

"That smooth-shaven fellow is sitting at the table with a green shade over his eyes, and a quantity of papers before him."

"Is he, really? They're down to business, I imagine. Come along, sir."

He turned to Grafton as he opened the door. Jennison followed, his teeth set and his face very white—and Grafton's opinion of the remorse received further confirmation. Burleigh beckoned his detective.

"You may as well come, too, Joe. You're likely to be needed."

As quietly as possible they passed into the silent building and began the climb. Each of the four was breathing a little more rapidly than usual.

The end of a complicated business was at hand. Between them they would have to cope with five men of fairly proven desperate character. Would matters end in a fight—and if they did, where would the fight end? Would one or another of the crowd slip through with the notes? They would be very nearly useless, but their absence might mean much in the way of lost evidence.

"Keep together," Burleigh whispered suddenly. "If they go to work to mix things up, see that none of them get clear. We'll mass around that door as quickly as possible, and once we're there, hang tight together and block the way."

The rest nodded, and the climb went on.

And then their heads appeared above the floor, and they saw the two men whom the detective had mentioned.

Their faces were startled, and with a common impulse they turned from their slow tramp and broke for the door of Brady's office.

With remarkable agility Burleigh and Grafton were between. For a tense instant the two sides regarded each other.

"Well?" said Burleigh coolly.

"Well, there ain't no objection t' our passing?"

"Isn't there? I'm afraid that there is, though. I shall have to ask both of you to remain at this end of the corridor, please."

"For what?" inquired the less prepossessing of the pair.

"Because we wish to drop in on Mr. Brady and his friends without being announced. Here, don't try yelling."

Burleigh's hand shot up and covered the other's mouth. The man dodged back and raised his fist—and lowered it again.

"Say, who are you?" he asked.

"Just a friend."

"O' Jim Brady's?"

"Certainly."

"Ah, go on! That's a con!" interposed the other.

"But——"

"Jim said nobody went in, no matter who it was."

"And that is where Jim was mistaken," Burleigh observed pleasantly. "Are you going to be quiet about it or not?"

A quick glance shot between the two. Burleigh observed it, and chuckled inwardly. They were estimating the force against them, and hesitating; and it became almost certain that they were not armed, for had they been, the weapons would have appeared before now.

"You can't go in there," said the first.

"Oh, we've settled that part, you know. The question is whether or not you mean to try any interference?"

"You can't go in there—that's all. Mr. Brady's busy."

"I have no doubt of that."

Still neither of the men moved. Burleigh was satisfied. He turned his back abruptly and walked down toward Brady's door.

"Come along, gentlemen; there is nothing to prevent our walking in, I think. As for you—stay where you are."

At the moment they seemed likely to obey.

Half a dozen yards were between the groups, and still Brady's henchmen had not moved.

"Good Lord!" whispered Grafton. "They're not going to take it as calmly as that, are they?"

"Give it up—shouldn't wonder!" chuckled the detective. "They're not the sort for just this kind of business. They know that we are two to one, and they don't like risking it. They are not provided with guns or they would have appeared at the very first."

"But——"

"But we're not inside yet," responded Burleigh, tiptoeing gently along. "No, that's very true; and we may have a bit of trouble with those chaps within a few seconds even now. This crowd of heelers are afraid of Brady, and they don't know that his influence is going to die to-night. When they see us go in——"

"Look out!"

It was Jennison's voice. Burleigh and Grafton wheeled around with startled eyes.

Working with a skill that bespoke long practise, the pair had hurled the detective's assistant to the floor, where he lay stunned.

Jennison was now in their grip.

"By George! That was quick!" gasped Burleigh. "Come on, sir!"

He plunged forward and clenched his fists. One of the men held Jennison.

The other stepped out quickly and his fist sped toward Burleigh's face. But the detective was even quicker. His head went down, and his hard knuckles came up with a force and an aim that sent his assailant reeling across the hall.

The other sent Jennison sprawling and leaped for Grafton. The millionaire stepped back in the nick of time, and missed a blow in turn. The dazed man on the floor was stirring again now and the first of Brady's guards was returning unsteadily to the conflict. Burleigh waited, and Grafton leaped to his side.

Jennison, too, regained his feet and ran toward the group, and his fists found a place on the head of the man who had thrown him. The other closed in, too, and the fight was on.

And it was a battle! Fists seemed to be everywhere, the soft thudding of heavy blows grew almost continuous.

Burleigh picked his man and floored him, and managed to detach him from the mass, but before he could return to Grafton's assistance, the millionaire and Jennison were both suffering from severe pounding at the other man's hands.

And Burleigh's man was back again! He came in furiously now, and the detective ducked to meet the onslaught.

Jennison had the other about the neck and despite a rain of blows was bearing him down. Grafton wavered between the two and was turning to Burleigh's aid when——

"Here! What the devil's this? Hey, there! Cut that out, boys!"

Burleigh sent his man staggering once more, and turned toward the sound with a rush. The others followed.

For the voice was that of big Jim Brady, and the politician stood in the doorway of his offices.

His face was more than startled. At the sight of the men before him he turned white and grasped the casing of the door.

But in the minute of his confusion Grafton and Burleigh had pushed by.

They were within the office!

"Good evening, Brady!" panted the former as he rearranged his collar.

CHAPTER XXI.

BY A NARROW MARGIN.

BRADY'S face was a study.

For a moment he stared from Burleigh and Grafton to the hallway without, where stood the other detective and Jennison, and farther down his own two ruffians.

The chief clerk appeared to absorb more of his attention than the rest. A black scowl gathered upon his face as he regarded the man, and his lips worked slightly.

"You here, too, Jennison!"

"I'm here."

"Where'd you go?"

"To Chicago."

"What!"

"Yes, and I took the police to the dive where Mr. Grafton was locked up, too!"

Brady's fury rose; his lips rolled back and his teeth showed.

"You damned white-livered hound!" he screamed. "You miserable cur! Say, I'll give you——"

He dashed from the doorway toward Jennison, who stood waiting the onslaught with squared shoulders.

But Burleigh was in between and his revolver appeared under Brady's nose.

"There, there, Jim, you just get back! I don't want to bring the police in here with any shooting, or I'd have given your two friends a taste just now—but you can't get at Jennison, and that settles it."

The politician fell back slowly.

"Now, into your office," continued the detective. "Just walk right in there beside Mr. Grafton."

The glint in the detective's eye, somewhere behind the convincing pistol, enforced his command. Brady turned sullenly and walked back into his offices, and the detective came close after.

Grafton, recalling his own weapon at the sight of the detective's, was covering the pair beside the table in the inner office—Colson and a smooth-shaven individual.

Burleigh nodded approvingly.

"That's right, Mr. Grafton. Keep 'em there and don't let 'em take anything from the table. Now, Brady, just close that door."

He accompanied the other, pistol in hand, and at the entrance he called:

"Jennison, you stay out there with my man and watch the other two, will you?"

The door slammed, and the detective smiled.

"Right into your private office, Brady. You don't mind our using it for a quiet little talk, do you?"

"Mind! I'll show you whether I mind or not! I'll——"

"Well, it doesn't matter much, anyway," smiled Burleigh. "In there, Jim, and no monkey business about it."

Once more the politician obeyed. The detective and Grafton followed close upon his heels and surveyed the scene with much interest.

And it was a sight to absorb one. In the center of the room stood a flat table, strewn with paper and documents and bits of tracing paper, with inkstands and pens of various sorts.

Work had evidently been upon the very point of beginning.

"Well, Mr. Grafton, is your property there?" asked Burleigh.

The millionaire stepped toward the table, but Brady's big body came before him in spite of the pistol in Burleigh's hand.

"That'll do you, Grafton—you get back!"

"I want to inspect the papers there, Brady."

"Mebbe you do, but you ain't goin' to."

"Oh, I think he will," the detective interposed.

"Then you got another think comin'!"

"See here, you idiot——" Grafton began.

"Now, that won't do no good! Back up there, I tell you! This here is my office—see? You ain't got any right in it, in the first place, but when it comes to pokin' over me private papers——"

"And mine."

"There ain't none of your'n here. Just keep your hands off!"

"Brady, that's a poor bluff," said Grafton angrily. "You know what is there, and you know why we are here. What on earth is the use of——"

Burleigh interrupted suddenly.

"There is a good deal of use, Mr. Grafton," he said tartly. "This smooth-faced person—Mr. Carvel, I fancy—has pocketed no less than seven documents in the past thirty seconds."

Brady turned almost involuntarily.

Carvel's jaw dropped, and Burleigh laughed.

"It was neat in a way," he said; "but it wasn't done deftly enough. Put them back, Carvel."

The forger looked from one to the other of his confederates for a possible cue. Brady's furious scowl was still all fight, but Colson seemed to have comprehended the situation perfectly.

His face was drawn and white and his eyes rather frightened.

He turned suddenly to Carvel.

"Put them back, then," he said, despite Brady's fierce glare.

Carvel obeyed, and from several pockets documents were brought and slapped upon the table.

Burleigh chuckled audibly.

"Now, Mr. Grafton, just look them over, please, and see if your property is there, and——"

"Get back there!" Brady roared.

"And—so help me!—I'll blow the head off the first man that interferes with you!" Burleigh concluded.

His weapon came up suddenly, and in spite of his bravado, Brady stepped back a pace or two. His fellows sat very still.

Grafton advanced and looked over the litter; then with trembling hand he seized a long, folded document, and another and another. He turned over the pile, searched further—and recovered two more of his precious papers.

After a minute or two he stepped back, and buttoned into an inner pocket was the package of papers connected with the Kenyonville Traction matter.

"Burleigh," he said shakily, "I've got every blessed note and bond, and not a single one has been trifled with!"

"Thank the Lord for that, sir!" said the detective. He turned to Brady. "You just sit down there, Jim. I have a word or two to say, I think. Oh, you're still ready for battle, are you?"

"D'ye know that you broke into this office by force, in the middle of the night?"

Colson shrugged his shoulders, and Burleigh shook his head.

"Don't you understand, Jim, that we know all there is to know about the whole business? Jennison——"

"Damn Jennison! I'll——" He started angrily from his chair.

"Here, here! You'll do nothing of the sort!"

"I'll——"

"You'll be out of town before you have the chance," smiled the detective. "Jennison gave it all away. We saved Mr. Grafton here—or he did—and we've recovered the papers. Just a word or two more, and we may say good night—or we may wait until morning comes along and then secure warrants for you."

"Not for me! Good God! Not for me!" broke from Colson.

"That is what we shall have to see," said Burleigh dryly. "You don't seem to like the prospect of yourself and Mr. Brady attired in stripes?"

Colson moistened his lips.

"And perhaps they won't become you, after all. So it's better to take matters calmly at this stage, is it not? All we want now is a few facts. Afterward——" He looked at Grafton. "Perhaps you're the one best qualified to find out how things stand, sir."

The millionaire nodded.

"Colson," he said, "there are a good many things that I could say to you and a good many things that I could do to you—and perhaps I'm going to refrain altogether. I am quite frank with you in saying that the fellow who committed the actual theft is one I'm not very anxious to put in prison, much as I should enjoy seeing you and Brady there. However, there's a train which leaves here for the South at half past two, and under certain circumstances I'm willing to have you go aboard."

Colson nodded, and a gleam of hope appeared in his eye.

"Just what have you been doing with that railroad?"

"You mean——"

"I mean how much money have you spent, to whom have you sold the stock, and what is the whole business worth now?"

For a moment Colson's eye wandered to the threatening scowl on Brady's face, then to the politician's intense disgust he turned squarely on Grafton and said:

"We never placed the stock, Grafton. I was holding that for a little scheme of my own. No, I didn't place it at all."

"In spite of our original agreement, of course."

"Yes, in spite of that. For the rest, there's close on to a million dollars of your money banked in my name in this town, Grafton, and as much more in Brady's name. The rest is in the road."

The magnate rubbed his chin and sighed.

"By Jove! you're a choice pair. So the road and the money you have in the banks will practically cover your notes?"

"They would."

"And you are quite sure that none of the stock has been sold?"

"The book of certificates is in that safe over there, and not a leaf has been touched."

"And to-morrow, when I was out of the way, and you had forged my name to paper enough to satisfy the whole debt?"

"We have arranged for a few loans."

"Amounting to?"

"A lot of money," said Colson evasively.

"Well, I don't know that the exact sums concern us greatly. That is easily discovered later. The main thing is that you're here and that you still have the goods, isn't it? Open that safe, Colson, and get out your bank books, your books of the road, and everything else connected with the business."

"It's Brady's safe."

"Then you open it, Brady."

The boss hesitated for a moment, but circumstances had the better of him.

With Grafton close behind, he walked to the safe and manipulated the combination.

The door opened and the millionaire bent down. Brady silently dropped some smaller keys beside him.

For a few moments Grafton worked steadily over the contents. The inner compartments were opened one by one, and books and papers removed. He carried them all to the table and studied them while Burleigh kept a sharp eye on the trio and waited.

When Grafton looked up his eyes rested on Colson.

"You were substantially correct," he said slowly. "Now—just write a confession of the whole business, Colson."

"A confession! Why, man, I'd never——"

"Be able to do the same thing again? I hope not—that's what I want to prevent if possible. However, please yourself." He shrugged his shoulders. "You may write it, and both your confederates may sign it with you—or you all three go to State's prison."

Colson collapsed. His shaky hand seized pen and legal cap, and for fifteen minutes he scribbled hurriedly.

"There! That's the whole of it."

Grafton glanced through it.

"Yes, that covers the main points. Your name, Brady, please."

The boss inscribed his labored signature and tossed the confession to Carvel; and the forger executed a beautifully flourished name at the bottom.

"Next, your check, Colson." Grafton tossed the book of blank checks across the table. "Your balance at the First National is—phew!—nine hundred and forty thousand dollars! Make it out to me."

The slip passed across the table.

Grafton held it as the ink dried, and smiled again.

"Here, Brady, your loot is divided among three banks, I see, so that I shall have to trouble you to make out three checks. Hurry."

Brady took the books without a word, and signed back to its original possessor such cash loot as he owned.

"Now get out! We'll put you aboard the train, and by the Lord! if ever I see one of you again, here or elsewhere in the State, or hear of you or any one of you operating, this whole affair comes out, and you go where you belong."

"But — Grafton!" Brady's voice had grown humble.

"Well?"

"You ain't—you ain't goin' to make me jump the town?"

"Yes, sir, and quick."

"Grafton, you're foolish. It won't do you no harm if I stay, and here's where I belong. Why, say, both parties here do just what I tell 'em. Let me stay and you can have whatever you like—franchises or contracts or anything."

"The train leaves at two-thirty."

"And say, Grafton, let me stay here. I'll live straight. I swear I will, Grafton. You let me stay and keep it quiet, and I'll make you mayor next election. Yes, I'll make you Governor of the State, if you say so, Grafton! I can do it, and I will do it."

Grafton smiled slightly.

"And if you shouldn't happen to catch that two-thirty, you'll be absolutely certain to see the inside of a cell within an hour," Grafton concluded.

Brady turned away with a groan.

"Five minutes past!" Burleigh announced. "Come along, gentlemen. Shall we leave Jennison and my man to guard these things, Mr. Grafton?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll call them and tell them, while these other gentlemen are preparing for a trip," chuckled the detective.

The two-thirty pulled out of Kenyonville station, and the old guard at the train gate stared somewhat at the sight of Kenyonville's biggest man almost skipping to the street at Burleigh's side.

In the empty square without, brilliant with half a dozen arc lamps, Grafton stopped.

"I think I'll ride home, Burleigh. The last time I tried walking I had some rather bad luck."

"Well, it can hardly happen again, sir. Shall I go back with Jennison?"

"If you will, and stay until morning. Burleigh, what a furore there's going to be to-morrow when the papers find out that those two have dropped out forever!"

"And yet if they hadn't managed to get Jennison to steal the papers, sir, you'd have been a lot more out of pocket than you are now. Most likely they would simply have withdrawn their cash early this morning and vamoosed."

"It is probable, certainly. Well—then let's be thankful they were kind enough to rob me," said Grafton lightly.

The half-hour car came down the hill and stopped before the depot, and, with Burleigh at his side, Grafton walked over and laid a hand on the rail.

He turned to the detective with a half-smile.

"Two or three days ago I owned a hotel or two, some apartment houses, some business blocks, some electric lights, and a few more odds and ends about Kenyonville. Now, by thunder, I own all the trolley cars as well!"

He swung aboard. "Burleigh, I think it's time for me to stop."

(The End.)

DISCORD.

Anonymous.

WHEN I stahts a little chune,
Wif de banjo on my knee,
Boun' ter notice purty soon
Some one j'inin' in so free.
Satisfied wif how he sings;
Drowndin' out de sweetest strings.
Voice is sure ter disagree;
Some one singin' off de key.

When de loafin's in yoh heart,
Dem as has ter oversee
Allus makes you git a start,
Allus spiles de jubilee.
Jes' when dreamin's full o' bliss,
Mammy says "git out er dis!"
Somehow seems dar's gotter be
Some one singin' off de key.

THE VAUGHN VELASQUEZ.

By Frank Marshall White.

A MAN may be a good judge of art, but in most cases it dosen't do him much good.

THE name of Portman Smythe is beginning to be known in art-circles and among well-informed amateurs, I am willing to admit, but that is no reason why I should have been hoodwinked by the fulsome flattery that made me such an easy victim.

I may say, also, that one of the most fashionable and exclusive hotels in New York is not a place where one is supposed to be on his guard against confidence games, so that personal vanity is not to be considered the reason for my disgrace.

On the morning of the day that this lamentable adventure occurred, I called at the hotel to see a friend who was living there; and waiting some time for him to return from an errand, remarked this fellow, who seemed to be sending an unusual number of telegrams, besides going often into the telephone booth.

Several times men came to the hotel, obviously in response to summonses from him, and he fairly fell upon their necks in his joy at seeing them; but on each of these occasions his visitors—cordial enough on arrival—seemed to freeze up at his eager advances, and each one apparently tore himself away with all possible expedition.

That should have served as a hint to any one—except a congenital dolt!

My friend not returning to the hotel during the half hour that I waited in the morning, I called again in the afternoon. Finding that he had not yet come back, I again sat down in the corridor to await his arrival, for I desired to consult him about a matter of some urgency.

The man whom I had noticed in the morning was still about the hostelry. I remarked that he now seemed even more restless and ill at ease than earlier in the day.

He walked the corridors with his hands deep in his trousers' pockets, his mind evidently far away; and twice I saw him go into the café to reappear with his color slightly heightened.

Once he sat down at a writing table and made several attempts to indite a letter, finally rising and tearing up his final effort, throwing the fragments into the waste-paper basket with a gesture almost of despair.

However, he passed entirely out of my mind, and I had purchased a newspaper and read it almost through before my attention was again attracted to him.

My eye having wandered from the sheet, although I was still holding it before my face, I caught sight of his reflection in a mirror and saw that he was regarding me with avid interest.

That ought to have been a sufficient warning to me to be on my guard when he finally addressed me; but, before I complete my narrative, I think I shall be able to demonstrate that I ought not to be written down as quite the complete and utter ass the bare circumstances would make me out.

The moment I laid aside my newspaper he swooped down upon me.

"Portman Smythe!" he cried, in a tone of delight. "Why this *is* the most extraordinary and the most happy accident! You are the one man in all New York I most want to see. I did not know your address, and to find you in person is a wonderful piece of luck."

Before I knew it I had risen and was shaking hands with him.

"But I—er——" I began.

"*Don't* say you have forgotten me," he interrupted gaily. "Well, I suppose that a famous critic can hardly be expected to remember all the small fry he runs across. I imagine it must be some-

thing of an effort to keep in mind all the distinguished men *you* come in contact with—let alone the nobodies. My name is Beverley Vaughn, and I believe that it was Mrs. Thursby who introduced me to you at the Patriarch's ball last winter."

Of course the name of Beverley Vaughn is familiar to all readers of newspapers. I knew its owner by reputation as one of the most ponderous of heavy swells, who was also the possessor of a famous collection of paintings that I had often wished to have the opportunity to inspect.

I could not recall, however, that I had ever met him, and was reasonably sure that I would have remembered the circumstance if it had occurred.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Thursby was a grande dame of the highest consequence, and I *had* attended the Patriarch's ball the previous winter and been presented by her to a number of her fashionable friends.

I will leave it to any unbiased person to say whether, in the circumstances, it was altogether inflated self-sufficiency that led me to fall into the trap and pretend that I recalled a previous meeting with him.

"As I was saying," he went on, with a glibness that ought to have told me that he was repeating a story he had learned by heart, "you are the one man in all New York I wanted to see this afternoon. In fact I came to town mainly to look for you.

"I am determined to have your opinion upon my 'Velasquez.' I don't know that you have heard that its genuineness has been questioned, as we have naturally kept it very quiet. I tried to get Sedgwick to come over and look at it when I was in London last month. He couldn't be induced to cross the water, but he told me that your opinion would be as valuable as his own."

Every man, woman, and child in New York with the slightest pretension to culture knew about the Beverley Vaughn "Velasquez," the withdrawal of which from one of the great European galleries had created a sensation only a year before.

The impossibility that an old master should hang for a century in a collection visited by the connoisseurs of the world, and then be discovered to be fraudulent after its arrival in America, ought to have cautioned me that something was wrong, had I not been carried away by the thought of how much my professional reputation would be enhanced were I the first to announce so stupendous a discovery.

I was, of course, acquainted with the reputation of Sedgwick, the eminent London expert, but I had never met him and I told Vaughn so.

"My dear Mr. Portman Smythe," declared Vaughn, "surely you must know that your reputation is as firmly established on the other side as it is in your own country.

"Sedgwick *told* me that he had never had the pleasure of meeting you, although he made several efforts to get hold of you while you were last in England. However, he knows all about you, of course."

This was very gratifying, and I found myself warming to Beverley Vaughn as he preceeded:

"Now, I am going to ask you to do me a very particular favor. I want you, if it is humanly possible, to put everything else aside, send for your bag, and come down to Fairoaks with me this afternoon to spend at least the night.

