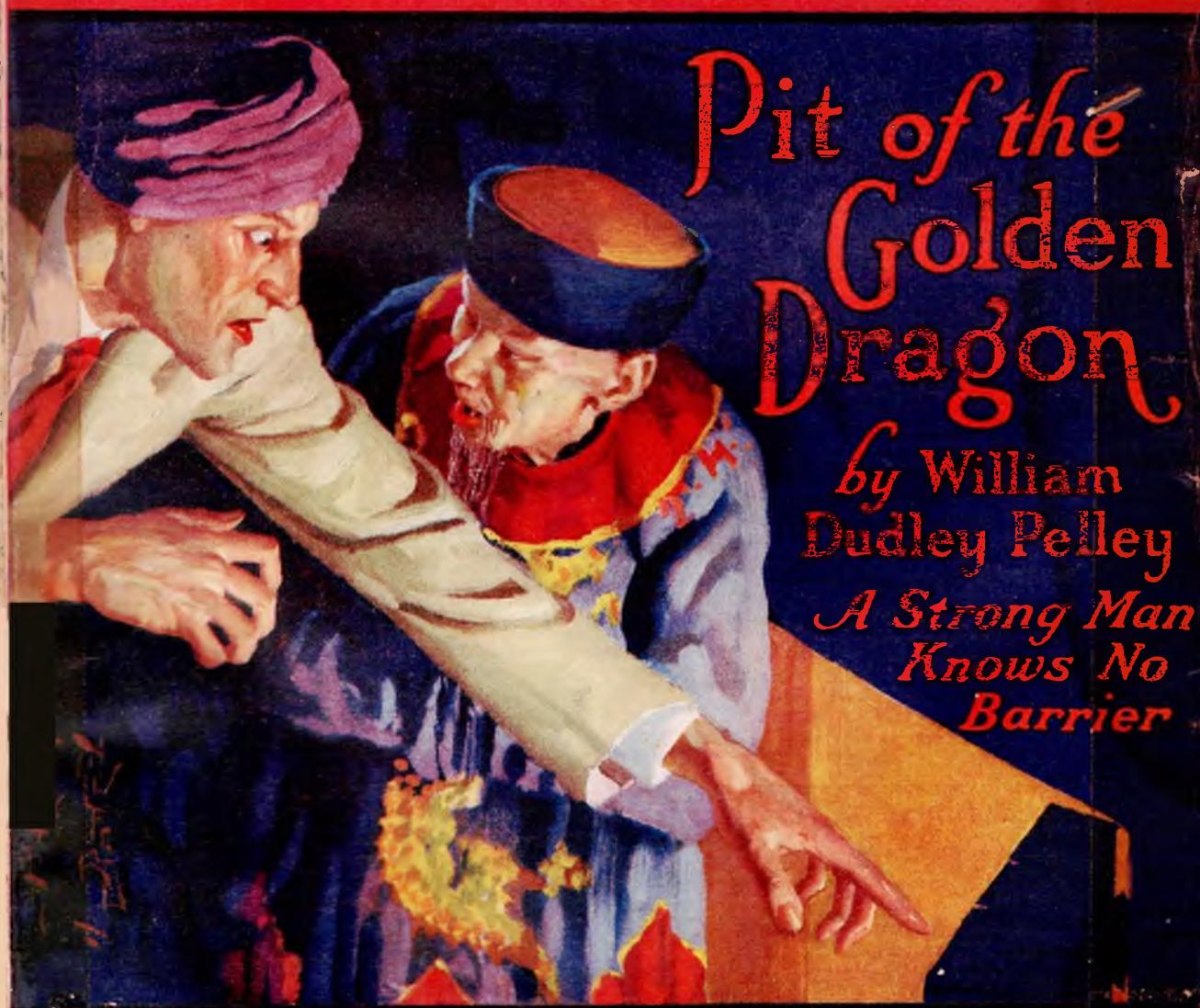


ARGOSY - ALL-STORY WEEKLY

ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY



*Pit of the
Golden
Dragon*

by William
Dudley Pelley
*A Strong Man
Knows No
Barrier*

10¢ PER
COPY

JULY 7

BY THE \$4.00
YEAR



No Money Down Sent on Approval

Our determination to this year double our sales of the world famous *Santa Fe Special* and *Bunn Special* Watches prompts this matchless offer.

While other watch dealers are raising their prices, asking you for larger monthly payments, and making payment terms harder for you to meet, we are offering you our new model *Santa Fe Special*, and the famous *Bunn Special*, no advance in price, no money down, easier terms and smaller monthly payments. WE realize the war is over, and in order to double our business we MUST give you pre-war inducements, better prices, easier terms, and smaller payments.

LOOK! **Santa Fe Special AND Bunn Special Watches**

Without one penny of advance payment let us place in your hands to see, to examine, to inspect, to admire, to approve a real masterpiece in watch creation.

Page 12 of Our Watch Book Is of Special Interest to You!

Ask for our Watch Book free--then select the watch you would like to see, either the famous *Santa Fe Special* or the 6 position *Bunn Special*, and let us explain our easy payment plan and send the Watch, express prepaid, for you to examine. No money down.

Santa Fe Watch Co., 757 Thomas Bldg., Topeka, Kans.

Please send prepaid and without obligation your Watch Book free, explaining your "No Money Down" Offer on the *Santa Fe Special* Watch.

Name.....

Address.....

State.....

REMEMBER No money down easy payments buys a master timepiece—a 21 Jewel guaranteed for a lifetime at about half the price you pay for a similar watch of other makes. No money down a wonderful offer.