"I am aware that such an abrupt request must seem almost impudent, but if you knew how anxious Mrs. Vaughn and I are to have the question of the validity of the picture settled, you would forgive me.

"Mrs. Vaughn will be delighted to have the opportunity of making your acquaintance, and she is as badly cut up over the chance of the 'Velasquez' being a counterfeit as I am. As a matter of fact she made me promise not to come home without you."

"But," I protested, "I scarcely consider myself competent to pass upon the genuineness, or otherwise, of what must be at the very least a most wonderfully clever copy of Velasquez, since it has deceived the greatest judges in the world."

"My dear sir," asserted Vaughn, "I would rather have your opinion, after what I have seen of your writings and what people tell me, than that of any

critic in the United States or anywhere else.

"Who was it—some eminent artist—said to me the other day that your prescience in these matters was marvelous?"

It seems almost incredible, on thinking this conversation over in cold blood, that I should have been gulled by such crude flattery; but, fatuous fool that I was, I only reflected that my abilities were forcing me upon public attention more rapidly than I had previously suspected, and I swallowed the dose without a qualm.

After all, I thought, Fairoaks is one of the show places of Long Island and the Beverley Vaughns are people to know, and more than all else—I swear that this came first in my mind—I ought, as a critic, to be acquainted with the Beverley Vaughn pictures.

"I was waiting here for a friend," I said, after some hesitation. "However, he is not expecting me, and——"

"Will you do me the *great* favor to induce your friend to run down with us?" interrupted Beverley Vaughn eagerly. "Really, Mrs. Vaughn will be *so* pleased."

But we learned at the desk that my friend had left no word as to the time of his return, and I finally acceded to Vaughn's request, took a cab to my apartments, and packed a valise with the essentials for a stay overnight, though he begged me to remain for at least a week, if possible.

On our way out on the train the behavior of my companion caused me some surprise. In spite of the feverish concern about the painting he had evinced, he now talked about it and about art in general in the most perfunctory manner, with long intervals of silence.

I attributed his condition to the galling suspense he was probably laboring under, now that my verdict upon the "Velasquez" was so soon to be rendered; and finding that conversation seemed distasteful to him, I gave myself up to my own thoughts during most of the journey.

A handsomely appointed motor was waiting for us when we reached our destination, and a run of a couple of miles brought us to Fairoaks. It was only seven o'clock when we arrived, but my host positively refused to allow me to see the picture before dinner.

"I shall be better able to withstand the shock after dining, if you should find the painting not genuine," he said.

Vaughn came to my room before I had finished dressing and ordered in whisky and soda, to which he helped himself more than once.

It was not, however, until just as the ormolu clock on the mantel was striking eight and he suggested that we go down and meet Mrs. Vaughn, that my suspicions were aroused.

His manner as he rose and took my arm was exactly that of a man nerved to perform a desperate deed.

His face was pale, perspiration stood upon his forehead, and in his voice was a tremor that told of intense emotion.

As we moved toward the great central stairway on leaving the room, a lady came unexpectedly through a portière, glanced at us with cold composure, and went through another silken hanging across the hall.

Vaughn, his face the color of ashes, attempted to speak to her as she passed, although she had given him no sign of recognition. I saw his lips move, much like the jaws of an expiring fish, but no sound issued from them.

Then—horror of horrors!—he excused himself from me in the utmost confusion, and followed the lady into the room, which, from the brief glimpse I caught of the interior as he entered, was a daintily furnished boudoir.

A moment later there came through the curtains the tones of a high, cultured voice, enunciating with extreme clearness, obviously in response to an indistinct murmur from the man who had led me to believe that he was the master of the house, the words:

"I request you to leave my presence."

Then I heard my name mumbled in tones that seemed to me to be imploring, after which the voice replied as clearly as before:

"I have no desire to make his acquaintance. Oblige me by leaving the room instantly."

A solution of the riddle flashed upon me. The man who had called himself Beverley Vaughn was one of the gilded chevaliers d'industrie we read about,

who, probably having some design upon the Vaughn pictures, or perhaps the Vaughn jewels, had brought me to Fairoaks to play an unwitting part in his nefarious scheme.

Knowing Vaughn himself to be away from home, the rogue had probably sent a telegram in his name that had brought the Vaughn motor to the railway station, and the chauffeur had taken us to Fairoaks as a matter of course.

Equally as a matter of course the servants had assigned us rooms on our arrival.

I remembered that the man who had called himself Beverley Vaughn had given orders in the hall as if he were master there, but that was evidently part of the game, since no well-trained servant would have openly resented such conduct on the part of a supposed friend of the family.

These circumstances would account for the fact that the pretender had not yet been unmasked.

His nerve had, however, almost failed him when he met a member of the household—perhaps she was even the chatelaine—but he had had the impudence, nevertheless, to attempt to impose himself upon her as an acquaintance, and had brought my name into whatever story he was telling her to account for our presence in the house.

These thoughts darted through my mind in the merest fraction of a second. My first idea was to enter the room, denounce the adventurer, and explain how I innocently came to be in his unholy company.

My next thought was that it would never do for the name of Portman Smythe to be involved in the affair, since I must appear in it either as an accomplice or a dupe—and one horn of the dilemma would be as painful as the other.

I crept back to the room where I had just dressed for dinner; and, rapidly changing back into my traveling clothes, took my valise and managed to escape unperceived from the house and grounds.

I walked back to the railway station, carrying my baggage, though the road was up hill most of the way; and only stopping in the village long enough to telephone the police that they were wanted at Fairoaks—which, it seemed to me, relieved me of responsibility as to any criminal designs upon Beverley Vaughn's property—caught a train back to New York.

On the way to town I tried in vain to construct a theory by which the impostor could have fitted me into whatever plan he might have devised to loot Fairoaks.

It was a clever play to divert suspicion—appearing on the scene with an eminent critic of art; but I was puzzled to account for his evident intention to carry out the pretense with me, in Beverley Vaughn's house, that he was Beverley Vaughn.

Hot and cold by turns with shame, I began to understand how easily I had been duped. I remembered now that not once, in the hotel, on the train, in the house, had any one mentioned his name.

He had told me that he was Beverley Vaughn; and, in spite of the fact that I was all but positive that he was lying about a previous acquaintance with me, I had accepted him *as* Beverley Vaughn on his mere say-so, as one of the yearning yokels from the wondering West, whom we read about in connection with transactions in green goods, might have done.

So overwhelming were my emotions that even the mortification of having, with my own ears, heard a lady declare that she had no desire to make my acquaintance, scarcely made an impression upon me. (The report that the lady afterward said that she had never heard of me before is, of course, ridiculous.)

I found myself wondering what part the self-styled Beverley Vaughn had been playing in the hotel that morning. He certainly seemed to be very much at home in that exclusive hostelry, and the men who called upon him appeared to be gentlemen.

Then I remembered the eagerness with which he received his visitors, and the haste each man made to get away after he made known whatever his business was with them, and I cursed myself the deeper for being the only victim of his wiles.

Of course he had made overtures

under the name of Beverley Vaughn to all of them to get them down with him to Fairoaks, and all the others had recognized him as an impostor. It was his very boldness in daring to operate so publicly that had fooled me—and no one else.

But what was the fellow's game? He surely could not have invited all the men who called upon him in the morning to go down and pass upon the genuineness of an oil painting! I could devise no theory to fit the circumstances.

Before we reached Long Island City I decided that the best thing I could do to clear my skirts of anything like complicity in the plot against the Beverley Vaughns was immediately to inform Mrs. Thursby of the occurrences of the day, since it was through the mention of her name that I had been brought into the matter. From the ferry I drove to her house, where I found a bridge party in progress.

In spite of my dusty traveling garments, Mrs. Thursby made me come into the drawing-room and repeat my strange story to her guests after I had hurriedly related it to her in the hall, where I had insisted on seeing her.

Mrs. Thursby's guests that evening were members of New York's most exclusive social circle, but I say without hesitation that they were as underbred a lot of humans as ever I came in contact with.

I am further aware that a certain ruffian, Finlay Vandergraft-Jones by name, knows a great many nice people, and has been considered a gentleman; but when I have exposed his conduct on this occasion I shall not expect him to retain the title in polite society.

I was just concluding my narration of the encounter between the adventurer and the lady in the corridor at Fairoaks, my entire story having been listened to with breathless and respectful silence up to that point, when this Vandergraft-Jones suddenly sprang to his feet, slapped his thigh, and, with the vulgar ejaculation, "Oh, my aunt!" burst into a roar of boorish laughter, in which, after he had gasped out his explanation of the scene I had described, the entire room joined.

I was subsequently compelled to admit that Vandergraft-Jones had accurately solved the problem. It appeared that Beverley Vaughn, whose terror of his wife was the talk of fashionable New York, had ventured, without permission, to remain in town the previous night.

Not daring to go home and face the wrath of the lady alone that day, he had spent the morning in an endeavor to organize a house party to accompany him, for purposes of protection—which accounted for the visitors at the hotel. By reason of previous experiences, however, no one of his acquaintances would venture to go down to Fairoaks and brave the displeasure of its mistress.

"The beggar tried this morning to get me down there," said Vandergraft-Jones, coarsely, "but I had too vivid a recollection of my last visit in like circumstances, when I participated in the most frigidly ceremonious *diner à trois* I ever sat down to, though she sent the wine away—said we'd had enough already, which wasn't true, of course, though I'll admit we did take a bracer before we went in.

"After dinner she told Bev to go to his room, and politely requested me to go home. I was afraid she might send him to bed before dinner this time—and then where would I have been?"

The humiliating truth was that, in his desperation, Beverley Vaughn had invented the falsehood about the "Velasquez" (I afterward learned that there had never been the slightest doubt about its genuineness) as a pretext for inducing me to accompany him home.

It seemed that a "society reporter" who knew who I was, and was also aware of my acquaintance with Mrs. Thursby, and that I had attended the Patriarch's ball, had happened into the hotel that afternoon in search of news, and, meeting Beverley Vaughn, had casually told all that he knew about me to that conscienceless scoundrel, who had then proceeded to cozen me with his lying flatteries, as I have related.

I have received, since that fearful evening, several letters bearing the Fairoaks postmark and mounted with the Beverley Vaughn crest. They have been returned unread.

JENNIE'S BROTHER AND THE DOG-WASHER.

By Ralph T. Yates.

NECESSITY being the mother of invention, this story needs no further introduction.

DID you ever see a dog-churn? Pa made one once; and then, because we didn't have a cow and had to buy all the cream from the milkman, and the butter wasn't very good anyway, sort of soft and light colored, he went and turned it into a dog-washer. Not to wash dogs, you understand; but a washing-machine to run by one dog-power.

It was a real clever arrangement when it was done. There was a sort of wooden vat with a cylinder inside, and you put the clothes into the cylinder, and then filled the vat with soap-suds, and then hitched on the power, when you could find it.

Our dog, Bully, was the power, and he runs under the wood-shed yet, whenever he hears water sloshing.

The way he worked it was like this: Pa made a kind of a wooden wheel, like what is on a squirrel cage, and then he attached that to the crank on the cylinder in the washer; and then he'd put Bully in the wheel, and shut him in with a sort of a gate, and then make him run, and that turned the wheel and the crank and the cylinder. See?

It was awfully hard to teach that dog to run, and after he was taught he would lie down and go to sleep in the bottom of the wheel whenever there wasn't any one there to poke him up.

I'd just as lief turn the crank myself as to sit around and poke him up all the time, and I told Pa so. So then Pa got a new idea, and he went and hung a piece of meat just beyond Bully's reach, so that he could see it through the slats of the wheel.

That worked fine for about five minutes; you ought to have seen the old wheel spin; and then Bully suddenly got bored and sat down to think about it—that is, he tried to; but the wheel wasn't ready to stop, and say, you never saw a circus dog do the stunts that dog did without meaning to.

Honestly, you couldn't tell which was wheel and which was dog; and scared! say, you could have heard him ten blocks!

When finally the wheel stopped, we were afraid to let him out, his eyes rolled so and he looked so awfully in earnest whenever he caught sight of Pa.

We went off and left him for a while, and then Pa came back and tied a string to the wooden button that kept the gate of the wheel shut; and then he opened the wood-shed door (the washer was in the wood-shed) and then he stood on the ladder of the shed loft and pulled the string.

Bully came out, and he kept Pa treed on that ladder for three hours, and he only quit then because I drove Barker's crumpled horn cow into our yard, and he saw her.

The Barkers didn't like it very well; but I had to get Pa off somehow, because he hadn't had any dinner, and Ma didn't like the way he was talking.

But it was something else that I started to tell you about.

This all happened a long time before Sister Jennie got married, and that was more than a year ago.

Pa decided that he wouldn't make Bully run the machine any more; but he left it there in the wood-shed with a lot of other old truck; and then, by and by, when he got the engine in the cellar to run the coal elevator and things, he decided to make it run the washer too.

He took off the wooden wheel and made a connection with the other end of the cylinder, and it worked fine. Ma was awfully pleased, for it was the first thing that he had fixed up that was any account.

She used to put the clothes in it to soak on Sunday night, and then Monday morning Pa would put on the power, and the clothes were all washed by the time the breakfast dishes were done. Everybody thought it was dandy.

But the time we had the last mix-up with the washer was one Monday morning not so awfully long ago.

You see, Aunt Em had been visiting us and was going home on the early train; so Ma told Pa not to put on the power until she and Jennie and Jennie's baby got back from taking Aunt Em to the depot.

They thought I was going to the depot, too, to carry the grip; but when we'd gone just about a block Ma told me to go back home and get a handkerchief. She said she was surprised that I didn't have one. So I put the grip in the baby-carriage, and told them to walk along slow and I'd catch up.

When I got into the house I went and looked in the sideboard drawers and the writing-desk and the shoe-box, and then I found I had a handkerchief in my pocket all the time. It was in the other pocket.

When I looked at the clock I saw that it wasn't near train time, so I went and got some apples and some gooseberries, and then I started after the folks. The apples had taken some time, and when I turned the corner just a block from the depot, the train was pulling up to the platform.

I ran like blazes; but the train didn't go as quick as usual, and Aunt Em was waiting out on the platform of the car, and then I stubbed my toe, I stubbed it awfully, and had to hop on one foot for a ways, and while I was doing that and holding my toe, the train went, and Aunt Em didn't have a chance to kiss me and squeeze me and make faces to keep from crying because she was saying good-by.

Ma felt real sorry about it. She said Aunt Em was dreadfully disappointed and that I mightn't ever see her again because she was going to California for more than six weeks; but I'm sure I couldn't help it if I didn't know I had a handkerchief, and stubbed my toe.

Well, when we started for home they made me wheel the baby-carriage.

I told Ma I had to go and get a patch put on my shoe; but Jen said my shoe wouldn't spoil, if I waited fifteen minutes; and then Mrs. Dakin came out on her stoop and called them to come in and see her new afghan that she'd just finished.

The kid was getting uneasy and beginning to fuss, so they told me to take it home and get the bottle of milk that they'd forgot to take and left on the kitchen table, and they'd be home after a while.

I didn't say much only to ask what was the use of school letting out so as to give a fellow a vacation; and then I gave the carriage a shove and followed it up and went on home.

By the time I got there the kid was yelling, so I took it out of the carriage and got the bottle and went and sat on the step that leads from the kitchen into the wood-shed.

While I was sitting there holding him, I happened to notice that I'd left the dog wheel on the washer. Joe Baines had been over to see me Saturday, and I'd put the wheel on just to show him how it worked.

I knew Pa would be mad if he saw it on again, so I laid the kid on the floor while I went to take it off; but he went to yelling right away, so I had to get him and take him along.

There wasn't any place to put him in the wood-shed, until I happened to notice what a fine cradle the wheel would make. I laid him in it and loosened the bearings so that it would swing clear, and went to rocking him.

He thought it was great, even if it did rock the wrong way, that is, he was lying so that first his head would go away down and his feet up, and then his feet would go way down until he was 'most standing up straight; but he didn't mind it at all—just crowed and gurgled for all that was out.

By and by I took my necktie and tied him to one of the slats so he couldn't slip, and say, he had more nerve than any kid you ever saw.

Why, I could make him pretty near stand on his head, and he didn't do a thing but holler and crow!

However, it didn't seem to agree with him very well, so after a while I tight-

ened up the bearings so that the wheel wouldn't joggle, and gave him his bottle, and pretty soon he went off to sleep.

I thought it was about time for Ma and Jen to be coming home, so I shut and buttoned the gate to the wheel and went to the wood-shed door to look.

Sure enough, there they were, about half a block down the street, talking to Mrs. Palmer over the gate, and she was picking some of her pink altheas for them. They looked as if they were just coming right along, so I thought I'd better go and get that patch put on my shoe.

You see, when you're at home there's such a lot of things folks want you to do; but if you ain't there, they can't tell you about it, and you ain't to blame for not doing what you didn't know anybody wanted you to.

I started to skip in and get the kid and put it on the lounge, and take off the wheel and get away before they got to the house; but just as I turned I heard a carriage stop and I looked and there was Pa getting out of Jim Thompson's runabout, right in front of the gate.

There wasn't a minute to lose, for I knew that Pa had the radish bed on his mind, and I thought I'd better hurry about that patch on my shoe.

Just then the kid began to cry, and I knew Pa would find him and look after him until Ma and Jen came, so I lit out through the back gate into the alley. That's the nearest way to the shoe-shop.

When I got into the alley I ran right up against Joe Baines and Sam and Bert Collins. They all had fruit baskets, and were just coming after me to go for May-apples with them.

May-apples are fine. You get them before they are ripe and put them in a box full of sawdust, and in a week or so they are just elegant.

I thought I might as well go along, and get the patch done the next day, because the May-apple season ain't very long and Ma's awful fond of them. Joe had a big basket and he said I could put mine in one end of that, so I wouldn't have to go back after one, and keep them waiting.

Well, sir, just as we came out of the alley on to Wooster Street, if there didn't come Jim Thompson's runabout again, and him and Pa in it! I tried to dodge back into the alley, but he'd seen me and he made Jim draw up.

"Where are you going?" says Pa.

Bert Collins has always such a big mouth! - "After May-apples," says he.

"I'm going to get that patch put on my shoe," says I, changing my mind real quick.

"No, you ain't," says Pa. "You're going home to weed that radish bed."

"But look at my shoe!" says I. "You told me to have that done a week ago, before it got any worse."

"That's what I did!" says Pa, "and it ain't done yet. Gimme that shoe. You can walk home through the alley bare-footed. It won't hurt you, and I'll leave the shoe at the shop as we drive by."

I gave him the shoe, and they drove off. The boys were awfully sorry I couldn't go, and promised to bring me a fourth of all they got, and then I started back home.

It was too much bother to take off the other shoe, so I hopped on one foot down the alley, holding on to the fence when I had to; and I wasn't feeling very good, either. You ought not to weed things in the heat of the day, anyway. It spoils them and makes them wilt.

By and by I got to our back gate, and just as I reached it to unfasten it, I heard an awfully funny noise.

It sounded something like a cat squalling, only it came in kind of gusts—"Wa-yo-ow, wa-yo-ow!" just as if the cat was being squeezed, off and on. I could hear it above the chug-chug of the engine in the basement.

I opened the gate and there was Ma and Jen just coming up the front walk. My heart gave a jump. Where on earth was the kid?

I made about five jumps to the wood-shed door and I got there at the same moment that Ma and Jen appeared at the door that led into the kitchen.

Gee, it was awful!

There was that wheel whizzing around until you couldn't see the slats, and in it was the kid, doing a loop the loop with every whiz—and yelling! why, say, it would have made your hair stand on end!

You see, it was going so fast that every time it would open its mouth it had to try twice to get a yell out; so it kept going "Wa—yo—ow, wa—yo—ow!"—coming down hard on the last syllable every time.

You wouldn't think that a small kid could make such a lot of noise; but, Lord, it was nothing to Jen! When she managed to grasp what the situation was—well, sir, the kid stopped yelling for more than a minute. He didn't have no chance against her.

She made a dive at the wheel, but I grabbed her.

"Let it alone," says I; "it'll smash you."

"Davie, Davie!" yelled Jen; and then the kid started in again.

"Say," says I, "he's all right or he couldn't holler that way. We've got to stop the engine, that's all," says I.

"Well, stop it, then! Why don't you stop it?" howled Jen. "He's dying! I know he's dying! Why don't you stop it?"

Of course it was up to me then, but I was out of the running. Pa had never let me touch the engine, and I didn't know any more about it than a Gatling gun.

"Go on—stop it!" says Ma, holding her hands as if she had butter on them.

"I can't stop it," says I. "I don't know anything about it."

Jen let off another shriek.

"Where's Pa? Call Pa!" she yelled.

"Pa's gone over to Fultonburg with Jim Thompson," says I. "He said he'd be back to dinner."

Ma just sort of groaned, and right then Bob Simmons and Mrs. Simmons and the Barkers and Nell came racing in from all directions to find out what sort of a menagerie we were having.

Then it was worse than ever! You ought to have heard those women go on!

Old Mr. Barker, he grabbed up a poker, and was going to try to wedge it in between the slats of the wheel; but his wife nabbed him and called him six kinds of an idiot and asked him what he wanted to murder a little innocent baby for, and Jen howled louder, and then Mr. Blake came running and stuck his head in the door.

"What's broke loose?" says he.

Everybody tried to tell him all at once.

"You set of freaks!" he shouted. "Why don't you stop the engine?"—and he made a dash for the cellar door. Down the stairs he went, three at a jump. Ma held Jen up, and Jen kept wringing her hands and sobbing:

"Oh, my baby! my poor baby!"

I felt awfully small, because in a way it was sort of my fault; but, gee! how could I help it? I didn't know Pa was going into the cellar by the outside door and start the old engine without looking to see if the wheel was on, or if the kid was in it.

We thought of course the thing would stop right off when Mr. Blake went down cellar, but we waited and waited, and it didn't even slow down, and by and by he came back up, his face and hands all black, and his hat stove in.

"Where's the idiot that set that engine?" he shouted. "It's the blamedest thing I ever saw. 'Tain't like anything else this side of the other place! I can't find any way to shut her off! Where's you Pa?" says he, grabbing my ear.

"Fultonburg!" I gasped.

He needn't have grabbed me. 'Twasn't my fault 'cause Pa'd gone to Fultonburg. I didn't send him.

Mr. Blake sort of gnashed his teeth.

Jen was getting kind of loony. The kid kept on yelling; but she was moaning and wringing her hands. "He's dead—oh, I know he's dead!" she wailed, and all of the rest of the women were weeping and wringing their hands the same way.

"I'll go down to the machine-shops for a man," says Mr. Blake suddenly, and he made a dash for the door, and ran square into Dave Goss—that's Jen's husband. Bob Simmons had been after him.

Jen gave a yell and made for Dave, and I shinned up the ladder to the loft and peeked through a knot-hole the rest of the time.

When Dave grasped what was up, for just one second he grinned. Dave's got an awfully keen sense of humor; but he shut it off so sudden that nobody but me saw it.

"I'll get him out," says he, patting Jen on the shoulder, and he pushed through

the crowd to the wheel as if it was the easiest thing ever.

Then he just stood there and sort of licked his lips. Why, you wouldn't have any idea how that wheel was going—you couldn't hardly see it at all, it whizzed so. Everybody had been making fool suggestions for ten minutes, and now they all stood back to see what Dave would do.

"Gosh!" said he, and then he went down cellar.

Everybody waited, but the thing didn't stop, and Jen began to get worse. She went to the cellar door and hollered down:

"Stop it, Dave—I say stop it! Don't you ever come up here again until you've made it stop! Do you hear me, Dave Goss?"

But the machine didn't stop, and Dave did come up, and he looked enough sight worse than Mr. Blake did, and mad!

Well, just as he got to the cellar door there appeared suddenly at the outside door—Pa! and behind him came Mr. Blake and the machine-shop man.

Pa just stood in the door and stared at the crowd.

"What in the name——" he began, and then all at once he noticed the kid's howls, which had got sort of hoarse and squawky. "What you got in there?" he demanded, pointing at the wheel.

"Your—your grandson!" wailed Jen.

"The deuce! What you doing it for?" says Pa, glaring at her.

"Oo—oh, we can't get him out! It's going too fast," screeched Mrs. Barker.

"Well, of all—— Why don't you shut off the engine?" yelled Pa, making for the cellar door. "What d'you go and put him in there for, anyway?"

There didn't anybody answer him, and in a minute the machine began to slow down.

Old Mr. Barker tried to grab the wheel when it wasn't going so fast, and got yanked half across the wood-shed and upset Mrs. Simmons and some other things, and by and by the wheel stopped and Dave unbuttoned the gate; and, say, that kid didn't do a thing but grin at him and crow for all that was out.

They got him untied and took him out and gave him to Jen, and she sat on the floor and cried harder than ever, and all the rest of the women cried, and old Mr. Barker couldn't find his handkerchief.

Pretty quick Pa came up-stairs and looked around contemptuous-like.

"What's the matter with you folks, anyway?" says he. "Why didn't you shut off that engine?"

Mr. Blake he steps up as if he was going to punch some one.

"What's the sense of having a fool engine like that?" says he. "No one that wasn't a blamed lunatic would know how to manage a crazy contrivance that hasn't got no shut-off."

"Say," says Pa, walking up close to him, "couldn't you see that it was a gas engine? If you didn't have gumption enough to stop it any other way, couldn't you turn off the gas?"

"Turn off the gas!" yelled Mr. Blake. "How could I turn off the gas when I couldn't find the place where it was turned on? Hey? How could I?"

Pa turned away with a disgusted look and his chin in the air.

"Well, s'pose you couldn't," says he, "wasn't the gas-meter there right before your eyes? I s'pose you couldn't grasp the combination enough to turn off the gas at the meter, eh?"

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Blake.

THE MEASURE OF LIFE.

By James Buckham.

TEN years a gracious heaven gives
To make man conscious that he lives.

Then twenty years of ardor sweet,
And hopes that dance with winged feet.

Another score to strive and weep,
And bind youth's dreams with gyves of sleep.

And last the harvest twenty come,
Reap, bind, and take the pathway home.

CERBERUS INTRODUCES.

By. Sheppard Stevens.

AN American girl story in which a British background completes a very pretty picture.

SHE stood on one of the lower steps of the stile, looking over into the well kept park beyond, with something of the expression which the Peri must have worn before the closed gates of Paradise.

Hesitatingly she rose, step by step, until her next forward movement must be a descending one which would carry her over the forbidden line. Here she paused, surveying the lovely view spread before her, fastening her longing gaze on the gray and partly vine-draped walls of Keswick Manor, of which, from this spot one obtained an entrancing view through a carefully prepared vista.

Her delicately dainty face showed at this moment an expression equally compounded of mischievous daring and hesitating fear. The impulse to dare was uppermost after a minute-long struggle, and a very small foot, in a distinctly American shoe, was tentatively descending from beneath her skirt, when around a bend in the pathway bounded a brindled bull terrier, who dropped on his haunches at the foot of the stile and began barking vociferously.

He had all the marks of breeding necessary to endear him to a dog fancier, and to make him hideous in the eyes of the uninitiated: a screw tail, an undershot jaw and threatening fangs, and a pair of forelegs that bowed outward in such fashion as strongly to suggest a Chippendale chair.

The girl eyed him with distinct disfavor.

"Stop barking this instant, Cerberus," she commanded, emphasizing her words with a stamp of her foot. "You English are miserably inhospitable, from dogs up to men. Last evening when I presented myself at your park gate, shilling in hand, as humble as any tourist, I was curtly informed that his lordship was 'in residence,' and that visitors were not admitted.

"Think of that; as if I were an ordinary cockney tripper, down from London on a Bank Holiday."

The dog, as if impressed by this long speech, so gravely addressed to him, had ceased to bark, and merely kept a cautious red eye on the strange creature above. Mistaking this cessation of open hostilities for a sign of peace, the girl once more attempted to descend the steps. In an instant her enemy was on foot, sounding his warning anew.

Stooping, she picked up two or three small pebbles, scattered on the top of the stile, and launched one with such unfeminine skill, that it struck her adversary directly in the nose.

It was too small to hurt him, but it angered him fiercely. A ridge of hair arose on his back, and his warning "whoof, whoof," was instantly changed to a snarling bark, which boded the young woman ill if she persisted in her original design of descending into his domain.

Childishly irritated at his nasty reception of her, two more pebbles followed in quick succession, so well aimed that each told, stinging the dog's tough hide just enough to enrage him further. Scarcely had the last one left her hand when a man's voice inquired, none too gently:

"Here, what are you doing to the dog?"

Utterly taken aback, the girl collapsed on the top step of the stile, and for an instant it seemed that she had nothing to say for herself—a most unusual state of things for her, did he but know it.

Gathering her scattered wits she met the eyes of the newcomer with a small defiance, which caused him to think of a naughty child.

"It isn't what I'm doing to the dog, it is what he is doing to me—or rather was—for I see that your presence has calmed him. He *was* barking at me in a most disagreeable fashion."

"But you were throwing pebbles at him. Of course he would bark under those circumstances."

"He began it—and I threw the pebbles *because* he barked." Both manner and words were absurdly suggestive of a squabbling youngster.

"I suppose it is superfluous to point out that he, at least, was on his own territory," the man remarked somewhat caustically.

"Which is to suggest, obliquely, that I am not. Well, you are mistaken." She ostentatiously drew in her skirts, which had spread about her in her sudden downsitting, and ran her finger along a crack that evenly divided the top of the stile.

"That is the line, I believe, where the sacred domain of Keswick begins, and you may observe that I am on the far side of it, dress and all. Even the common herd, I think, are permitted the use of the highways, no doubt by the gracious permission of the Duke of Keswick, who allows them to live, breathe, and walk the common roads—if they give him no further trouble."

"Whew! you have got it in for the duke. What has he done?"

It was not until this instant that the girl fairly took stock of the man before her, or attempted to reach any conclusion as to his social status.

He was rather stocky and something above medium height. His features were strong rather than perfect, and his clean-shaven face showed a firm-lipped, well-cut mouth and a good chin. He was not handsome, but possessed a certain manly comeliness pleasant to look upon.

He was dressed in riding breeches and leggings far from immaculate, and her quick eye took account of the fact that his coat was loose, old, and sagged comfortably to the lines of its wearer's figure. A not very respectable cap completed a toilet far from elegant, and an old briar pipe added nothing to his appearance.

Her summing up was instantaneous, and held no element of uncertainty in it. The result caused her to answer his question with a marked reserve which had been absent in the first heat of the discussion over the dog.

"His chief fault is that he is at present 'in residence,'" she answered coldly, rising and shaking out her skirts preparatory to departure.

"Oh, I understand; you are a tourist and wanted to see the Manor."

This time the flush which rose to the girl's face was distinctly angry.

"I'm not; at least, I'm not just a sightseeing, globe-trotter sort. You'll suggest that I am a 'Cooky' next," she retorted, indignant at being placed in the hated category.

"My interest in the place is very personal. Although I am an American, five generations ago my ancestors inhabited Keswick Manor, and the portraits of my forebears are all in the picture gallery here.

"Naturally, I want to see them, and naturally, it is rather humiliating when one is actually a member of the family, though a distant one, that one should be barred out with the Bank Holiday trippers," she concluded haughtily.

"But if you wrote a note to the duke and explained this, I am sure he would be glad to grant so slight a request," the man was beginning warmly, when he was interrupted with cutting scorn.

"*Never*. He would think that we were setting up some claim to kinship, and on the strength of it, if recognized, would demand something of him. He would not understand. These English never do."

A somewhat amused smile flitted over the man's face, and he was about to speak when the girl broke out impulsively:

"You are one of the grooms on the place, are'n't you?"

For an instant her companion seemed to hesitate, then with—it appeared to her—a wholly unnecessary smile, he faltered: "I—yes—I have just now come from the stables."

Forgetful of the dog's late hostility, the girl swooped suddenly over the stile, pausing persuasively before the man, with pink palm extended under his nose as if he were near-sighted.

"Listen to me," she began, her eyes eager, her cheeks glowing with sudden color. "It is early, oh, so early; it can't be more than seven o'clock. Of course the duke is in bed and will be there for *hours*. Couldn't you, *couldn't* you take me by a side door, or any way, just to the picture gallery?

"I should not be so dreadfully disappointed at not seeing the house, if I could only see the picture gallery. If you only do it, you shall have this." The this referred to was a gleaming sovereign, held out on the before-mentioned pink palm.

Her girlish enthusiasm appeared to have awakened a gleam of interest in him, though he made no motion to accept her gold piece, nor did he seem at all dazzled by it. He smiled into her eyes, however, as he asked:

"Why are you so sure that the duke is such a lazy beggar? You seem to have no end of ideas concerning him."

"Of course he is still abed. This is no hour for a *duke* to be abroad. The next thing, you will be trying to make me believe that he does not wear his strawberry leaf coronet and pretty fur-trimmed robes every day—now don't tell me that I am mistaken, I refuse to listen; to have another darling illusion spoiled."

Being a slow young man, he weighed this announcement an instant before deciding that she jested. At last his smile deepened into a broad, amused grin.

"There isn't any side door to the picture gallery, but I happen to be pretty certain of his lordship's movements this morning, and there isn't the slightest fear of encountering him. If you care so much to see the pictures, I will take you there."

"Oh, will you, will you?" She was like an eager child. "Then come at once before that old duke wakes and spoils our plan;" and almost before he knew what he was doing; he was following rather than leading the way for those small, impatient feet that tripped along the path so lightly.

The bull terrier, after a moment or two of hesitation and a look toward his master to see if all was satisfactory, finally trotted up to her, and, having given a few tentative sniffs, decided that in spite of her unbecoming conduct in the early part of their acquaintance, she was not a person to be disapproved of.

His tail began to wave back and forth in friendly fashion, and the girl, seeing it, stopped a second to pat his head and so accept the extended olive branch.

When after a brisk walk they reached the entrance of Keswick Manor, it was to find the broad door wide open to the early morning sun, and the hallway beyond entirely deserted.

As they entered the girl paused, emitting an involuntary sound of pleasure which caused her companion to turn toward her.

She stood, mouth smiling and eyes lighted with admiration, gazing around the great, broad, wainscoted hallway, so full of the suggestion of other days, from the enormous and beautifully wrought parget mantel, to the gorgeously blazoned Keswick arms, supported by two stags, and occupying the far end of the hall, at one side of which an exceedingly broad stairway with magnificently carved balustrade began its leisurely ascent to the floor above.

Absorbed in contemplating her surroundings, she was unaware that she was offering as fair a view to the man beside her.

"Do you like it?" he asked sympathetically, after a moment in which neither of them spoke.

"Like it! It is perfect. I am so glad that he did not spoil it with his renovations," she breathed thankfully; then, as if suddenly reminded of her ambiguous position, she exclaimed: "But we cannot stop here, some one might come, and I must see the pictures."

They crossed the hall and were not far from the foot of the stair, when, with a sudden gasp of nervousness, she grasped his arm, pinching it tightly.

"I hear footsteps. Some one *is* coming. Oh, what shall we do?" in a tragic whisper.

For an instant he failed to grasp the reason for her fright, and when he did it did not seem to move him to anything save amusement. There was a look of boyish mischief in his eyes as he touched a spring in the panel of the wainscoting, which instantly slid back, revealing a dark closet or passage beyond.

"In here quick," he whispered, and with scarcely a moment of hesitation she sought the offered refuge, and saw him follow. The panel slid noiselessly back into place, leaving them in total darkness, while Cerberus, who had not been allowed to enter, stood outside, his nose pressed against the woodwork, taking long and exhaustive sniffs of the spot which a minute before, he could have taken his doggy oath was an open doorway.

Nearer and nearer came the footsteps, rapidly descending the stair, until they paused just beside the hiding place. In her terror she was utterly unaware that she was gripping her companion's arm, and by the increased tension of her muscles was telegraphing to him every varition of her fright.

"Don't be alarmed," he breathed softly, anxious to reassure her.

"Is it your master?" she questioned in return.

"Em—yes, I think it is." The darkness hid the whimsical smile on his face.

Outside there sounded a smart cuff, which evidently landed on the dog, and an unpleasant voice said:

"What are you up to, you brute, nosing around the woodwork? Come out of that;" then the sound of retreating footsteps of both dog and man.

After a moment longer of continued darkness, the man slid the panel so as to let in a thin streak of light. Everything seemed quiet; yet the girl still kept to her cautious tone in speaking.

"What a disagreeable voice he has. I knew I should not like him—and he struck Cerberus."

"Cerberus? What makes you call the dog Cerberus? That isn't his name."

"Well, it ought to be," she announced calmly. "Anybody has but to look at that dog and *know* that he should be named Cerberus."

This answer should have warned him that he was facing feminine logic.

"I see no appropriateness in the name; not the slightest. To begin with, Cerberus had three heads, and——"

She did not wait for him to finish.

"Yes; but all three of Cerberus' heads were not more ugly than this dog's one, so that doesn't count."

"Ugly!" His tone was fairly boiling with indignation. "He is a perfect specimen, and has already won two blue ribbons."

"That does not make the slightest difference; he is one of the ugliest dogs I have ever seen. However, that is no excuse for his lordship's striking him."

"A little while ago you would scarcely have been taken for the dog's champion yourself," he reminded her grimly, feeling the hopelessness of argument as to the animal's points.

"That was a little while ago," she answered, unruffled by his tone. "Then, Cerberus barked at me, and I did not like him; now he wags his tail, and I am friends with him. That is the way of the world—dog-world or man-world. I am only as other people."

"Shall we venture forth? I think the coast is clear."

"Are you sure?"—nervously.

"Quite. I saw him go outside. Come, we will make a run for it this time, and be there in an instant," he reassured her when he saw that she hesitated.

The panel was open to its limit, and they emerged into the full light, blinking a bit after the gloom.

"Now, up the stairs and straight in front of you," he directed, and with a laughing scurry the girl ran up the shallow steps, followed more sedately and with little less rapidity by her companion.

Once inside the magnificent gallery, which extended across the whole front of the building, she could not restrain a few "ohs" and "ahs" of admiration at the display of masterpieces hung against a wall covered with priceless tapestry.

But she was quick to come to the chief matter in hand, for she more than ever feared interruption, and the unpleasantness of her position should some member of the household chance to turn up was momentarily forcing itself upon her.

"Now show me the portraits. Begin at the beginning, if you know them," she commanded briskly.

"Why—the present duke hasn't been painted. His portrait isn't here," he hesitated.

"Bother the present duke. I haven't the slightest interest in that very com-

monplace person. I mean begin really at the beginning, and I don't care to see anything later than five generations back; my own ancestors, in fact. When they ceased being that, they ceased to have any *raison d'être,* so far as I am concerned. Now who is this very ugly person, for instance?"

And then they did begin at the beginning, her companion showing, for a mere groom of the stables, a strange, and minute knowledge of the family history. After a little the girl remarked this fact.

"There is nothing strange in that," he defended smilingly. "You see I was born on the place."

She gave him a quick, curious look, and the thought occurred to her for the first time that he did not seem in the least like a servant; but just at this instant her mind was so engrossed with other matters that the vague suspicion slipped from her and was forgotten almost instantly.

At last her inspection brought her to a standstill before a large, life-size portrait of a very beautiful woman, whose flashing eyes and high-mettled look caught the attention instantly.

She was clad in a white gown and wore a broad black hat with a sweeping plume. Her hand rested on the head of a slim greyhound, and her eyes challenged you to say that she was not the fairest lady of her day.

The girl, deeply absorbed in contemplation of this picture, did not notice that her companion had drawn near and was equally absorbed in looking at her. At last he broke out:

"Upon my soul, it is a most remarkable resemblance. You are enough like her to be her daughter instead of five generations removed."

The girl turned, the slow red burning in her cheeks.

"Do you notice it, too? I thought I was like her, but—it seemed such a conceited fancy that I was trying not to utter it."

The likeness was decidedly striking, and was more strongly accentuated by the fact that the living woman also wore a white gown of some simple wash material, and a large black hat, not unlike the hat in the picture.

After a moment of leisurely survey, during which his admiration was plainly visible on his very frank face, the man smiled slowly.

"That is my—— That is Lady Kathrine Somers, fifth duchess of Keswick. She was a woman of rare fascination, but, as one might judge from her face, a person of some temper. They called her Kathrine the Shrew, but since her husband is said to have adored her, and to have died of a broken heart six months after she was killed in the hunting field, I doubt if 'they' did not do her ladyhsip an injustice."

"So even her name and mine are the same," mused the girl wonderingly. "My name is Kathrine also."

"Yes? And your family name, what is that?"

"The same as the duke's, as hers—Somers. It really seems a marvelous coincidence that I should look like her, and bear her name also, does it not?"

"Maybe you are a reincarnation of Kathrine the Shrew, though I must add you do not look the sobriquet."

She made a faint little grimace.

"Well, I do not pose as a patient Griselda," she admitted frankly.

A few minutes later the heavy boom of a near-by clock startled her into a recognition of the passage of time. She insisted upon going, though she went with evident reluctance.

When they were safely in the park and on the shortest way to the stile, she fell suddenly silent. Her mind was busy with the thought of how much, if any, of the morning's adventure she should confess to Alicia.

Just before darting over the stile into the highway she paused long enough to thank the man who had so patiently befriended her, and before he was aware of her intention she had thrust a gold piece into his hand, and was off.

"Here, come back, I don't want this," he called after her, holding out the money.

But she did not pause, and only looked back to send him a friendly, reassuring nod.

He looked whimsically down at the sovereign in his open palm.

"Well, I suppose that is the first money that I could ever be said to have

earned, and it was not by such very hard work either." And whistling to the dog who had joined him when he came out of the manor, he turned his steps back to Keswick and breakfast.

The girl, speeding along the highway, soon came in sight of Keswick Inn, which stands almost directly opposite one of the gates of Keswick Park. As to age, the inn much antedates the present manor house, having been built during the existence of the first Keswick Manor, which, as a picturesque vine-clad ruin, now adorns the park, standing not far from the Tudor mansion which succeeded it.

The inn is a rambling, many gabled structure, built of stone—though you would guess rather than know it to be stone, for to its very eaves it is vine-draped, with scarcely a break in the dense foliage to betray the structure beneath.

The girl did not pause until she had run up-stairs and opened a door into a private sitting-room. Here, beside a small breakfast-table, sat a gray-haired, fat, and placid woman, evidently waiting, yet with not the slightest sign of impatience ruffling her pleasant pink countenance.

One glance at her decided the question revolving in the brain of the newcomer: Alicia must know nothing of the morning. It was no fault of hers that Alicia was incapable of understanding; that she made this disagreeable concealment necessary.

The truth is, that the more the morning's adventure fell into the perspective of the past, the less the girl liked the look of it herself, and she was now wondering how she had ever been led into it, and why she had talked and acted with such easy familiarity to a groom.

Yet with a fierce throb of joy at having carried her point and seen the pictures, she decided that, if it was to do over again, she would do it, only she would be more circumspect, less expansive in her manner, than she had been.

"Kitty, where have you been at this ungodly hour of the morning?"

"Alicia, how could you lie abed and snore, with such a day and such a world around you?" Kitty attacked instead of parrying.

"I do not snore, Kitty, and I wish——"

"Now, Alicia, I won't enter into that oft discussed and painful subject; in fact I refuse to quarrel," returned the girl airily. Poor Alicia never failed to rise to this fly, no matter how often her tormenting young cousin dangled it before her vision.

"Alicia, I have fallen in love with this place; everything about it. This is the most perfect of inns, with the most perfect country surrounding it. Just look at this dear old tangle of a rose garden." She had gone to one of the latticed windows, and was kneeling on a chintz covered window seat, leaning out into the sunshine, gloating over the flowery confusion beneath her.

"Everything about the place is harmonious, even Mrs. Pencoddy. Actually"—she withdrew the half of her person which had been hanging out of the window, and faced her relative—"actually, if I had been called upon at a moment's notice to create a landlady to match Keswick Inn, I should have made round, rosy, aitchless Pencoddy.

"I could not possibly have done better myself, and when she was complete and I was ready to bestow a name upon her, my lips would have framed the word, Pencoddy, without the slightest volition—because she *is* Pencoddy," she concluded, as one who has said the last word on a subject.

"Dear, dear, it is nice to have you so absolutely suited. I suppose Mrs. Pencoddy and the Almighty can divide your complimentary approval between them," remarked Alicia dryly.

"Suppose, if you can consider such mundane matters, that you come to your breakfast. Your eggs and bacon are cooling to an indigestible and unpleasant mass."

Without demur, Kathrine slipped into her seat, but not to eat, merely to trifle with her breakfast. The excitement of her morning, and worse yet, the necessity of not speaking of it, was very trying to her, used as she was to babble all that she knew and did with the freedom of a small child.

"While you have been trapesing the

countryside, I have been talking to Mrs. Pencoddy and making arrangements for such sightseeing as we care to do. Incidentally, I mentioned our particular interest in Keswick," here Alicia blushed, "and she tells me that she is positive that we need not go away disappointed. She says the duke is—I use her own words—'a most haffable young man,' and that a line or two of explanation will be all that is necessary to gain us permission to see the house."

Kitty broke in hotly:

"*Never,* Alicia, if we go without seeing those portraits until the day of doom," here conscience gave Miss Kitty a sharp prod. "I shall never consent to your making any family claim on that young man. You don't know these English; they *never* understand, and they can be very nasty at times."

"I think it is very disappointing to have come all this way just for that purpose, and then not succeed" (another and bigger prod from conscience), "and I think you are letting foolish notions prevent, but I know if you have set your mind that way I might as well give it up and say no more," concluded the older woman, who had been ruled by Kitty so long that she had ceased to rebel.

The girl kept her eyes fixed on her plate. Conscience now did more than prod; it said many and uncomplimentary things, and if Alicia had but held silence a moment longer, it would have forced Miss Kitty to capitulate, for she had a keen sense of justice in spite of her wilfulness.

But at the critical moment, Alicia began to explain arrangements for the day, and Kitty pushed clamoring conscience from her until a more convenient time.

"Mrs. Pencoddy has agreed to let us hire the pony chaise and a very gentle animal which she drives herself, and this morning we are going over to Little Widcomb, where there is a small but very interesting church; besides which, it is market day in Little Widcomb. The country around is lovely and I think it will prove a profitable morning," concluded Alicia warmly.

"It will be far better, Alicia, it will be a pleasant one," agreed Kitty, glad to fall in with any plan which her cousin advanced.

When at last the fat and lazy little pony came back to the inn door, bringing two very weary women, it was nearly two o'clock.

"Alicia," remarked Kitty severely, "I should refuse positively to pay for that beast. *We* should be paid, and a good price, for having *pushed* him all the way to Little Widcomb and back.

"I for one feel that I have worked my passage, and I only wish this inn was run on the American plan; then I should be able to balance accounts with the Pencoddy by means of my appetite."

When they reached the little sitting-room above—having left an order on the way up for a prompt and hearty luncheon—they discovered on the table a box of roses and a card.

"Read it, dear; I can't see without my glasses, though I cannot imagine who would be sending us flowers in this out-of-the-way part of the world."

"It's—it's—they're from the Duke of Keswick," stammered Kitty in amazement.

Before Alicia could do more than exclaim, "The Duke of Keswick!" Mrs. Pencoddy bustled in, all importance.

"Yes, miss, I see you've found the flowers. No, miss, the card did not come with them; 'is lordship called in person, miss, an' left the card, and was most disappointed, miss, at not seein' you, 'e 'avin' 'eard that you was related to 'im, so to speak. 'E was most haffable, and said 'e would call again, an after 'e left, the groom, miss, brought the roses."

It was not until Mrs. Pencoddy had exhausted her interesting budget and left the room to hurry luncheon that Alicia remarked in a wondering tone:

"But how—how did he know of the relationship? That is what mystifies me."

"It doesn't seem such an unsolvable mystery, Alicia, when one recalls how you have burbled of the fact to the Pencoddy. You can see for yourself that information trickles through that porous medium, as water through a seive."

Oh, Kitty, Kitty, how you should have blushed! Instead, it was poor Alicia who grew pink and apologetic.

"Oh, I hope not, Kitty. It would be so mortifying to have a thing like that reach him by way of the servants' hall." Kitty flinched, but said nothing. She was fast becoming a hardened sinner.

Luncheon was well under way, and Kitty's appetite was justifying the threat which she had uttered when she alighted from her journey to Little Widcomb, when again Mrs. Pencoddy fussily entered the room, with a mere ghost of a rap to precede her.

"I thought, miss, that you'd be interested to be'old 'is lordship, seein' as 'e is related, and so, miss, I took the liberty of runnin' in to say that 'e is just now drivin' out of the park gate, miss."

Mrs. Pencoddy had the satisfaction of seeing that her news was considered important, for both women—I had almost said dashed to the window, but Alicia could never justify the word by any of her movements.

Kitty did dash, however, in time to see a light dog-cart containing three occupants, two men in front, and her acquaintance of the early morning, Cerberus, surveying the world from the rear.

One of the men, the one driving, was also an acquaintance, the groom—yet—no—Kitty's heart gave an uncomfortably sudden lunge.

"The man on the far side is the duke." She made the announcement as if she would force it to be the truth.

"Oh, no, miss, your pardon, miss, you can see by 'is livery, miss, that 'e is the groom," reproved the Pencoddy, shocked that nobility and the servants' hall should thus be confused. "'Is lordship is drivin', miss."

Kitty uttered a low cry of dismay; then a frown such as Kathrine the Shrew might have worn darkened the sunlight of her face.

So he was no groom but the duke himself. She felt now that she had been stupid not to know it. He had played an abominable trick, an unpardonable trick.

Every incident of the morning flashed before her angry vision, and she was whirled into a sudden helpless rage which longed to vent itself on some one, preferably the offender. If he had been there at that moment, he might with some truth have suggested that she was a reincarnation of her famous ancestress.

Somehow she managed to keep from boiling over, through fear of Alicia's knowing that which she was now determined she would never confess. The only evidence of her temper flashed out after Mrs. Pencoddy had disappeared. She flounced into her chair, remarking acridly:

"If the Pencoddy missed us less, Alicia, I believe we might miss her more in her brief absences from the room."

"So there *is* one point in which you would have altered the Pencoddy, if she had been your own creation?" but Kathrine did not vouchsafe to notice the gibe.

The meal over, Alicia announced the vital necessity of a nap, which had been forcing itself upon her recognition for a half hour past. Left to herself, Kitty took her hat and wandered forth.

After a walk of about ten minutes she found herself before a small stone church, surrounded by a graveyard, which from its look of age held a promise of interesting epitaphs.

Turning in under the old lich-gate, the girl wandered from grave to grave, reading the quaintly expressed inscriptions. Seating herself on the slab under the gate-roof, where bearers had rested coffins for a century or more, her thoughts wandered into quiet channels, when the sound of swiftly advancing wheels, and their sudden stop, caught her attention.

Her back was toward the highway. Before she could turn to see who had paused so near, Cerberus came bounding toward her, tail waving in friendly fashion, followed by his master, whose expression suggested some doubt as to the warmth of his welcome.

On seeing him, Kitty's frown came back with blackest threat, yet somehow it failed to strike as much terror to him as she had intended it should. Indeed, he laughed—openly, amusedly.

For an instant this had the effect of deepening her wrath, then she felt a sudden desire to laugh also, and to save herself from such an ignominious breakdown, she said acidly:

"I suppose you think it immensely

funny, but I assure you it presents itself in a decidedly different light to me. It was a mean trick—and—and you did not tell the truth," she accused.

"Not always and altogether," he admitted, sitting down beside her.

"When I asked you if you were one of the grooms, you said yes." She was becoming categorical.

"You must pardon that. I was so flattered."

Kitty raged, but no evidence of her anger disturbed the imperturbable young man at her side.

"Then later, when we hid," here her little fist clenched fiercely, "when we heard some one on the stairs, and I asked if it was your master, you said it was."

"That was true. It was Withers, my valet."

Kitty turned an indignant shoulder, and sulked. He bore it patiently a few minutes, then moved so as to face her.

"I don't propose to return the sovereign, so don't ask for it. I've just been to Little Widcomb to put it in bank. It is the first money I ever earned. Work is a great thing. I never understood before why men enjoyed it so."

If there was one thing that Kitty could not endure it was to be laughed at.

"Don't fear that I will balk your newly awakened ambitions; I am no 'Injun giver.'"

"I don't think this is the proper way to treat a cousin," he protested. "Let's make up."

He held out an inviting hand, and after a struggle to retain her resentment she yielded, and allowed his to take hers into a warm, friendly clasp. Ten minutes later she was chattering away as if she had known him all of her life, and before they reached the inn, she had consented to recognize the cousinship in spite of its remoteness.

At the inn door they came upon Alicia, who was looking out for Kitty with a view to more sightseeing.

"This, Alicia, is your cousin, Archibald Somers, and I can recommend him to you as quite a worthy young man, if somewhat disagreeable in his ways," was Kitty's introduction, while poor Alicia looked at her in shocked surprise. Kitty's cavalier treatment of young men was a matter of wonder for her cousin.

"Miss Kathrine and I have already become good friends," he explained to the older woman. "You see, we had a chance encounter before this meeting."

"Why, how strange, Kitty, you did not mention it to me."

"There is nothing strange about it, Alicia." Kitty's chin was in the air. "It was such a trifling incident that it must have escaped my mind."

"My! but that was a nasty one, and so undeserved," murmured the duke.

"It was altogether deserved. I hate people who blab," she retorted behind Alicia's rotund back.

"I shall believe in the theory of the reincarnation of our renowned ancestress——"

But Kitty had turned angrily into the inn, and was ascending the stairs to the sitting-room, leaving the other two to follow as they pleased.

Every day thereafter did Archibald Somers plan for the pleasure of his newly discovered relatives. There was an afternoon spent in the old manor, studying the portraits, with tea afterward on the lawn; there were drives and motor car journeys to every place of interest within a radius of thirty miles; and there were flowers in profusion.

Day after day did they put off their departure, until their intended stop of three days had grown to be nearer three weeks. Mrs. Pencoddy regarded them as fixtures, and began to assume proprietary rights.

But it was all to end soon, for the duke had announced the date of his departure for London, and to-morrow's sun would see it. Alicia and Kitty were both loath to break into so pleasant an experience, though of the two, Alicia was the more vocal in her regrets.

"And to think how he has treated us, Kathrine, and the abominable way you misjudged him at first. If we had had the very strongest of claims, he could not have been nicer," was dinned into poor Kitty's ears on an average of three times a day.

The evening before the duke's departure, Kitty, coming in from a walk with him and feeling strangely lonely and forlorn, encountered Alicia in a twitter of excitement.

"*Kitty,* I think this is the strangest thing I have ever known. Look at that!"

Alicia thrust a copy of the London *Queen* so close under her cousin's eyes that she could see nothing but a blur. Focusing the paper, Kitty beheld the picture of a large fair woman in presentation dress, the long court train giving her quite a regal appearance. Underneath was printed:

"Portrait of Lady Eleanor Blythe, who is, in three weeks, to marry Archibald Wetford Somers, eighth duke of Keswick."

Kitty let the paper fall on the table, feeling her lips stiffen in her effort to keep her expression from changing. Something seemed to catch her heart and stop its steady beat. She looked at Alicia calmly.

"It *is* odd, but it surely must be Arch—this duke of Keswick, for there is no other."

"But why shouldn't he have mentioned it, Kitty, and above all, why hasn't he sent us invitations, since he has been so more than kind to us?" twittered Alicia.

Kitty shrugged her shoulders with easy indifference.

"Men are so incomprehensible, Alicia, I don't pretend to understand them;" with which dismissal of things masculine, she walked into her own bedroom, where she stood in the middle of the floor, staring straight ahead of her, and seeing nothing.

Later, when supper was over, she made some excuse to Alicia and sought the inn garden and a favorite nook under a tangle of rose vines. Here she continued to stare and think until the long and peaceful English twilight had faded into dusk.

The sound of footsteps startled her. It was Archibald Somers, looking distressed and troubled, as even this dim light showed.

"Your cousin told me that you were here. I find that I must go up to London so early in the morning that I shall be obliged to say good-by to-night."

Kitty expressed perfunctory regret. The conversation languished. Finally the young man exclaimed:

"You are wondering why—why I did not speak of my approaching marriage. I tried to, but I could not," he concluded lamely.

"It did seem a little strange to us, but both Alicia and I realize that we must make large allowance for the difference in English ways."

"Don't, don't!" His exclamation was as if he were fending off physical blows.

"Invitations have been sent to you by my direction. I have no doubt that they will reach you by morning post, but for God's sake don't go," he pleaded miserably.

"If you didn't want us to go, you should not have sent the invitations. We will be in London at that time, and nothing in God's world, I am convinced, would keep Alicia away," responded Kitty cruelly.

"Oh! *Alicia;* well, let her go. But you, Kitty, for God's sake spare me that. You know what I mean." His pain was so real that Kitty had not the heart to gibe. Perhaps her own heart was a little sore.

He held out his hand and took hers in a fierce clasp, which in spite of its pain was a comfort to her.

"Good-by, I have—this has been a very pleasant time"—then he dropped her hand and turned hurriedly away. He could not utter the conventional phrases which the occasion demanded.

Kitty, though apparently calm and self-possessed, had that look in her eyes which bespeaks the suffering heart.

Though he turned away, he did not go far. Impelled by an emotion stronger than his will, he ran back to her. When he caught her in his arms, she clung to him and gave him kiss for kiss.

But when he would have spoken, she stayed him, looking at him wet-eyed and miserable.

"No, no, do not say it, you must not. Only go, go."

He looked into her eyes and knew his duty. Sadly he turned and went.

As he passed into the lighted inn, he longed to cover his face from the chance gaze of curious eyes; it relieved him to find the passages empty. Then at the front door, he encountered one of his own grooms. The man touched his hat and offered a blue envelope.

"This came about ten minutes ago, my lord, and Withers thought maybe it might be important, so I came with it at once."

The duke tore it open.

Forgive me if you can, Archibald, but even if you do not, I could not help what I have done. Jack and I were married to-day. We leave for the Continent this evening.

ELEANOR.

He crushed the telegram in his hand. "Ah," he murmured, "God bless them both!"

Then joyously he huried back to the rose arbor.

THE MAN ON THE TABLE.

By Staern Wheeler.

IN which it is proven that the guilty can escape neither mankind nor the arrow of fate.

"LUDLOW," observed Bradley as they paused on the curb and surveyed the comfortable-looking, dimly lighted house across the street—"Ludlow deserves a monument, even without the formality of dying to get it! Think of a lonely, single man of sixty keeping up that establishment, almost for the sole purpose of feeding his friends the best cookery in America! And that Frenchman he keeps in the kitchen—a-ah!"

He ended with a sigh of delicious anticipation, and Hyde chuckled a little.

"And now, I suppose, that after-theater supper's waiting for us. If it is as good as the dinner Ludlow gave us four or five hours ago, I'll start the monument subscription. Pity he didn't go to the opera with us."

"Oh, he and Morford wanted to see the show at the Empress. I suppose they're back by this time, although there's no light down-stairs. Well, come along. We don't want to keep them waiting."

They crossed to the comfortable appearing house, and Bradley sighed pleasurably again. Of the four rather elderly cronies who found Ludlow's home the pleasantest rendezvous in the city Bradley, perhaps, appreciated most the art of the aged Frenchman.

Dinner had been a sort of edible dream; the supper would be no disappointment. A wee, hungry hope went through him that Ludlow and Morford might long have returned from the play at the Empress; that they were now waiting impatiently within. He stepped up the curb briskly.

And then he paused and looked down the street.

"Hello! Isn't that Ludlow coming now?"

"Guess not." Hyde followed his gaze. "Morford would be with him, you know, Dick."

"He—well, it *is* Ludlow, nevertheless!" Bradley stepped forward a house or two and came face to face with their host.

Ludlow seemed quite as astonished as themselves.

"Hello, Dick! Where's Morford? He didn't back out?"

"Where is he, sure enough? He was with you, wasn't he?"

"Of course not. He changed his mind. He went after you two, to the opera."

"Humph!" Bradley shook his head. "He never caught us, then; we haven't seen a sign of him. He could hardly have gone to the opera and been turned away, either, for the house was a long way from full. He might have had a seat easily enough and have caught us when we came out."

"And he certainly wasn't waiting," Hyde put in. "We left almost at the end of the line, and there weren't a dozen people loitering around the lobby."

"Why — that's queer!" Ludlow

tilted back his opera hat and scratched his forehead thoughtfully. "Oh, well, I suppose he's changed his mind again and gone home. Jim's a great one for that sort of thing."

"Did he leave here with you?"

"No. I went first, just after you two had left. Jim was up-stairs, struggling as usual with a necktie that wouldn't stay straight. However, come along."

He led the way up the steps, and the others followed—rather less cheerfully than a moment ago, for Morford, as a rule, was the liveliest of the quartet.

Ludlow's latch-key clicked in the lock, and the door swung inward. They entered and slipped out of their overcoats.

"It's just possible," said the host, "that he may have decided to stay here, you know. I'll run up-stairs and look."

He ascended quickly, and returned as quickly.

"No, he's gone. He must have felt a yearning for bed."

He drew the curtains and peered into the darkened drawing-room; dropping them again, he shook his head.

"Not there, either. We'll go into the library, I think, and see what's under way below stairs."

They followed Ludlow to the rear of the lower hall, and came to a closed door at the end.

The master of the house tried it and growled.

"My good Mr. Parker seems to feel his duties include shutting the air out wherever possible. I don't know how many times he's been told to leave this door open—something like fifteen thousand to date, I imagine. This time he's even gone to the length of springing the catch from the inside—confounded idiot!"

He fumbled at his key-ring, held it up to the light and squinted at it. He found the key at last and opened the door.

A square of blackness was revealed, relieved only by the faintest cherry glow of the dying coals in the grate.

The others at his heels, he felt about in the darkness for a little. Then an electric switch snapped sharply, and the room blazed with the light of a dozen incandescents.

At once a shout, a gasping shout of amazed horror, escaped from three throats.

"M—Morford!" cried Bradley, reeling against the casing of the door.

In the center of the room, Ludlow's great, round mahogany table occupied its accustomed place, dominating, with its eight-foot top, all the other furnishings. But the polished expanse was no longer occupied by stray books and papers.

Across the shining surface, Morford lay stretched! He was flat upon his back, his head near the edge, his body across the table. His hands rested limply on the wood at his sides; his eyes stared at the ceiling above!

Three pairs of eyes, fastened upon the broad chest, failed to detect any sign of fluttering breath. The form was ominously still; the cheeks were flushed almost to a purple tinge.

Hyde's speech returned first.

"It's—it's Jim!" he mumbled.

"It's Jim, but—but what——" Ludlow shook himself together and moistened his lips.

Bradley rubbed his eyes and drew a long breath.

"Something's radically wrong with him!" the host went on. "Whatever possessed him to climb to that table? Whatever—well, we're not helping him, at all events. Bradley, 'phone for Dr. Murley. I'll find out what I can."

He pressed a button long and hard and far below a bell rang. Sounds of steps were heard approaching.

Ludlow turned back and went swiftly to the man on the table, but Hyde was there before him.

"Jim! Jim!" Hyde shook the unconscious form. "Jim—why—why—oh, my God!"

His jaw dropped, his eyes glared. He stared at Ludlow, and Ludlow stared at him.

At the same instant, they had made the same discovery! No mere illness was at work upon poor Morford; his arms were stiff and rigid; the unseeing eyes were glazed.

"Bradley!"

The other member of the trio turned from his inspection of the telephone directory. And as Parker opened the door, Ludlow's voice continued, softly and tremblingly:

"You needn't 'phone. Poor Jim Morford's stone dead!"

II.

THERE was, of course, an inquest.

And, as in many another inquest, the coroner's jury, rather than arriving at a verdict, had a verdict forced willy-nilly upon them.

The testimony of the coroner's physician, an extremely important and political-appearing person, ruddy of complexion, harsh of voice and impatient of mien, stated flatly that death had been due to apoplexy. He was in something of a hurry that day; a tempting berth had just opened in the Health Board, and he wanted to see one or two people about it before night.

Therefore, he stated very tersely that the said James Morford, deceased, had been attacked, probably too suddenly for any outcry, by apoplexy, which had brought swift death. There was no doubt about it, and that settled the whole matter.

Parker was called and could tell little. To the best of his knowledge, Mr. Morford had been in the house alone, save for the servants, on the evening in question. He had supposed that Mr. Morford left shortly after Mr. Ludlow —but as a matter of absolute certainty, he could say nothing. He had not been in the library that evening; he could not say positively whether or not he had closed the door; probably he had.

They cross-examined Parker for some two hours, and at the end concluded that for sheer stupidity he stood at the head of the whole line of domestic servants.

Ludlow, too, told what he knew, and Bradley and Hyde stated briefly their own small connection with the case. And in the end the inquest settled it officially that James Morford had met a natural death and that, certainly, no one could be blamed.

Yet they left unsolved one point of utter mystery. How could—why should a man attacked by severe illness, climb upon a library table?

It was strange; it seemed, indeed, wholly inexplicable. But was it vital to the main issue? The coroner tried hard and conscientiously to account for the phenomenon and at last was forced, metaphorically, to throw up his hands in despair.

Perhaps Morford had been mentally unsettled at the last; perhaps some strange impulse had painted the familiar faces of his three friends in their wonted places across the table; perhaps he had tried, with his fast failing strength, to reach them.

Still, it might then have been expected that he would be found in a sprawling posture. On the contrary, Morford had lain flat upon his back.

The coroner, however, was in office to ascertain causes, rather than their accompanying oddities. The fact of natural death having been established, he ceased to speculate.

Had there been an iota of suspicious evidence, had there been one stranger in the house or even in the neighborhood, there would have been some reason for further investigation. As it was, there seemed no other course than to consider the case closed.

But if, officially, doubt had ceased to exist, there was at least one mind in which it rankled, and that mind was Bradley's.

As to Ludlow, he was wont to feel things deeply and say very little about them, and his nature showed no deviation in this instance. His comments upon the awful happening were few, but the thing seemed to have made a profound impression on him.

Dinners at the house almost ceased, and the club saw more gatherings of the remaining three of the old quartet of chums. Now and then, to be sure, they gathered at Ludlow's, but the memory of that scene in the library dispelled forever the old charm.

On Hyde's part, the matter was dropped, for he made it a rule to forget unpleasantness rapidly and remember pleasures as long as possible.

But with Bradley the question would not down: *why* had Morford been found stretched upon that table?

He tried and tried again to figure out delusions which could have led their late friend to believe that the polished top was some sort of couch or bed. He was forced to laugh at his own lines of thought.

The sole possibility remained that Morford, feeling himself going, might have dragged himself to the table and stretched out and that death had come instantaneously thereafter. It seemed far-fetched, but there was no other explanation.

Except that the body had been placed there!

And if that were really the case, Bradley reasoned, many other things must follow in natural sequence. For a primary consideration, some one must have had a reason.

But who? And what was the reason? Except for the doddering old French cook and the younger and even more stupid Parker, no one had been within the house. It was nonsensical to imagine that either of them would have ascended, hearing the sick man, and placed the body where it had been found, or that later they would have denied all knowledge of the affair.

Was it thinkable, then, that Morford had been murdered?

Bradley spent many a meditative pipe over that proposition. Supposing it to be possible, what was the motive and who the criminal? Robbery certainly could not have prompted the crime—if there had been a crime—for Morford's generous roll of bills had been found intact, as well as his diamonds and his watch—personal property that might easily have netted a thousand dollars.

As for finding the possible criminal, that was even more difficult and baffling to the would-be solver of the problem.

The servants were obviously out of the question; there was no one else. Ludlow's substantial locks precluded the possibility of an unannounced visitor. The house, too, was small, frequently covered by its few occupants and very openly furnished. There would have been very scant chance for one to enter secretly, hide away, and wait undiscovered for his chance at Morford.

Still, inferring that one of the servants *was* responsible, that a crime *had* been committed, how had it been done?

The autopsy had shown no sign of poisoning or even of internal derangement other than might have accompanied the apoplectic stroke. There had been not the faintest sign of a scar, even of a bruise, on poor Morford's body. He had not been struck down, or shot, or stabbed, or poisoned.

Bradley, at every new analysis, came back to the first conclusion. Apoplexy had claimed Jim Morford; unaccountably—for he was a lean, hardy man, careful in his mode of living and abstemious—but certainly, nevertheless.

And still—it *was* queer! Bradley could not forget that odd figure, stretched in death across the big mahogany table. At the end of a week, when the time came for his monthly business trip to Boston, he was cogitating as actively and as fruitlessly as ever.

He returned a day or two earlier on this occasion, and, finding the hour rather late for a visit to the office that day, made a fresh toilet and adjourned to Ludlow's for a brief chat.

Ludlow was not at home, nor was he expected immediately. Bradley, however, having nothing better to do, essayed to wait, and Parker drew aside the drawing-room curtains for him.

"Hum." Bradley considered for a moment. "No, I think I'll wait in the library, Parker."

"In there, sir?" The man shuddered a trifle. "You gentlemen ain't been in there much since—since——"

"I know it. I'm not afraid of ghosts, though."

He walked to the rear room and himself switched on the lights, and Parker made for cozier and less gruesome realms.

Seated in one of the big chairs, Bradley stared thoughtfully at the big table.

There it stood—poor Jim Morford's bier! He regarded it intently for a while. Finally he crossed the room and, resting his hands upon the edges, continued his brown study.

His fingers rubbed absently at a spot or two, along the rim of the circle. He frowned a little and bent to examine the places more closely; and frowned even more.

Then, after a moment, he stooped and looked beneath—and started. He glanced over his shoulder; he dropped to the floor and studied the under part of the table.

A little later, his hand reached upward—and a stifled exclamation escaped him.

Bradley rose to his feet and, hurrying to the corridor door, listened. He shut the door and snapped the catch. He went to the windows and drew the shades and listened again.

III.

WHEN Ludlow's key rattled the outer latch, the library door stood open again and Bradley, a little whiter, was reading quietly. He came to the door as the owner of the house passed through the entrance.

"Hello, Dick! You here?" Ludlow held out a cordial hand. "Anything on for to-night?"

"No. I thought I'd drop in, have a chat with you for an hour, and then we'd go up-town for dinner."

"All right."

He discarded his hat and overcoat and slowly followed his guest back to the library.

"Settled down in here, did you? By George! I can hardly stand the place myself, since poor Morford died here!"

"The dead don't return."

"I'm aware of that," said Ludlow, as he found his own particular chair and lighted a cigar. "Some pretty clear memories of them do, nevertheless; in this room, at any rate!"

"Oh — I don't know!" Bradley laughed softly and, perhaps, a trifle nervously.

He drew his chair nearer to the table and lighted his own cigar.

"I've been looking over this table," he remarked.

"So?"

"I have been studying it very carefully, in fact."

"Really?" Ludlow's paper dropped and a dry smile appeared. "You've got a morbid fit on to-day, haven't you?"

"Not particularly, but—well, I noted one or two things."

"Well?"

"Look at those marks!" said Bradley suddenly. "These crushed spots, at four different points along the edge—see them?"

"Why, I see something of the sort, yes. Parker has probably been banging the furniture around as usual."

He picked up his paper, but Bradley went on with grim persistence:

"It may have been that, but do you know what occurred to me, Ludlow? Somehow, it seemed to me that those marks might have been made by drawing tight certain heavy straps—which might even, at some time, have held down poor Morford's body!"

"What? Bosh!" Ludlow frowned impatiently. "Drop it, Dick! You're enough to take the appetite from a shipwrecked man!"

"And it's queer, but when I looked underneath, I found filled-up screw holes, where little cleats might have been fastened to keep the straps in place! How do you account for that?"

"I don't account for it!" said Ludlow sharply. "Get off that table theme; you're sending the shivers through me!"

"I don't doubt it!" cried Bradley. "Ludlow! I lay on my back under that table for very nearly half an hour. Then I found the secret!"

"The—the secret!" Ludlow shouted. "Dick, have you gone altogether mad?"

"Not a bit of it, but I've found that the top of this thing revolves as smoothly and as silently and swiftly as a piece of watch-making! I've found that there's a little concealed panel, underneath and over by the pedestal, and that the chamber beneath it contains a lever! I've found that that lever releases the top, so that a single push will send it spinning around a dozen times." He moistened his lips.

"Ludlow, *you* killed Jim Morford!"

Ludlow shot to his feet, and his hands came up. As rapidly, a pistol appeared under his very nose.

"I carried down a lot of money, and I forgot to leave this at home, thank fortune!" Bradley said. "You stand still, Ludlow! Look!"

He bent cautiously and reached beneath the pedestal. A low snap answered the move.

He gripped the edge of the table and shoved; without hint of jar or sound, it began to spin rapidly upon the heavy pedestal!

Easily, swiftly as if running upon a bed of oil, the top revolved; some twenty full turns it made; then slowly reached a standstill, and Bradley's voice came again:

"Ludlow, I don't know what devil's

impulse made you study out such a thing; I hope sincerely that you're only mad and that your days will end in an asylum.

"But whatever the cause, you strapped Jim Morford to that table, stood beside it and kept it spinning at top speed; *and the centrifugal force of the fiendish thing hurled the blood into his head until he died! That's* how he died of apoplexy. You strapped him there and killed him!"

Bradley ended chokingly. He would rather, almost, have believed himself guilty of the crime, than to fasten it upon genial, whole-souled Ludlow.

And yet, wild and weird as it all was, nightmare-like, almost, the case seemed dreadfully clear. The marks of the straps and the cleats which had held them, the queer mechanism of the lever and the revolving top, pointed in but one strange direction.

And, if further confirmation were needed, Ludlow's face was not that of an innocent man.

His cheeks had gone purple for a moment, then a deadly white. His lips worked and his teeth showed, for a moment, almost after the fashion of a wild beast. Into his eyes came an expression of the most furious, the most intense hatred.

Then, as the accuser watched, Ludlow grew calmer. His expression set, cold and hard as steel; his hands dropped to his sides. He faced Bradley and the weapon, with utter disregard of any danger from either.

"Well, I *did* kill him, then!" he said, in a low voice.

Bradley caught his breath; before he could reply, Ludlow was speaking again:

"I did kill him, and I'm glad of it! D'ye hear that? I'm glad of it! Oh, I'm not going to tell you the story, Bradley. It's all of thirty years old now, and not an uncommon one, by any means—indeed, it's so wretchedly common that you may guess it from end to end!

"Morford never knew that I—that I was connected with it, until that night! He knew then, after I'd stolen up behind him and stunned him with one blow, and strapped him down before he could come around! I told him all about it then——" Ludlow's teeth showed again.

"I told him just who I was and how long I'd waited and how I had cultivated him, so that I need never lose sight of him! I told him just how many years I'd studied to find a way of killing him without bringing suspicion on myself.

"I told him how I finally hit upon this scheme; I even told him how I had stolen back here at night, last winter, when you and every one else supposed I was in the South and the house was closed tight—and how I brought a mechanic from—well, never mind where—to do the job for me and then disappear!"

He threw back his head and laughed heartily; and a cold chill ran down Bradley's spine.

"And then, when he knew all and could appreciate everything, I sat down for a minute or two and laughed at him, while he tried to plead through the gag I'd stuffed down his throat."

Ludlow replaced his cigar and chuckled.

"And then, I began to twirl her about, faster and faster and faster, until he was nothing more than a whirling bundle of suffering—until he died! The—damned—hound!"

His voice, almost a shout, died away, and he stood trembling with fury.

Bradley's eyes opened wider. A queer wonder ran through him. Could *this* be Ludlow—the quiet, even-tempered gentleman and clubman? Could this enraged, exultant, murderous thing be Ludlow?

For a moment or two, a strange doubt assailed Bradley. The man was wholly within his power; yet did he wish to turn him over to justice? Some deep and terrified justification seemed to exist somewhere in the matter. Ludlow believed himself to have—perhaps did actually have—a moral right to take that one life.

But there are moral rights and legal rights, and Bradley had long been a law-abiding citizen. Doubtless, he concluded, after a hard effort at coherent thought, the man was simply mad—long and unsuspectedly insane. And as such his duty toward him was clear.

"You've confessed to me, Ludlow," he muttered.

"Well?" Ludlow's glaring eyes faced him.

"There are consequences which you will have to take. I have the gun and you haven't. Come and stand beside me here, Ludlow, while I 'phone for an officer."

"What?" screamed the murderer.

"Yes, you have no choice. Come!"

"And you mean—you mean——" Ludlow choked. "You mean to turn me over to the police for *that* deed? Why—you fool! You infernal fool! If you'd known Morford—known him for what he really was—you'd thank me for ridding the world of such a scoundrel!"

"Perhaps," said Bradley quietly. "Murder is murder, though. Come!"

"Come? I won't!"

Ludlow's hands worked convulsively, and the blood was surging to his face; his whole body shook.

"Stand aside, there! I'm going—going out! Bradley, if you get in my way——"

He took a heavy step forward. Bradley leveled the pistol.

"Stop, Ludlow! Stop!"

"You fool, I—I——"

Bradley gathered himself for what seemed the inevitable encounter; then relaxed as suddenly.

Ludlow had indeed stopped short, but seemingly not of his own volition.

His eyes stared wildly about for an instant, his mouth worked again, thickly, but no words came. Then his hands, clutching aimlessly, were thrown above his head.

For an instant he tottered, swaying backward a little, then forward again. His arms outstretched toward Bradley—and then he crashed headlong to the floor.

Bradley, horrified, rushed to him and turned him over. A brief examination and he knew. Whether the immediate cause was temper, latent disease, or retribution—Ludlow had paid the penalty of his crime.

"Oh, you're there, Parker?" Bradley said, as the terrified servant appeared at the door.

"There has been another case of apoplexy here, I fear. Your master is dead!"

THE CASTLE OF FORGETFULNESS.

By Helen Sterling Thomas.

A STORY of the sword and the shield, of love and hate and of splendid forgiveness.

DOWN near the coast where the villages huddle under the lee of the dunes and where the fields are bleak, the trees wind-blown, lie the lands of the Seigneurs of La Rochelle and De Neufville.

From opposite headlands the weather-beaten fronts of the two castles scowl at one another like faces hardened and creased by all the winds that blow. No friendly signals pass between them, no jousting nor merrymaking bring their folk together. For once long ago, a Blaie of De Neufville stole a daughter from a Vandee of La Rochelle; from that hour there has been blood between the houses.

With fire and sword they have scattered one another's lands and, save now and then for a little respite, have fought without quarter, and for many leagues around there has been no place of peace. The peasants feared to raise a hand lest it should be struck down by a foe, the very cattle in the fields grew lean and cringing, and the wind blowing in from the sea moaned throughout a desolate region. The sons of La Rochelle and De Neufville forgot to serve God or their king, and became slaves to this private feud, the source of which lay obscurely in the past.

Because of one man's passion and a

girl's dishonor a mighty flame swept through successive generations until the days when Mademoiselle Susanne shut herself within the castle of La Rochelle and prayed the Holy Virgin night and morning to deliver her from Gaston Blaie, Seigneur de Neufville.

She was a long-limbed, deep-chested girl, crowned with fiery hair, and had the quick tongue and hot blood of the south. She was all the sons of La Rochelle; had been sired in turbulent times, bred upon fighting, crooned with the clash of arms and could ride a horse or swing a lance with the best of men.

Withal she was not without softness. She had ever a ready hand to throw bread to a hound or tend a broken-winged hawk, and there was one of her maids, a girl Marie, tawny hued and lank, whose eyes followed her mistress with more of passion than mildness.

Even so was she loved by her cousin, one Henri du Bois. He was a strong, bearded man with a vulpine face, a close fist, but a good sword arm. He was chary of words or favors, had a sense of justice, but no liberality, and was little liked by her folk; yet he held by sheer prowess a position gainsaid by none among them.

Brought to close quarters alone with him Susanne had never yielded weakly to his will, as most women would have done. She had not openly defied or quarreled, yet her heart had never beat for him. In a time when she lacked other aid, she had accepted his, and he had wrung from her finally a half willing pledge of marriage.

Well-a-day! A woman must take some man. She could not wed with one of the soft-voiced troubadours who halted singing at her gates, nor yet with M. l'Abbé. And who else was there?

Henri had fought for her, had kept her enemy the Seigneur de Neufville at bay. Alack! it took a strong arm to keep a roof above one! She chose her cousin, a lesser evil than Gaston Blaie. For all the fiends in hell were more merciful than that man.

The name of Gaston Blaie ever brought an oath to the lips of the village folk; the name of Gaston Blaie made little children tremble; and it was to that name that the topers in the inn of the Good Shepherd drank death and destruction without the shadow of a reproof from M. l'Abbé.

For it was Gaston Blaie that had raided the lands of Mademoiselle Susanne, and week by week crept nearer the fastness, leaving a train of fire and pillage almost to her very threshold. Her people fled before him within the walls; and like the murmur of an oncoming storm his troopers followed.

"Is the great gate fastened, François?"

"I slid the bolts myself, Mademoiselle," answered the old serving man.

The girl turned and glanced about the hall. Her cousin Henri was beside her; they were surrounded by about a dozen men-at-arms, an equal number of peasants—stout, awkward fellows from the fields hastily armed with casques and swords—and huddling in the corners and on the stairs, scared women and children. A baby clinging to its mother's neck cried fretfully; beside the fire an old man shivered, half with cold, half terror; up in the mullioned window on the landing M. l'Abbé told his rosary with hands that shook as the beads slipped through his fingers.

"Are you all within, my people?" asked the girl.

"How many blades are you?" broke in Du Bois.

"A glass of wine all round," ordered Susanne. "The women and children shall go to the north tower. We'll drink, boys, death to——"

There was a cry from the priest at the window.

"Mademoiselle! M. Henri! the enemy! up the village street, and Mère Rudal is hobbling to the gate, but they gain, they gain!"

"Quick, Henri, we must open again for her!" cried Susanne.

"And let the robber in to murder us all! Never!"

"Would you leave one of our own outside at his mercy? A crippled old woman!"

She swept him aside and started for the door; her cousin gripped her hand.

"Folly, Susanne, I tell you, folly!"

"Let me go!"

He held her while she struggled in his grasp, a bird caught in a fowler's snare.

"I will have the gate opened. Go, François, let Mère Rudal in."

The old man hesitated. "It means death to us if we open again." He glanced fearfully at Du Bois and did not move.

"I'll have you flogged, François," her hands grew red under the cousin's grasp. He looked down at her, smiling coolly.

"Let me go, Henri, I am still the head of this house and as good a man as you!"

She wrenched herself free, seized a sword and a casque, and ran down the stairs into the courtyard, followed by Du Bois, the old servant, and part of the soldiers.

Outside in the narrow street the clang of hoofs on the stones echoed and reverberated, and above the din rose the shrill voice of Mère Rudal:

"Open; open; I shall perish!"

Susanne was before the others and, bruising her own hands, beat back the bolts. Slowly the heavy portal swung. The old woman stumbled inside and crawled away panting.

"*Dieu!* Mademoiselle, heaven's blessing."

At the same instant a group of horsemen swept up to the entrance. The leader, a man in closely fitting armor, pressed ahead; a scarlet plume in his helmet flaunted like a challenge. It caught Susanne's eye. Gaston Blaie, the fiend, wore such an ensign, her father had told her once, cursing as he spoke.

Her blood stirred, a hot wave of anger swept over her, her hand tightened on her sword, and, before her men could prevent, she leaped before them and crowded into the passage.

Twice did Gaston Blaie charge, twice he fell back before the rain of steel blows. His horse sank under him, struggling. Then gathering himself instantly he sprang forward on foot; his men closed around him and they threw themselves furiously against the living barrier. It swayed, yielded slightly.

Gaston pressed his advantage, striking steadily, blow quickly following blow. Like a beast that hooks its jaws in the throat of its foe, he worried his opponents, let them go, gripped at the tender spot again, held on, making every inch they lost his gain. Again and again Henri's sword clashed with his, but neither bent.

Du Bois tried to force Susanne back, but she stood firm and struck steadily, her eyes fixed on the scarlet plume.

Two men fell like reeds, broken; they slipped and sank on the blood-soaked flags. Old François close beside her, shielding her with his shoulders, his breath coming in great gasps, shrank aside once as the swift sword of Gaston Blaie aimed at him.

Susanne saw the old man's ear cut neatly away and hang by a tattered thread. She uttered a cry. François who had carried her as a child, taught her to fence, to ride, who had fought for her, lived for her! Curse this Gaston Blaie!

She threw back her head, the casque which she wore, insecurely fastened, slipped off. Her hair, flame colored in the strong sunlight, showered about her. The Seigneur de Neufville saw what had passed unnoticed in the mad haste of the fight. Susanne swung her blade with both arms; he faltered.

"God! It's a woman!"

Her voice rang back defiantly:

"One that can deal a blow!"

He hesitated, his weapon swerved aside unsteadily, grazed her cheek, letting warm blood; while she brought hers down with tremendous force just above his visor. It took the strength of the blow but split open and his headgear rolled off. Gaston Blaie sank forward into the courtyard. There was a cry of:

"Mademoiselle Susanne! Has he killed her?"

Her followers rallied, fought with new vigor. The enemy fell away from the entrance and, disordered without their leader, they scattered and broke. Susanne's men threw their weight upon the gate, some one shoved the fallen out of the way, the hinges creaked and turned slowly, the bolts were shot.

The living men turned and gazed at one another over the dead. Susanne, dropping her sword weakly, leaned against her cousin. A group of women with blanched faces crept out of a doorway. The girl Marie started forward, then turned away with a shriek.

"What is it?" murmured Susanne. She put her hand up to her face and

brought it down with the fingers red and dripping. "It's bleeding," she repeated wonderingly.

Henri tried to draw her away. "François, where is François?" She turned back, stumbled over the body of Gaston Blaie.

"Come away, Susanne." Her cousin took a scarf from one of the women and put it to her cheek. Then he glanced down and kicked the body of the Seigneur de Neufville.

"We are quits at last with this knave." The form stirred slightly.

"Is he dead, or have we that yet to manage?" Henri raised his sword, "One more thrust in the heart will make all sure."

Susanne seized his arm.

"Stop! in pity. I can see no more!"

She leaned over and put her hand on Gaston. The white face seemed like death, but at her touch the eyes opened and looked out from beneath a closely fitting mask of yellow hair. There was supremacy in their liquid clearness while the body lay inert. Something in her gave way before them. A new sensation, a hope and pleasure born of anguish and akin to fear, fell quivering on her heart.

"He lives," she murmured dreamily, and glancing hastily about, added: "I would have no man's death laid at my door."

"You are faint, my child," cried M. l'Abbé, rushing to catch her in his arms.

For some weeks after this all was quiet in the castle; outside the chill spring wind piped across the heath, and the sea, like a thwarted enemy, lashed the walls in fury. The men buried the dead, dressed their wounds, cleaned their armor, hugging the fitful sunshine as it came and went, while up-stairs in the great, empty rooms Susanne sat with her women and looked out across the gray waters. The red mark on her cheek grew less day by day; and her people came and kissed her hand and gazed reverently at the scar.

On the moors on three sides of the walls still stood the tents of Gaston Blaie's troopers, and there still fluttered his ensign, while he remained a prisoner within. There was some skirmishing about the gates, some letting fly of arrows from the ramparts, and once an embassy from the camp came and demanded their lord of Henri du Bois.

"If he be living and delivered to us, we pledge to depart in peace."

"The wall shall crumble first," came back the answer.

"Then you shall starve within."

"So will we then, but Gaston Blaie with us."

While outside Gaston Blaie's people hovered like birds of prey, within he tossed delirious and unconscious and the sands of his life ran slowly. The blow which Susanne had given him had thrown him into fever, although there was no apparent wound. The thought that this man might die, and by her hand, struck terror to her heart in a way she herself could not have explained.

"Have we not prayed for his death since we were old enough to lisp," insisted Henri; "and now 'tis in our power."

"Yes, yes; but if he dies 'tis my soul's burden to carry forever;" she covered her face with her hands.

"Since when have you become such a weakling? You were hot enough for his life once."

She sprang forward and took Henri's arm. "True, my cousin, but let a woman have her way. I would not have it said Henri du Bois murdered his guested prisoner; moreover 'tis but meet this man should die by your sword, not a girl's. Therefore he must live now."

"Well, when all is done, there is reason in your sayings. 'Tis plainly better he should fall by my hand, so shall he live to meet me. I'll find his heart, Susanne. Have your way. Come here to me. No? Saints in Heaven! Was there ever woman so hard to tame?"

She slipped away with a sudden revulsion of sensation stronger than usual, and flew along the corridors to Marie.

"He shall be carried to one of the upper chambers, Gaston Blaie, Seigneur de Neufville, and treated as a guest," she charged the girl.

And as soon as François was well of his own hurt she set him to watch beside the prisoner.

"Swear to me you will let no harm come to this man!" commanded Susanne.

The old servant swore with her eyes upon him, but muttered, turning away: "Not I nor all the fiends in hell could ever pay the dog for the scar on your cheek!"

She caught his arm.

"Listen, François, you bear the mark of Gaston Blaie's sword, old friend, even as I do. Think not that I forget that because I would leave him live. What I did in passion down at the gate I could not do now." She spoke musingly as though questioning herself.

"You ask much, Mademoiselle, but what you ask I needs must do."

So François faithfully executed the task his mistress set, but there was no love and much loathing in his face as he took his seat at the bedside of Gaston Blaie. But as the Seigneur de Neufville struggled before him, raving of battles fought and lost in lands of nowhere, or of tempestuous voyages and shipwrecks made on seas of dream, or fell back weak as a child with hollow cheeks and hungry eyes, some pity woke in the old man's heart.

It may have been but a reflection of Susanne's attitude; for Marie was sent a dozen times a day to know how did the seigneur, how he looked, what he ate, whether he talked or was still, and when she returned Susanne must needs go herself to see if the girl spoke truth.

The best wine from the cellar was smuggled to the chamber; the first almond blossoms, pale, vaporous, from the garden close, must be set near him to speed his recovery; M. l'Abbé must say a prayer for him, but below the good father's breath, of a surety, and, *Dieu!* not a word of all this to Cousin Henri.

But Du Bois was no simpleton. His ears caught more than once the swish of skirts as he approached Gaston's door; it occurred to him sometimes as he stood looking down at his prisoner that he had heard that fair hair in men was a color favored by women, but he turned away with a contemptuous shrug.

Tush! the fellow was safe enough; quite mad, likely to die straightway. Moreover Susanne had never been so yielding as of late; he would take her when the hour came and make himself unquestionably the master of La Rochelle.

Gaston Blaie did not die, but got his strength daily. He slept much, ate what was given him, slept again, his great frame relaxed and quiet.

One morning after a wild night the spring broke fair and warm; François, entering the Seigneur de Neufville's chamber, started to find him risen and dressed, apparently in his right mind and in perfect health. His back was turned, he had thrown open the casement and was leaning out. Some small birds twittered about his head, and his hair, grown long and heavy in his illness, caught the light. He stood looking down at a scrap of garden clinging on the rocks.

"On guard!" muttered the old servant. "The beast is himself again."

The door slammed in the draft. Gaston turned, smiled, showing his strong, even teeth. He stretched his arms over his head deliberately, exultantly.

He towered above the bowed servant, yet there was a singular boyishness and grace in his attitude, like a young giant unconscious of his strength.

"*Dieu!* the sunlight—can't you feel it running through your veins, old man? I've been asleep a lifetime or a thousand years for all I know. I've been ill, haven't I? You took care of me, and some one else; I saw her all through my dreams."

François stood staring at him, backed against the door, his hand on his small sword.

"Come, take your hand off your sword! God's mercy! What ails you, old man? Keep you calm while I take another look out of this window. I think I see her again."

He sat down on the window seat, crossed his leg, and continued confidentially after a moment.

"It's strange; but there's something I want to know. You'll do as well as any body to tell me, and I want to know it very much indeed," he added gravely. "Come over here beside me."

There was something winning yet imperative in his manner, and against his will François advanced a few steps.

"Can't you speak, old man? Or is this verily the castle of forgetfulness and you've lost your tongue here as I my memory? Now, I'm not mad; don't be

startled; it's passing strange, but I am perfectly sane, perfectly steady, and I can't remember my name."

He leaned forward, his voice low and intent.

"Mother Mary save us!" breathed François.

"I can't remember how I got here, where I came from, or, devil's luck! who I am. The past is gone somehow. Now just tell me in a few words. If I once get the thread the whole big pattern will come."

He waited. François rubbed his hands together, his knees trembled.

"Dog! Can't you tell a man his own name?"

François slipped from Gaston's grasp, pushed open the door, and fled down the corridor screaming:

"Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle! M. Henri! here's a lunatic will translate us all!"

Down in the little garden above the sea Susanne leaned over the parapet and watched the gulls come and go. Near, her women sat spinning, tossing the shuttle one to another and singing each in turn a ballade of the House of Rose.

"Your ballade is a woman's tale, Marie." Susanne spoke petulantly. "Give me a song with the ring of steel, a fight without quarter." She sighed. "I would I had been my father's son!"

"You were truly a man when you felled the Seigneur de Neufville with your own hand; would you be again a man and finish the deed?" Marie looked slyly into her face. "'Twould be fit subject for the next troubadour that comes out of the south." She caught up a lute and strummed it mischievously.

"Thus might it begin."

"You forget, Marie, Gaston Blaie's troopers! We are prisoners. None can come or go save by the air like the wild birds."

"Show them this man's head from the ramparts, I vow 'twill bring to some conclusion this siege," Marie flamed hotly.

"Ah, I could not." Susanne gave a little indrawn breath. "He is sick and in my house."

"'Tis his brave yellow hair and his blue eyes have saved him! But a little while agone did we not desire his death?"

"But, Marie, we knew not then what manner of person he was. In faith, when all's said, I should have made but a feeble man!"

She turned smiling. Marie sprang to caress her cheek, but uttered a little cry instead.

"Look! He comes here unguarded. Saints have mercy!"

The women fled screaming in terror, stumbling over their yarn. Marie followed more leisurely, Susanne stood her ground.

"I've faced him once and can again," she muttered fiercely to herself; but this tall, fair-haired person of courteous bearing was no longer Gaston Blaie her enemy, nor Gaston Blaie her prisoner.

Her throat grew dry, her body shook. She clutched the parapet.

"Am I afraid?" she demanded proudly of herself and shook back her head.

"Mademoiselle, I ask your pardon. Why do those women run away?"

"They fear," she murmured, with averted eyes.

"Am I so frightful?" His voice was very gentle as he bent nearer.

Far down below them rose the sound of the sea singing. Time seemed to pause for her; her heart ceased to beat and hovered motionless as the gulls in the sunlight.

Was this the fiend, Gaston Blaie, against whom she had clung to Henri? Was she herself, Susanne of La Rochelle, hanging here on this balustrade, somehow weakly pleased at his presence?

"Am I then so frightful?" he repeated. "And are you braver than the others?"

There was that in his voice which demanded answer.

"I do not fear you," she spoke to reassure herself.

But was this terrible new sensation fear, or no? In all her life she had trembled before no one, not even Henri, whom others dreaded; but now in the presence of this man her soul seemed to wilt, her strength crumble weakly away.

"It must be hate I feel," she argued to herself. "He is the enemy of my house."

"Fear! Why should you in truth? I come humbly to beg a boon," his voice

laid hold upon her senses like some old familiar tune. "I have been sick, walked in strange places and had unholy dreams. In all that blackness, Mademoiselle, I can remember but one fair thing: a woman's hand which saved a sick soul. In a world of hateful, fever shadows, Mademoiselle, I saw that woman's face. I clung to it. The torments of hell are gone. I can see them no longer. I can only see that face; I shall see it until I die."

"What face?" she breathed against her will.

"Yours, Mademoiselle, yours," his words tumbled out tempestuously. "It was you, I know, who passed through my dreams. I woke from them and saw you here below my window."

She turned from him.

"Listen, Mademoiselle, you must listen"—he caught her hands—"a strange thing has come to pass: my memory is gone from me; is swept clean away. Nothing matters; nothing is real any longer save you alone! There is no world, no heaven nor hell without you. It is a fierce thing I feel, stronger than I am, a flame which has burnt all before it, left me with one thought, one desire. By some stronger link than kin you belong to me, I to you. Why or how I cannot tell. Do you fear me? Do you think I rave? I don't know your name, where we are; I don't know who I am; I know I love you."

Slowly she looked into his eyes; they were quiet, unwavering.

"We do not belong together; you mistake," she answered steadily.

"Nay, I cannot reason with you; my knowledge is deeper. I know we do belong together."

She shook her head.

"Then tell me out of your greater knowledge. Tell me who I am, the rest will all come back then. I had rather you, a friend, knew my plight, than some one else who might think me mad, as did an old servant I bespoke up-stairs. Tell me, Mademoiselle, my name! Did ever man ask such a favor of woman!"

She hesitated, measuring him with her eyes. There was something piteous in his appeal. In an instant she would tell him, and push him from her. The good moment would be gone, he would be again her enemy. They could never stand thus like friends here in the sunlight of the garden with the sea murmuring far below.

"He will hate me when he knows," she thought, and still hesitated. Then she looked up and saw Henri with his sword drawn, coming toward her.

"Quick! get inside the tower here and close the door."

She pushed Gaston from her.

"But tell me——"

"Yes, all; only do as I bid you now."

The next instant she turned and barred her cousin's path.

"Wait, Henri!"

"Stand aside, Susanne! Gaston Blaie is about again. Let me go, I say! I'll finish him."

"Listen to me if you would be wise."

"I'll have his blood first! Which way did he go?"

She caught her breath. "A silly revenge, too quickly over! I know a better."

"Tell me."

"Put up your sword first. This is a woman's way, more cunning." She paused. "'Twill take time."

"Well?" he demanded.

She put her hand to her throat. One desire overmastered her. She could not have explained wherefore, but above all things she wished to save the life of Gaston Blaie. She thought quickly, forcing an idea from her mind in her necessity.

"He is not mad. I see that with certainty, but his memory is gone. The saints have played a jest to aid us, Henri. He has forgotten who he is—all the past." She hesitated, forcing her laughter.

"How helps that? I see not."

"Stupid! he's our tool, clay in our hands!"

"True, perhaps! but what avails? His death makes all certain."

"Nay, he shall live," screamed Susanne fiercely. "He shall live, I tell you, and we can make him fight his own folk if need be; turn traitor to his cause."

Henri rubbed his chin. "The idea may serve. Think you we could manage it?"

"Leave all to me; it may take time.

Meanwhile, he must be treated not as a prisoner here but as a free man, let to go and come as he wills.

"None can leave the castle in any case," responded Henri. "If the gates be guarded he can't escape."

"But he must be our friend, our blood brother, so he suspect naught, and none must reveal to him his name."

Henri clapped his hand on her shoulder.

"I have it. When next his people attack, Gaston Blaie shall lead our onslaught. 'Tis a pretty revenge, in truth; it takes a woman's wit; I uncover to you, Susanne. He shall be cut in pieces by his own people, cursed by them and us; and the crows shall peck his bones ere long."

Her face went white; she turned away. She was thinking not of this revenge upon Gaston Blaie, but of the hate he must bear her when he knew her once more as Susanne of La Rochelle. Better to have told him the truth, put a sword in his hand and let him die fighting, rather than live thus tricked and cheated. Would she buy his love at a price which would make him loathe her at last?

"I will tell him myself straightway," she thought bravely.

But the spring day passed with its lingering hours of sunlight and shadow, then a troubled sunset, and afterward the night; and still she had not told the Seigneur de Neufville.

At midnight Susanne, with Henri beside her, stood in the chapel, their people about them. An awed silence was on all the company: the thin-faced page shrinking by the door, the gray-beard troopers, the dull peasants, the group of maids in clinging white, hovering round Mademoiselle. The blue moonlight shone through the tracery of the windows and fell in pools of light along the floor. Henri continued:

"Whoever speaks the name of Gaston Blaie shall have his joints pulled apart and his tongue cut out. Now come hither and swear."

He lifted the cross from the altar and one by one all came and touched it, took the oath and passed out, dazed and frightened.

Had Mademoiselle bewitched this man, Gaston Blaie, so he had forgotten who he was, or had she translated him by some magic potion? One thing remained certain: he who spoke that name died; M. Henri had said it, so let them all look to themselves.

"Will you swear, too, Susanne?" asked Henri when they were alone. She was gazing wide-eyed into the black reaches of the chapel. She started.

"Is it needful that I take oath, cousin, to be loyal to my own house? Do you rather swear who are an alien."

She snatched the cross from him, but it slipped from her nerveless grasp and fell with a clang in that silent place. In a sudden fear, a desire to escape from Henri's presence, she fled out of the chapel and was gone along one of the tortuous passages of the house before he could hold her. She missed her way somehow in the shadows and without light dashed into an unfamiliar gallery.

"Marie, Marie!" she called, "where are you?"

No answer came, and she stood motionless like a frightened child, that sudden nameless terror of the dark upon her. She grew cold, a presence in the room seemed to envelop her, dissolving her will; and like a straw caught by suction and drawn toward flame, she was swept along—into Gaston Blaie's arms.

"I have found you," his exultant voice sang in her ears.

His hands were upon her, her heart leaped at his touch, his caresses melted on her face, along her neck and arms.

"Dark or light, night or day, I seek you here in this castle of forgetfulness, where I've lost all else. Tell me now our souls do not belong together and thus I answer you."

He held her quivering mouth with his own.

"Together," she breathed, "only until you remember and while I forget."

She tore herself from him. On the ramparts far above a watchman's hoarse call ripped the silence and rang out into the night.

"Wake! to arms!"

II.

A TORCH flamed in the distance and lit the room. Gaston and Susanne looked into one another's faces. Men started out of every corner and flooded the

house, fastening their armor as they ran; night-robed women shrieked and clung to them and fell back fainting. Out of the confusion came again the choking cry of the dying watchman:

"The enemy is within! Mercy!"

Gaston sprang forward, Susanne's hand in his. Overhead on the ramparts were the noise of combat, the cries of wounded men or dying.

Out of the uproar came Henri's harsh voice. He was beside them; with a quick glance he marked even amid the excitement that Susanne and Gaston were alone. A black look gathered on his face, as he thrust a sword into Gaston's hand.

"Will you hang back, craven?"

"No, you must not fight!" cried Susanne.

"Death to the enemy! Long life to La Rochelle!" yelled a half crazy peasant running by them.

"Whoever I am, I am no coward!" Gaston lifted the sword and rushed up the stairs to the ramparts. Henri followed.

Susanne stood below, her fingers in her ears, but she could not shut out the sounds.

The enemy must have scaled the walls and surprised the watchmen before discovery. She knew how in the narrow space at the head of the stairs the struggle might be close. Gaston was there, felled, wounded already, and crushed under foot or striking down his own followers.

She leaned against the wall, shuddering. Why had she not told him who he was?

His voice rang out clear and resonant:

"For Mademoiselle and La Rochelle!"

After that it seemed to her she could distinguish the blows of his sword; then they were swallowed up suddenly in the din. Her heart seemed to stop. She strained forward. Once a cry of anguish, thin and clear, cut the air.

She dragged herself up to a turning in the stairs where she could see beyond the narrow doorway. Against the sky a shapeless snarl of bodies writhed in single combat. She slipped back and sank at the foot. She lay there and lost count of time.

Henri's voice roused her finally as he stumbled down the stairs, the wildness of the broil still in his manner. Susanne raised her head.

"Gaston?" she breathed faintly.

Henri did not hear. He caught her hands and lifted her.

"A better revenge was ne'er thought on! He killed his men right and left; they fell like weeds, no resistance when they recognized him. He split his own henchman's skull; the fellows threw their swords and ran for the walls like mad. I kiss you, Susanne, in honor of the victory. Here comes the dog! what a strut!"

Gaston entered from the ramparts; the soldiers followed at his heels, gathered round him and raised their swords, cheering. What and who this man was was wiped clean out of their minds; he had led them to success, and they were pulp under his hand still, even as they had been at the moment of the fight.

"Why do our men gather round him thus?" yelled Henri. "I'll show them who's master!"

Gaston turned and looked into Susanne's face. He put his hand to his forehead with a dazed expression.

"Why did they scream, and curse me as though they had seen a ghost? They were brave fellows, as many as we. Why did they fling away their swords in panic? Answer! you shall answer!"

"Buck up, man," roared Henri; "'twas your gigantic person they fled from as though you were the evil one himself. Here, François, a pot of ale! We'll drink, Susanne and I, to your very good health; or, better still, to the recovery of your memory. Perchance it may be restored to you ere you think."

"In mercy, tell me who I am!" Gaston turned to Susanne.

She opened her lips, but before she spoke some soldiers entered, crying:

"Mademoiselle! M. Henri! An embassy from the camp under a flag of truce!"

"Where?" Henri pulled himself together.

"At the north postern. Shall we open?"

"I come." Henri was gone.

Gaston turned to Susanne. "Who am I?"

She did not speak.

"I ask pity. Have I done aught dishonorable or brought shame? Why do you place this terrible punishment upon me?" He caught her hands. "Whoever I am, I love you!"

"Hush, only hush," she moaned; but he drew her to him, and seemed to wring the words from her.

"Gaston Blaie, God forgive me!"

"Gaston Blaie!" he reiterated wonderingly.

"Hate me now if you remember."

"Hate you!" He would not let her go. "Gaston Blaie—the enemy of La Rochelle?"

She bowed her head. "You remember? There is blood between the houses. We fought at the courtyard gate, you and I. How long ago! You wounded me. I struck you. You fell within the castle, prisoner, unconscious, had a fever, and forgot. We tricked you, Henri and I!" She hid her face. "I did it to gain time, to save your life."

"This is the stronghold of La Rochelle! Then here to-night those men on the ramparts were mine?"

She opened her hands in pitiful acquiescence.

"I, against them! God!"

He broke away from her; there was a dangerous light in his eyes.

"Hell fire! Some spell was upon me. I know it all now! The feud! I took oath none of La Rochelle should survive. Let me go! I'll leave this cursed place."

"Think you 'twas you alone were forced to turn traitor? Was it easy for Susanne of La Rochelle to play false to save your life?"

"My good fellows! Christ! I slew them!" His form seemed to break and sway like a storm-stricken tree.

"I have kept your life from day to day by that device or this, what matter! I have kept you safe, my enemy, weakly listened to you. You have struck me down, scarred me, slain my family, scattered my lands! Now you cry out at having killed a serf or two because of me!" Her chest heaved stormily.

"God help us! All's different now—we love one another!" He gazed at her without touching her, then spoke again deliberately:

"Within the gates I am prisoner; without, traitor. If there be a way from this labyrinth I see it not."

He touched her cheek reverently.

"I wounded you! The sins of years are naught to that!"

"The scar is on my heart alone," she cried, clinging to him.

They were silent; the castle was quiet for an instant.

Outside the wind whistled thin and reedlike and the flying sea-foam struck the casement. Hurrying footsteps passed in the corridor.

"Henri may come for you at the instant," whispered Susanne; "we must think quickly. He must not find us together. Where can you best hide?"

"I've a sword; I'll face him and die if need be." He raised it proudly.

She struck it down. "Idle, page's play! there's a time for bravery, a time for cunning. Come, above are my chambers."

She threw open a window on the little garden. A blare of wind and tide deafened them as they crossed the open space to a tower stair opposite. They paused to bar the door, their fingers meeting on the bolts.

"You are cold, Susanne!"

The captured hand fluttered in his an instant, then slipped away. She left him at the last turning before the top; ran ahead to clear the room of her maids. She threw herself down against the cushions of the bed and hid her face.

"Leave me; I can no more."

Her maids, huddled together in a corner, sprang up from the shadows like a covey of wild game from the underwood. Marie gathered her close with a cry.

"You are safe, my dear? We lost you. The fight—the enemy?"

"Routed," muttered Susanne, brushing away the caress. "I heard from the west gallery. I am weary; leave me."

But they loitered. She was cold. One would brew a hot drink; another brought her night robes. Her hair must be tied, and Marie's fingers passed but slowly through the soft plaits.

Would she never be rid of them?

Henri might be back at any moment—Gaston discovered on the stair.

How could she get him from the castle in safety, and where indeed was his safety now, since he had done battle to his own folk?

Her heart pounded. She pressed her fingers against it.

Should she call her people together, face them with the truth, trust their loyalty to her to save Gaston and herself; pit her strength, her influence with them, against Henri's?

No; she shrank from that. What was she against Henri?

The lamp swayed uneasily above, the wind moaned about the chamber as the door opened for her maids to pass out. She sprang to admit Gaston. Her fingers were already on the latch when Marie reappeared.

"I would not leave you this night."

"I have need of naught," replied Susanne petulantly, "save to be alone."

"Of naught, my heart?" Marie looked in her face.

"Oh, Marie, Marie! When had woman greater need?" She flung herself upon the girl. "Listen! think with me. You know already; I care not. We love, this man and I—Gaston Blaie, the enemy of La Rochelle. He's there, hidden in the garden stairway. How can I cheat Henri of him? Save him? Answer, answer!"

She tore herself from Marie, and threw open the door.

Gaston entered.

"Marie, go without; see who's the watchman at the left postern."

The girl slipped away. Susanne turned to Gaston. "You must go before dawn if at all."

"The chance is with my own people, if there be indeed a chance," he answered her.

"There is—there must be," she answered fiercely. But her lips were drawn.

He took an earthen ewer from the table, poured the wine, held it to her lips. They drank from the same goblet, looking into one another's eyes.

"The feud is done," murmured Susanne. "I pledge you, in the cup of comradeship."

"Nay, of love."

The wind sucked under the hangings as he spoke; they swayed uneasily; in the patterns of the arras some knights with lowered lances seemed charging down upon them. Susanne let fall the glass.

"Some one is within the room!"

She turned to bolt the door. The wind gurgled with a sound like laughter, the lamp sputtered and grew dim.

"It burns blue!"

She turned her white face toward it in horror.

"Susanne! I have need of you!" It was Henri's voice at the door. She startled, clutched Gaston.

"I have tidings and would speak with you."

"Have I not had enough for one night? Leave me till the morrow, I would sleep," she responded, while she pushed Gaston between the hangings and the wall, whispering:

"Be silent till I call you; then come forth."

"Open; I must enter." Henri's sword hilt resounded on the paneling.

She drew the bolts, faced him with burning cheeks.

"Such news for you, and you would have slept and missed it!" he caught her hands, smiling, showing his teeth.

"Here, just gone, was an embassy from Gaston Blaie's folk. They ask only his person, this devil's henchman, delivered to them; then they depart in peace. They would see him swing from the nearest tree top, do you comprehend?"

Henri threw himself into a chair, chuckling.

"Hanged by his own folk! Was there ever so neat a revenge?"

She turned away crushing down the agitation which rose up to ruin her, and spoke slowly, choosing her words with care.

"It may be but a hoax to get him away!"

"Fear not. I thought of that, but we are invited to the hanging, you and I, with so many of our folks as we choose. We deliver him at sunrise."

Her nails bit into her hands. She glanced toward the window; the storm had lulled, the clouds were streaked with gray.

"Sunrise! Hanged!" Her voice was hoarse and strange.

"Yea, and why not, cousin? We shall have peace once more: green fields and fat crops. We'll wed now, Susanne, in honor of this ruse."

He came and looked in her face. His eyes held her fascinated.

"And why not, I say? Faith! you show little mirth. Have you no cheer for me? no word to say me well for what I've done this night? no cup of wine? no kiss?"

She did not move.

"Come, what will you wear, cousin? We must go to the hanging in brave array. Afterward we'll come home to the chapel, M. l'Abbé shall light his candles, have a mass and marry us. What say you? But first for the stringing of Gaston Blaie. He's a big devil, will die hard. The limb must be a stout one. I'll see the rope is sound myself."

The wild beast in her broke loose. She uttered a cry—swift, agonized.

"No," she caught Henri's arm. "We tricked him. I'll none of it."

"You will none of it? And wherefore? Have the sly ways of this fool worked a spell upon you? I find you lingering in corners with him these days past. Where is he now? Last seen beside you. I am no blind man; you belong to me, I tell you, Susanne, and are to look at no other man. He hangs at sunrise, hangs, and I bear you to witness it. 'Twill be better sport than a morality!"

He grasped her face between his hands, turned it upward to the light slowly, cruelly, as though to read the secrets behind it.

"To the hanging of Gaston Blaie you shall go," he reiterated slowly.

She grew weak under his hold. He flung her away.

"Where is this man? I see all now, fool! false! a woman's trick. You lied to me. Has he been here in this place?" He lunged about the room piercing the arras with his sword. "I'll have my hands upon him."

"Stop!" screamed Susanne, throwing herself in front of him. "Gaston!"

At her cry Gaston Blaie appeared and stood before Henri, his sword in his hand.

"Surrender to me," demanded Henri.

"You will answer me here in single combat, Henri du Bois."

"If I raise my voice a dozen men will enter and run you through."

Susanne rushed to the doors and bolted them.

"But were you my blood brother and I found you here I should kill you myself," Henri shouted and lunged forward.

Instantly the swords met, spit fire, cut apart; they clashed again. The men were equally matched in size, straight of limb and long of reach, but Gaston was but fresh from the fever, his strength untried, while Henri's puissance remained intact.

Susanne leaned against the door, her hands clutched the tapestry, her nostrils like a horse's under a curb, distended and closed rapidly. A jewel on Henri's hand glittered under the dying lamp like a malicious eye. With a kind of dull, impersonal fascination she watched it burn and glow as he thrust and parried. The ring of steel seemed to strike her.

The blades shivered together, there was a quick pass, then separation. Gaston sprang forward the next instant, driving Henri before him.

Gaston struck hotly, fought headily, pressing every advantage he made. Together they made the circuit of the room, neither gaining in ascendency. They paused, the table in the center dividing them.

Henri drove his sword across it; Gaston responded. A jug of wine upset, an angry stain splotched the white cover and trickled on the floor.

"Just so shall your blood run, Gaston Blaie."

"But you shall never live to see it, Henri du Bois."

Again they sent their weapons toward one another's hearts. The air grew heavy in the chamber.

Their breath came in great gasps: faster—faster flashed the blades. Henri forced Gaston into a corner behind the bedstead; he leaped out from it, with one bound, escaped Henri's sword, but his boot caught in the window-hanging; the curtain loosened, gave way.

He tripped, struggled to extricate himself, and fell with it on the floor. Su-

sanne uttered a choking cry. Henri stood passive.

"Get up, blunderer; fight me till you drop by my sword."

They faced each other once more. Henri's blade touched Gaston's shoulder. Again Susanne cried out.

Marie's voice on the other side of the door answered.

"Open, open, Susanne! Who harms you?"

Only the clash of sabers responded.

"Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle! He kills her!"

Other cries answered Marie's. Hurrying footsteps clattered on the stone floor. People clamored at the door. Old François' feeble voice rose and was overborne.

"Help! Open!" screamed Marie.

"Mademoiselle! Speak to us if you live."

There was no answer.

"Break the door!"

"An ax!"

"My children, patience——" M. l'Abbé's querulous tones were cut short as the blow struck the oak paneling.

There was a tense silence in the corridor for the next moments as the crash of the ax outside alternated with the thin, sharp ring of steel within.

"Courage! I come," screamed Marie.

"The door gives!"

"Susanne, I am with you!" The girl's flute-like tones rose quivering and flew like a homing swallow straight to Susanne's heart.

"Robber! Traitor! You thought to take a woman of La Rochelle!" cried Henri.

"Not against her desire," retorted Gaston, panting.

"And thus shall you die for it!"

"*Dieu!* the sacrament first!" exclaimed M. l'Abbé.

The oak door crashed forward. The people surged through it.

"Get back!" called Susanne. "Single combat decides."

The sudden draft swept in, the lamp flared, went out, leaving the place in darkness. The blades struck together, there was a frenzied cry of pain, then the sound of a body falling.

"Gaston! No!" Susanne's anguish gathered and broke.

"Quick, a light!"

Some one ran for a torch. It spurted blue; was lost in the windy air. No one stirred; a kind of paralysis possessed them before the unknown thing in the room.

Then light again. It flashed on the mass of dazed, frightened faces; on Susanne crouching in a corner; on Gaston leaning heavily against the table, his face dripping sweat and blood, and on a still figure on the floor. The people stumbled forward, a pack of hounds, leaderless.

"What is it?" Their voices rose and gathered strength like an oncoming tempest.

Susanne cast herself between them and Gaston.

"'Twas done in fair fight!" She turned to him and clung to his knees. "The stronghold surrenders to you, my heart!"

"God be praised!" breathed Marie.

"*Miserere nobis!* M. Henri! he is dead!" said the priest, bending over the body and making the sign of the cross.

An hour later, outside the castle the sea grew light, then purple, changing steadily to sapphire and gold; a dark-hulled fishing-boat fled like a bird of night from the brightening dawn. The sun turned the rocks pink and orange, shone through the windows and lay in narrow streaks along the floors.

After the tumultuous night, after spent strife and passion, all was stillness and inertia. The women with awed faces silently washed the bloodstains from Mademoiselle's chamber; the men snored at the gates, in the halls, the courtyard, where they had fallen from exhaustion; Gaston Blaie was stretched heavy and unconscious, but grasping even as he slept the hand of Susanne as she sat beside him; while in the chapel, with none to keep vigil save only M. l'Abbé, Henri du Bois lay stark and cold.

Gently, slowly, one at a time, Susanne loosed her fingers from those which clung to them. Gaston stirred in his sleep. She relaxed her hand instantly.

"Marie," she breathed.

Marie started up from the floor at Susanne's feet. Susanne snatched at her hand and dexterously replaced her own with it in Gaston's.

"What would you?"

"Keep that for me, Marie, till I come."

"Where go you?" the girl clung to Susanne's frock.

"Soft! let me free. I leave you to watch." She touched Gaston lightly.

"How if I act too faithfully your part?" Marie's voice was playful. "If my hand should serve as well, nay, better than your own——"

"Loose it if he wake!"

"I'll promise naught."

"Alack, how can you jest! Henri dead in the chapel; we prisoned here! Gaston's folk without, hungry for his life! I go to bring him back his followers or ne'er to come back again myself."

"Sweet Christ! You go not without alone!"

Susanne snatched a cloak, drew the hood close about her face.

"I'll go a poor pilgrim to his people, Marie, with a flag of truce in my hand. They shall hear how I served him; hear why he turned against them through no disloyalty of his own."

"'Tis not safe, the barbarians! They might eat you!"

"Did we not once so speak even of Gaston Blaie! I have no longer any fear of his followers. His army shall come back to their lord, for I go to deliver up the keys of this castle."

Marie caught her breath.

"The stronghold is his own, to do with as he wills, and this shall I make plain to them. Let me pass."

She was gone from the room.

Across the moors in the burning noon of the same day wound the long train of the Seigneur de Neufville's men. The sunlight glittered on a hundred lances and the jangle of bit and armor sent the larks fleeting from the path. With a blare of trumpets they made straight to La Rochelle.

Leading them all rode a girl, her red hair flying loose like a fiery gonfalcon. No mount was swift enough for her eagerness; no trooper could keep pace with her desire. She pulled her horse up at the entrance.

"Open! Open in peace, to the followers of the Seigneur de Neufville! I have surrendered."

The horse bounded into the courtyard, she sprang to Gaston.

"I have brought you back your people."

Before her he knelt humbly as he made answer:

"Nay, they are your own."

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

By W. A. G.

HOW the law took its course in a complicated case of unusual legal aspects.

OLD Judge Marlowe—"Hanging Charlie," as he was called—was intolerant of sentimentalists who wished to do away with the death penalty, and when the high sheriff's chaplain after dinner began to speak about "judicial errors" and inferred the desirability of abolishing capital punishment, "Hanging Charlie" let himself go in an argument so vituperative that at last the chaplain claimed the respect due to his cloth. Then the judge burst into a boisterous laugh.

"Well, well, Mr. Chaplain," he said, "if I've hurt your feelings, I'll tell you a story to make up for it, though to be sure the story is an unanswerable argument for capital punishment.

"You forget when you make these unseemly attacks on the law and its administration that they claim to be under divine patronage. Now my story shows quite plainly that verdicts like marriages are made in heaven, and that when mortals are in danger of committing judicial errors Providence interferes and sets them right.

"I don't suppose you could find a likelier opportunity for a judicial error than this case which I have in mind. In fact, there was material enough in the evidence for one and perhaps for two judicial murders. But—here is the point—not even one was perpetrated!"

Marlowe glanced quickly round his guests and continued:

"Some of you may have heard of the case, though I think it must have been before the time of any of you, except perhaps the high sheriff. At all events, none of you knows the true facts of the 'Primrose Hill mystery,' as it used to be called."

The mayor leaned forward and exclaimed:

"I remember hearing about that, sir—the murder of a foreign woman—a singer ——"

"Ah!" interrupted the judge. "Then, sir, some of the facts would not be new to you; but the most important would be."

He sipped from his glass and waited for an invitation to proceed, which soon came from every one.

"Well, gentlemen, it was in my early days at the bar, when I was almost as young as my friend the chaplain here. The case was defended by Henry Stratton, the most successful criminal pleader of those days.

"The nearest approach to Stratton, recently, was poor Monty Williams. Both of them were actors first, and lawyers afterward—literally, I mean; for Stratton, like Williams, was a favorite figure on the amateur stage before he distinguished himself at the bar.

"They resembled each other very much in their styles of pleading, too, though Stratton was more highly colored and melodramatic. But that belonged to his times; rodomontade of all kinds was more in fashion then.

"And they were like each other in another point: each of them had a disease which he aggravated by his work, and which cut him off before his prime—throat trouble in Williams' case; heart in Stratton's.

"As they first came to light, the principal facts were these. The woman, a public singer named Irma Filiputti, lived on Primrose Hill.

"One foggy night a policeman patrolling the district heard a shot fired and set off in the direction of the sound. Sound, you know, travels very distinctly in a fog.

"When he had gone a short way a second shot informed him that the singer's house was the scene of the disturbance. The door was standing open, and, hurrying in, he found in one of the rooms a woman lying insensible on the floor and a man standing over her with a double-barrelled pistol.

"He knocked the pistol to the ground and then seized the man, and there was a violent struggle. In the end the man got the best of it and escaped through a window into a garden beside the house.

"Before the officer was able to give chase the fugitive had disappeared hopelessly in the fog. Accordingly he soon returned to attend to the woman. She was dead.

"The Filiputti kept two maid servants. Neither of them was in the house at the time of the tragedy, but they both were able to give important evidence at the inquest.

"They had gone out half an hour before to a local entertainment for which their mistress had bought them tickets. She herself had no engagement that evening, and was staying at home because—so the servants said—she felt unwell.

"The girls testified that just before they left the house—in fact, while they were unfastening the back door to go out—some one knocked at the front, and the Filiputti, thinking they had started, went herself to see who it was.

"As soon as she had opened the door, they heard her trying to close it again, and there seemed to be something like a scuffle. They heard her protesting, and then a man's voice answering inside the hall; upon which one of the maids slipped into the back of the hall.

"The Filiputti, finding they were still in the house, called them both and told them to show the intruder out. The stranger behaved very violently, they said, and used threatening, blood-thirsty language, vowing that he would visit the Filiputti whether she wished it or not; but finally he gave in and went.

"One of the maids said she had seen the man once before in Paris, though

she knew nothing else about him, and that he had annoyed her mistress there.

"Now there was no doubt, from their description of him and the policeman's description of his antagonist, that this intruder was identical with the man who was afterward discovered standing over the body with the pistol. He had evidently waited about the house till the servants were gone and then had obtained admission again.

"The supposition of suicide was highly improbable in these circumstances, and the medical evidence excluded it entirely. Of the two shots, one, which had glanced aside on the corset without touching the body, had been fired from so near that it had singed the dress, but the other—the fatal shot—had certainly been fired from some distance, and besides, its direction was such that the wound could not have been self-inflicted.

"The theory of accident seemed equally untenable. Indeed, taking the circumstances into account, it was sufficiently contradicted by the simple fact that *two* shots had been fired, both hitting the woman. Had they even come in rapid succession, an accident might have been slightly more conceivable, but the interval between them suggested plainly a deliberate purpose. The servants, by the bye, had never seen the pistol in their mistress' possession. Her jewelry and money did not seem to have been touched; in fact, so far as was known, nothing was missing. The evidence, however, supplied a quite sufficient motive for what the French call a *crime passionel*.

"On these grounds, then, the coroner's jury—ah, I was forgetting one other point. A note without any address or date was found lying on a desk with two or three words in it something like this:

I will come on Tuesday.

ABELARD.

"Tuesday was the day of the fatality. There was nothing beyond the name Abelard to identify the sender, and no one of that name could be discovered among her acquaintances. It was not certain of course that the note had anything to do with the tragedy.

"Well, then, on this evidence the jury returned a verdict of wilful murder—a very proper verdict in the circumstances.

"A year passed and then, thanks to one of the maids, the suspected man was arrested at Baden, where she happened to meet and recognize him.

"He turned out to be a young Canadian in good circumstances, called Ferrars. He was brought to London, and Stratton was retained for the defense, as a matter of course. His reputation was such—he was then at the climax of his career—that any important case of this sort was quite sure to be pressed on him.

"Stratton was married to a very beautiful and good woman, the elder daughter of the Earl of Wight. They were devoted to each other and to their one child, and she took the tenderest care of him. The full extent of his heart trouble was not known to her, but she knew quite enough to be very anxious at times, and I remember that when this case was coming on she did her best to keep him out of it.

"He was looking wretchedly ill just then, and when she begged me to dissuade him, I did what I could, but it was to no purpose. Stratton declared he couldn't possibly drop the case. When I asked him why not, he answered, to my surprise:

"'Because the man is innocent, and I should never forgive myself if I didn't do my best for him.'

"I asked what grounds he had for thinking his client innocent, adding that so far as I could see everything pointed pretty plainly the opposite way. I supposed of course that the prisoner had disclosed some fresh fact, but Stratton was not communicative. He merely begged me to wait till I heard what he had to say at the trial.

"In the preliminary inquiry, before Ferrars was committed to the assizes, nothing startling came out. His identity with the fugitive was established, and it was shown that he had been leading a wild life.

"The only new element in the case was his attempt to explain away the facts, and a sorry attempt it proved to be in the opinion of every one. He admitted having called at the house earlier in the evening, but he denied that he had been violent and threatening.

"He suggested that the servants had unconsciously exaggerated his behavior, looking back on it in the light of the subsequent fatality. He alleged—what seemed to be true—that his acquaintance with the Filiputti had been extremely slight, and that he had gone to her house that evening in a mere fit of bravado, after dining rather too well.

"After leaving the house, he said, he entered the garden and walked up and down there for some time with the idea that she would be driving into town soon, for he supposed she was to sing that night; in which case he hoped—without much reason he admitted—to persuade her to let him accompany her.

"While strolling about, he stumbled against a garden-seat and sat down on it, and became drowsy, or, perhaps, fell asleep for a few minutes, till he was wakened by the first shot. Then he ran to the window facing the lawn and set to work to open it.

"The second shot was fired just as he managed to lift the sash.

"He stretched his hand through to push the curtains apart, and caught a glimpse of a man hurrying from the room. Before he could climb in, the man left the house by the front door.

"Ferrars particularly mentioned the front door, alleging that he heard him open it. When he got into the room, the discovery of the prostrate woman horrified him so that he stood spellbound.

"He picked up the pistol, which was lying on the floor, without thinking what he was doing, and then the policeman came in and tried to arrest him, and in fear of his life he freed himself by force and ran away.

"The corner-stone of this defense, improbable as the whole structure was, was knocked out by the policeman's evidence. The officer was positive that no one could have left the house by the front a short time—however short—after the second shot, without being seen by him. He was only a little way from the door when the second shot was fired, and was coming on rapidly, and the door was standing open with the hall-light showing everything up.

"A man might possibly have escaped his notice if he had turned off short into the garden instead of coming out into the road, but this loophole for Ferrar's case was blocked by the fact that he would have had to cross a flower-bed, and that all the foot-prints in the garden, without exception, belonged to one and the same man, namely, the prisoner.

"Besides, no trace whatever of this supposed fugitive could be shown, and, on the other hand, the prisoner's two appearances on the scene covered all the facts to a nicety. In short, his story was generally regarded as the baldest of fictions.

"I supposed, then, that after this preliminary inquiry Ferrars had produced other information, not yet published, which had convinced Stratton of his innocence, and to which he was trusting for an acquittal.

"However, the main trial came on and not an iota of new evidence was forthcoming. Moreover, it was clear that the prisoner personally made a bad impression on the jury, and if ever I expected to see a judge put on the black cap, it was for that man.

"In cross-examination Stratton's chief effort was directed to shaking the policeman's assertion that no one could have left the house by the front within the supposed limits of time without being seen by him.

"But, as I have said, there was nothing to support the hypothesis of this other fugitive, and all the probabilities favored the policeman's statement. In fact, people wondered why the prisoner had not invented a likelier story.

"It would have answered his purpose quite as well, and been much safer, if he had simply said he had seen a man leave the room, without specifying where he had gone to. Then it might have been assumed that he had hidden in the house till the policeman left it in pursuit of Ferrars.

"But it nearly always happens in criminals' stories that they overlook some central absurdity, even if they make the rest of the invention more or less probable.

"On the first day of the trial—in the afternoon, when the proceedings were well under way—Stratton had a fainting attack. After that, not only his wife but his medical man and his other

friends urged him to hand the case over to one of his juniors.

"We all told him he was running a useless risk by persisting in the defense, since it must fail, whatever he did. However, he refused to listen to us.

"On the last day, after a speech for the prosecution which, I believe, left the jury decided to a man, Stratton rose to make his reply. That, gentlemen, was by far the most eloquent speech I ever listened to in a court of law.

"He used every art at his disposal, and you may imagine how he swayed not only the public but the bench, when I tell you that he took liberties in the form and matter of several parts of his speech, which would have been reprimanded quickly enough on any other occasion.

"I was sitting beside his wife and her sister, and even while I was enjoying his eloquence, I couldn't help sharing their anxiety for his health. For Stratton, as you may suppose, did not spare himself in this final attempt to save a man whom he believed to be innocent; though his reasons for that belief I couldn't fathom even at this stage of the proceedings.

"At moments his face was gray with exhaustion, and between many of his periods he had to stop and gasp for breath. Whether or not it was merely art, making the best of circumstances, his speech became vastly more impressive through these signs of distress. They gave it an earnestness, a solemnity, a veracious air which were indescribable.

"The bulk of the speech was a detailed exposition of the rôle which might have been played by the hypothetical person who, according to Ferrars, should have been standing in the dock in the prisoner's stead; for Ferrars implied, of course, that this hypothetical person was the assassin.

"Stratton, curiously enough, didn't go so far as that. He confirmed Ferrar's story at every point, but in an ingenious way, as you will see in a moment, he reintroduced the theory of accident in favor of the puppet he was setting up.

"He narrated his story, not as what might have been, but positively as what had happened, and with a tone of conviction and a minuteness of circumstance which made people forget that, after all, they were listening to a tissue of suppositions.

"I can't give you any idea of his vividness, but I must try to recall the bare outline of his tale.

"Stratton supposed, then, that this alleged principal was a young Englishman who had met the Filiputti some years ago while traveling abroad, and had formed an acquaintance with her, which to him was merely a passing idyll, though it became to her the great experience of her life.

"When he left her she could not forget him. He returned home, began his life-work, and married a woman of his own country. Then a professional engagement brought the Filiputti to London, and she tried in some way to approach him. He became alarmed for the happiness of his home and told her bluntly that he could have nothing more to do with her.

"He went further, and, displaying a suspiciousness which was unwarranted, for the woman loved him too well to harm him intentionally, he insisted on her returning all his old letters.

"The request and the manner of it cut her to the heart, but she did not refuse. She asked him to come to her house to fetch the letters, promising that no one should see him there—that she would even send her servants out.

"In his eagerness to get them he consented. The plan had some advantages, such as avoiding the transmission of the letters by other hands; and if she was nursing any hope of other results, he could trust himself to deal with that.

"She kept her word about sending the servants out, and waited for him. While she was waiting the interlude took place in which Ferrars figured, as to which Stratton accepted his client's statements *en bloc*.

"Ferrars was turned out of the house and went into the garden. Then the other man arrived. He made haste to secure his letters, and even looked at the dates of them to see if they were all there, and so on.

"Then, without the least sign of the tenderness of other days, he went away. The Filiputti had decided what course to pursue if his behavior at this meeting left her no hope.

"As soon as he was out of the room, she took a pistol, which she had kept concealed from her servants, and while he was in the hall putting on his hat and coat, she held it to her side and fired with suicidal intention, though (as it happened) the shot only tore her clothing.

"He ran back and before she could fire again snatched the weapon from her, and when she tried to recover it he held it up in one hand and keeping her off with the other backed away toward the window.

"Suddenly a noise behind him—behind the curtains covering the window—made him turn around.

"Some one was shaking the window from outside.

"While he was looking away from the Filiputti he let the hand with the pistol down a little. Whether the trigger had not been pulled back securely and released itself under some shock, or his fingers unconsciously pressed it, the pistol went off, and she staggered and fell.

"He dropped the pistol, and at the same moment the window-sash was flung up. Then a hand appeared between the curtains; an arm followed it. The instinct of self-preservation and the thought of his home, which would be ruined if he was found there, made him fly from the witness behind the curtains out into the night.

"He left the door of the house open behind him, its light streaming on the fog. As he passed through the gate he heard the steps of the policeman coming up, and wheeled off quickly in the opposite direction. The light from the door, falling on the fog between them, instead of revealing him, served him as a screen.

"A score of clever touches which Stratton put into his tale I should have to leave out, even if I remembered them distinctly, and all were wonderfully enforced by his look, his voice, his gestures. In short, he really created the impression that he was not simply suggesting possibilities, but relating facts.

"Well, the story and the way it was told had an evident and very considerable effect on the jury. For all that, it was certain that as soon as they retired and were able to talk together, the purely imaginary character of the narrative would recur to them and its influence vanish.

"Stratton was not deceived as to the extent of his success, and he threw his whole heart and soul into his peroration. He made an effort then which plunged his poor wife into an agony of anxiety. I had the feeling myself, and I dare say others had it too, that I was watching something like a gladiatorial combat instead of the bloodless routine of a law court.

"He began with a quite irregular attack, which you, Mr. Chaplain, would have sympathized with, on the institution of capital punishment. The judge allowed it to pass; in fact, Stratton spoke with such fire of imagination and grandeur of language that no one with any soul for eloquence could have brought himself to interfere.

"It was a superb outburst, a true work of art, and while it lasted, but hardly for any longer, it hypnotized his listeners.

"Then he was absolutely unable to go on, and I thought from his looks it must be the end of his speech. I pitied him from my heart, for he seemed driven by a frenzied desire to win the case, and in spite of all his attempts I felt sure he had not won it.

"He looked incapable of saying another word. He was leaning on his desk as if he hadn't the strength to sit down, and his face was ghastly.

"But I was mistaken; Stratton had not done yet. He lifted his head slowly and pointed one hand at the jury. Then his lips began to move, but there was no more oratory in the speech. What followed was simply the low, broken, utterance of a sick—a very sick—man.

"With a terrible effort and a strangely truthlike accent he brought out these astonishing words:

"'My lord, gentlemen, believe what I now say! I see what you cannot see. I hear what you cannot hear. And I swear to you, on my soul, the prisoner is innocent!'

"While the last syllable was still on his lips he fell forward, struck a corner of the desk, and dropped on his back to the floor.

"A doctor hurried to him; for several minutes the court sat motionless; then it was whispered round the room that Stratton was dead.

"The sensation was intense, of course. His wife was carried out in a lifeless state. Several other persons fainted. However, it was early in the day and late in the session, and it was decided not to postpone the conclusion of the case.

"After a very brief summing-up the jury went out and returned almost at once with a verdict of 'not guilty.'

"The verdict was a foregone conclusion. Stratton's extraordinary declaration while he was dying was changed by his death from a pure piece of insanity into—well, it was irrational, of course, but I believe every one in court experienced the same feeling.

"Looking on the words immediately afterward they seemed—one didn't say it to oneself, one didn't believe it, but one *felt* it—they seemed to have something supernatural about them, as if they had been spoken from another world.

"It was his death, at all events, which changed the minds of the jury; there can be no doubt about that. Before it the feeling of the court—since those days I have had some practise in diagnosing these symptoms—was unmistakably against the prisoner. If Stratton hadn't died, Ferrars would have been hanged."

"But, sir," said the chaplain, who seemed waiting for a chance to make a criticism, "I don't see how there was any providential interference to prevent a judicial error. To make that out you would have to assume that it would have been a judicial error if the prisoner had been sentenced."

"If Ferrars had been sentenced, it would have been a judicial murder."

"But, according to all the evidence, surely—— Why do you say that?"

"Because," Marlowe replied, "Ferrars' story was true. Another man was the principal in the tragedy. Who that was you can probably guess."

"Not"—ventured the mayor—"not Stratton?"

"Yes, sir."

"How do you know?" asked several voices.

"It was proved afterward by Ferrars with my assistance. Something Stratton had said to him soon after his arrest recurred to him during that last speech and gave him a sudden idea that this vivid imagining of another's experience might be a literal statement of his own. His strange words at the end strengthened the idea, and when Ferrars was released, he followed it up. Between us we proved the thing beyond a doubt.

"You remember a note found in the room signed 'Abelard'? That was Stratton's; it was in his hand.

"We traced out the whole story. He met the woman at a French watering-place one summer. In fact, it was all just as he told it himself. She used to call him Abelard; Stratton had rather the look of a priest; that may have been why. Whether her death was an accident or not, is another question. It may have happened as he made out in his speech. Heaven alone knows that, but I doubt that he could have persuaded a jury of it. Anyway, his connection with the affair was a striking instance of a train of events being quite hidden till the first flash of suspicion and then completely laid bare.

"He must have understood his position perfectly, must have foreseen that if suspicion so much as touched him, everything would crumble away. He would not only be disgraced and ruined, especially after his original silence, but be in extreme danger of his life. For the evidence would have been even stronger against him than against Ferrars.

"Yes, gentlemen, Stratton had good reason to hold his tongue, but I prefer to think that, though he was guilty of a grave injustice, in his own mind he had set a limit to the silence, and didn't mean to let Ferrars hang.

"I fancy he may have made a sort of wager with himself, backing his own powers as a pleader—that he said to himself:

"'If you can get him off, you may keep your secret! If you fail, you must speak!'

"Of course he may not have meant to confess, but, even so, he couldn't let his silence murder a man without an agony of compunction. It is no wonder he didn't spare himself in that speech.

"Well, gentlemen," Marlowe added with a smile, "you see now where the

Divine Providence came in. Not only was a judicial murder prevented, but capital punishment was inflicted on the man by whose hand—though the court knew nothing about it—the woman actually fell, and who was perhaps contemplating at that moment—for what will a man not do for life and love?—another assassination."

"Then," asked the mayor after a moment, "Ferrars didn't publish his discoveries?"

"No, sir. As I told you, the facts have been known to very few besides myself. Stratton's widow died last month; his son a long time ago. Neither of them had a suspicion of the truth. Ferrars respected their ignorance."

AN IMPLACABLE WARDER.

By Edgar White.

ABOUT a certain checkered career and the manner in which a visitor took a hand.

THE crime of Martha Trueman's unattached loveliness was laid without reservation at the door of her tall and soldier-like aunt, who was a spinster, and who, it was said, had ordained that the fair-haired orphan should travel in her own austere footsteps. It was a matter of common knowledge that quite a number of eligible young men of Prairie Valley had visited the Trueman mansion, in the suburbs, and then had, from unknown causes, lost interest.

No one ever hinted that the object of their visit was at fault—not at all. She was admittedly the prettiest girl in town, and the most popular. The amazing thing about it was that she didn't droop away and lose her buoyancy under the rigid blockade her grim aunt seemed to have established against all mankind.

At church, at social gatherings, and on the streets her blue eyes sparkled with good nature and seemed to invite confidence. But that was only a baleful illusion, as the eligibles were willing to make affidavit to. The details, however, they kept to themselves. Miss Martha was on their black list, in spite of her sunny disposition, her bright curly hair and her pleading blue eyes.

But they didn't charge her with the cause of her being there—not in the least. Every single one of them had an abiding conviction down deep in his lacerated heart that things would be different if he was ever so fortunate as to meet her away from the blighting shadow of her unassailable guardian.

One night, when the subject of Aunt Naomi's reprehensible conduct was being quietly discussed by several young men in the Prairie Valley Club room, Robert Compton, a newcomer, who was assistant superintendent of the local electrical machine works, casually remarked that he had been introduced to Miss Martha that day, and had been very courteously invited to call.

"Better not go," said Lloyd McPherson, with an expressive look at the other members of the party; "it only means trouble for you."

"How so?" inquired Compton.

McPherson shrugged his shoulders, and laughed bitterly.

"You've had fair warning," he said, "and all the boys here will bear me out."

They promptly echoed the doleful statement.

Compton was sitting with his feet on the edge of the window. He meditatively knocked the ashes off his cigar, and said:

"Well, my head's set on being initiated. Then I can be one of you. I'm going out."

No further attempt was made to dissuade him. Truth is, the others were secretly glad of his decision, on the ground that those who have seen tribulation are desirous others would enjoy the same experience.

Compton was a city man, having been

reared in Chicago and there learned his calling. He was of medium size, a trifle dark and the owner of a couple of pleasant brown eyes. His disposition was mild, and his strength of character only appeared during a crisis. Up until the talk at the club his purpose to visit the fiercely guarded young lady was only half formed, but now he intended to go. The trip was made the next evening.

Martha received him graciously and showed him into the parlor, where Aunt Naomi was sedately awaiting him. She was attired in black and wore spectacles. Her hair, instead of being in long corkscrew curls, according to the alleged fashion of very old maids, waved back from an intelligent brow, and was neatly caught up behind.

Compton decided she couldn't be as black as some had painted her. Martha sat dutifully beside her, and let her aunt do most of the talking.

The visitor was enjoying quite a pleasant evening and was beginning to wonder where the baleful influence came in. While he was conversing interestingly with the master of ceremonies, the fair-haired girl quietly arose and began stirring the fire in the grate. As she did so a tiny cloud of smoke was wafted toward her and she coughed slightly, but hastily covered her mouth with her apron. Aunt Naomi requested her to get the checkers and board before she sat down again.

"You play checkers, I presume, Mr. Compton?" inquired Aunt Naomi.

"I can, though I don't," said the young man, boldly; "but I've got a deck of cards in my pocket; let's play something we can all three join in."

"I don't play anything but checkers," said Aunt Naomi, sternly. "I think cards are wicked."

Instead of being crushed by this rejoinder the visitor simply looked at Martha and smiled.

"*You* won't play checkers with me?" demanded Aunt Naomi, in astonishment.

"Let's talk; that's nicer," said Compton, ingratiatingly.

He had but lately returned from a tour to the Isthmian countries, and without further reference to the proposed checker game began a graphic narration of the strange people and scenes he had witnessed.

So absorbed did Aunt Naomi become in the story that she asked all sorts of questions, and then related some experiences of her own, for she, too, had traveled some. It was nearly eleven when Compton arose to leave, and as he did so he remarked apologetically to Aunt Naomi:

"You mustn't think hard of me because I didn't play checkers. It's a great game and some other time you and I will have a bout."

"Oh, that's all right," she said; "I enjoyed your talk better, anyway."

They accompanied him to the door and Martha's bright eyes warmly seconded her aunt's invitation to repeat the visit.

"Well, Miss Martha met him with smiles at the door," remarked McPherson dreamily, when Compton joined them in the cozy corner of the club room, next evening.

"And she ushered him into the little parlor, where Aunt Naomi received him like a captain of the old guard," added Harry Guthrie, reminiscently.

"You've guessed right," returned Compton, smiling.

"They're not guessing," said Charles Wilson, a serious-faced young lawyer; "they're speaking out of the depths of a miserable experience."

"Since you fellows are so wise," said Compton, good-naturedly, "you may go on and relate the entire episode."

"You all sat down for a quiet little chat," McPherson went on, "and just as you began feeling you were glad you came, and that you would be still gladder if her royal and somewhat ancient highness would get sleepy and go to bed, she challenges you to play a game of checkers."

"She did that very thing," said Compton, easily.

"Of course, and you being a gentlemanly sort of fellow, and naturally wanting to get into the good graces of the old dame, said you would be delighted."

"You're off on your lines there," interrupted the novitiate.

"What!" exclaimed McPherson, and the others echoed his astonishment.

"I simply told her I wouldn't play checkers with her," remarked Compton, quietly.

"Do you mean to tell me that you re-

fused to play checkers with Aunt Naomi?" demanded McPherson, sternly.

"What's wonderful about that?" asked the new citizen. "I merely told her I wouldn't play any game all three couldn't take part in, and so we just sat and talked. She's an exceedingly interesting old lady. She insisted on my going back again."

The other young men exchanged puzzled glances. Compton was at a loss to understand the significance of their bewilderment, but imagined that in some way his experience at the Trueman home had been unique. Finally McPherson spoke up candidly and delivered this load from his soul:

"Bob, if you've turned that female grenadier down on her checker game, you've shown more nerve than any of us. It has been the death blow to the ambition of every 'eligible' in this man's town, for every blessed one of 'em has fallen in love with Miss Martha on sight, but that jealous aunt has rolled 'em all."

"What do you mean?" inquired the man who had temporarily, at least, escaped rolling.

"You see," said McPherson, earnestly, "it's a put-up job. She don't want her good-looking niece to have company. When a man goes out to see the girl—a gentleman in every way suitable—honest, industrious and all that a man like—er—those around you here—Miss Martha meets him all smiles and dimples and does her best to make him happy and feel at home, but just as they are getting along like two turtle doves the old lady chips in with a proposition to play checkers.

"Of course the man is dead anxious to please Aunt Naomi, and he falls into the trap, thinking after a game or two she will get enough of it and retire from the room. But she don't get tired and the man dare not. Miss Martha's the one who gets tired. She yawns, gets up and walks around and finally says it's getting late and she believes she'll go to bed.

"The man grits his teeth and plays the game out with Aunt Naomi; then grabs his hat and hikes out for home. Now, how many times do you suppose a sane American citizen would care to go up against a game like that?"

"It is cruel," murmured Compton, sympathetically. "Suppose you defy her."

"That's just what I'm going to do," said McPherson, boldly. "She's bulldozed that poor girl long enough, and I'm going to tell her to her face, and see that the child has some pleasure in life!"

The manly course was unanimously indorsed, and Martha's emancipation was then and there proclaimed by some half dozen "loyal hearts and true."

The next day business called Compton away from Prairie Valley, and he was detained a couple of weeks. Not long after he returned he called at the Trueman home, and was let in by a most indignant maiden. He saw the time of day and started to back out.

"Come in; I've something to tell you," said Miss Martha, in a voice indicating a strong effort at control.

Compton meekly followed. The "guardsman," it happened, was not on duty.

"You've been away?" she said, and he drew a great sigh of relief at what he thought presaged his exculpation from the sin of causing the shadow on the girlish face.

"I was in New York two weeks," he said.

"While you were away Aunt Naomi was grossly insulted by four of your friends," exclaimed Miss Martha, passionately.

Compton started and then looked at her in amazement.

"They surely didn't——"

"But they did," she said, impetuously. "They came out here to see us, and when Aunt Naomi was good enough to invite them to play checkers with her they declined—positively declined!"

Compton quickly averted his head, and bit his lips till the blood came.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," and Miss Martha's blue eyes looked injured.

"I'm not laughing," said Compton seriously; "I think they were cads for treating her so."

"I'm sure they are," she rejoined with hearty emphasis; "and I told them they needn't come here any more."

"Well, that ought to settle it."

"But it won't!"

"It won't?"

"No, it won't. There are fully twenty to come yet, and I'm satisfied all are going to act in the same ungentlemanly way. It's a conspiracy—that's what it is!"

Miss Martha arose from her chair and paced nervously up and down the floor. Compton didn't know just how far he stood from the precipice, and resolved to feel his way carefully.

"As many as that?" he hazarded.

"Yes, as many as that; there were twenty-four before."

"Twenty-four what?"

He felt safe there, but when he saw the red blood mounting to her temples he knew he had put his foot in it.

"Don't you know what I mean?"

She stopped and eyed him suspiciously, but one of Compton's business qualifications was a smooth and unreadable countenance.

"Er—you don't mean——"

"Yes, I do!" she admitted as promptly as if he had said "admirers." "And the whole thing will have to be gone all over again!"

"Y—e—s."

"I don't believe you understand me at all," she said, in some disdain.

"Indeed, I do!" protested the awkward father confessor, earnestly. "You make it as clear as daylight."

"Then what do I mean?"

Compton recalled a dim and distant day when the Sunday-school superintendent had asked a certain boy in jeans who looked strangely like himself to enumerate Job's various afflictions, and his self-confidence now was no stronger than it was then. He silently studied the floor, and then looked up, with a mighty resolve in his heart.

"Miss Martha," he said, "to be candid with you, I don't know what trouble's ahead of you, but if you'll tell me, and I can help you out any I'll do it if it ruins me!"

At these gallant words a faint smile chased the frowns away, and then the fair face became gloomy again.

"I don't know what you can do," she remarked, discouragedly; "I guess they'll all come and the little farce will be played with each one. There's no help for it."

Here light broke in on the man of electricity, and he was surprised at the glow it produced about his heartstrings.

"You mean there's twenty to come yet?"

The bright head nodded, resignedly.

"And you don't want 'em to come?" he went on with a boldness that astonished him.

A vigorous negative shake of the same head.

"I know a way to fix that," with excessive confidence.

She looked inquiringly.

"Yes, I do," he said, approaching her. "I'll see Aunt Naomi and ask her to let us get married."

The blue eyes were mirthful now as they looked over the handkerchief she had been holding to her eyes.

"I don't see what your marrying Aunt Naomi would do to help matters," she said sweetly—"even considering that she might consent."

"Me marry Aunt Naomi! Good Lord!"

He stepped back and ran his hand through his hair. Miss Martha regarded him reproachfully.

"I think Aunt Naomi is good enough for the best man that ever walked," she said with quiet dignity.

"I know she is," he said hurriedly, repairing the break—"too good; far too good for me. But what I meant to say, Miss Martha, is that if it would save you from—from—these fifty——"

"I said twenty."

"Yes, you did. These twenty visitors who won't play checkers with Aunt Naomi—that if you and I were to get engaged it would stop all that foolishness. I love you——"

He was very, very close to her now, and she wasn't trying to get away. As he took her hands she looked up at him with a mischievous smile.

"You forget—you wouldn't play checkers with Aunt Naomi, either, sir."

"But I will; I'll play with her morning, noon, and night. If that won't do, I'll shut down the works and play between times."

"That's good of you, Robert," whispered Martha, fluttering the white flag of surrender, "but the truth is, Aunt Naomi don't care much for checkers, and it was

only at my urgence she agreed to play with them when they made me tired."

"Then you're the—ah—the——" stammering over the astounding disclosure.

"The sinner," she said, demurely.

"Well, I never!" Then remembering something, he added, distrustfully: "She wanted me to play the first night."

She shrived him with a pair of warm, tremulous lips.

"It was all a mistake, Robert," she said; "when they weary me I cough and auntie gets out her checker-board. The night you came, I got up to stir the fire, and the smoke—I tried so hard to keep from it, but auntie heard me and like the good old soul she is she understood the time had come to relieve me, and she went about it in the usual way."

* * * * *

When the details got around to the club, McPherson offered a resolution, which was unanimously adopted:

"*Resolved,* That appearances are always misleading and deceptive, and we hereby retract all the mean things we've said and thought about Aunt Naomi these years past, and wish to say that we regard her as merely an innocent and guileless instrument in skilful hands, and, furthermore, that as long as we, individually, couldn't get Miss Martha we congratulate our fellow member, Robert Compton, on his luck."

"IF."

By James King Duffy.

IF trouble were a feather
A breath might blow away,
And only sunny weather
Came to us day by day,
We'd laugh away the wrinkles
That tell of life's decay,
If trouble were a feather
A breath might blow away.

If age were always mellow
And brought no carking care;
And Time a jolly fellow,
Would touch us unaware;
Then down life's gentle gradient
We'd glide as light as air;
If age were always mellow
And brought no carking care.

If maids would set the fashion
Never to answer "nay,"
When love, the tender passion,
Spoke in its pleading way;
Then thro' life's leafy by-ways
In lovers' mood we'd stray,
If maids would set the fashion
To never answer "nay."

If only kindly sinners
Could run this world's affairs,
We'd sit at better dinners
And spend less time at prayers;
And at life's sparkling banquet
We'd drown corroding cares,
If only kindly sinners
Could run this world's affairs.

If fame were worth the striving,
And all were in the race,
And each of us were driving
A horse well backed for place;
Then round life's race course speeding,
We'd set the devil's pace,
If fame were worth the striving,
And all were in the race.