Santa Fe Watch Company
757 Thomas Bldg., Topeka, Kans.

I Want 1000 Men For Big Jobs in ELECTRICITY

Previous Experience Unnecessary

Men trained in Electricity—Electrical Experts are in greatest demand right now. Thousands of men are needed to keep pace with the amazing growth of this Wonderful Industry. The opportunities for advancement and a big success are the greatest ever known. I need more men to prepare for big paying jobs. No matter what kind of work you are doing or how much you earn, Electricity offers you more.

Be a Certified Electrical Expert Earn \$70 to \$200 a Week

Today even the ordinary Electrician—the "screw driver" kind—is making money—big money. But it's the trained man—the man who knows the whys and wherefores of Electricity—the "Electrical Expert" who is picked out to "boss" ordinary Electricians—to boss Big Jobs—the jobs that pay. You, too, can learn to fill one of these jobs—spare time only is needed. Be an "Electrical Expert" earn \$70 to \$200 a week.

Age or Lack of Experience No Drawback

You don't have to be a College Man; you don't have to be a High School graduate. If you can read and write English, my course will make you a big success. It is the most simple, thorough, and successful Electrical Course in existence, and offers every man, regardless of age, education or previous experience, the chance to become, in a very short time, an "Electrical Expert," able to make from \$70 to \$200 a week.

I Give You a Real Training

As Chief Engineer of the Chicago Engineering Works I know exactly the kind of training a man needs to get the highest salaries. Hundreds of my students are now earning \$3,500 to \$10,000 a year. Many are successful ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS.

Your Satisfaction Guaranteed

So sure am I that you can learn Electricity—so sure am I that after studying with me, you too, can get into the "big money" class in electrical work, that I will guarantee under bond to return every penny paid me in tuition if, when you have finished my course, you are not satisfied it was the best investment you ever made.

FREE Electrical Working Outfit, Radio Course and Employment Service

I give each student a Splendid Outfit of Electrical Tools, Materials and Measuring Instruments absolutely FREE. You do PRACTICAL work

L.L.COKE
CHIEF
ENGINEER



AT HOME with this Outfit, You start right in after the first few lessons to WORK AT YOUR PROFESSION in a practical way. I also furnish them supplies, a complete Radio Course, Special Lessons for men going into business for themselves and free employment service and many other things that other schools don't furnish.

Get Started Now; Mail Coupon

I want to send you the "Vital Facts" of the Electrical Industry including my Electrical Book, Proof Lessons and a sample of my guarantee bond all FREE. These cost you nothing and you'll enjoy them. Make the start today for a bright future in Electricity. Send in the coupon—NOW.

L. L. COKE, Chief Engineer
CHICAGO ENGINEERING WORKS
Dept. 17-B 2150 Lawrence Ave. Chicago, Ill.

Use This "FREE OUTFIT" Coupon

L. L. COKE, Chief Engineer
Chicago Engineering Works, Dept. 17-B
2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir:—Send at once the "Vital Facts" containing Sample Lessons, your Big Book, and full particulars of your Free Outfit and Home Study Course—all fully prepaid without obligation on my part.

Name.....

Address.....

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

The "Cooke" Trained Man is the "Big Pay" Man

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY W E E K L Y

VOL. CLII

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NUMBER 5

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SHIRLY LEONARD was a crook — and yellow, at that. But everything came his way in the prize ring and out of it — until the day of the big jolt. What happened then is worth reading.

JAMES B. HENDRYX

writer of vivid tales, tells the story in

WITHOUT GLOVES

A SIX-PART SERIAL BEGINNING NEXT WEEK

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

RICHARD H. TITTERINGTON, Secretary

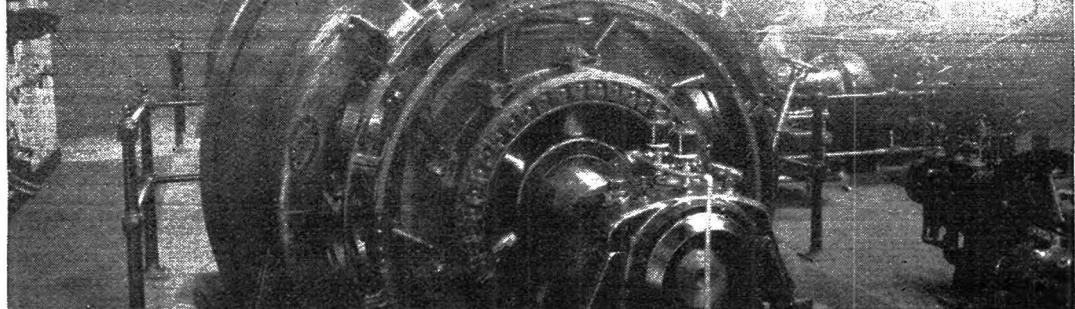
CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$6.00 to Canada, and \$7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered.

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ELECTRICAL EXPERTS IN DEMAND



Good Positions Await Trained Men *Salaries of \$12 to \$30 a day not unusual*

THE Electrical field needs men. It needs them badly. Hardly a week or a month passes but what some new use for electricity is discovered. And each new use means new positions—*better positions!*—for men who have trained themselves as experts in this wonderfully fascinating work.

The recent growth of Radio is simply an example of the progress that is yet to be made. No work offers greater opportunity to the man of an inventive turn of mind than Electricity. Salaries of \$12 to \$30 a day are not unusual.

Best of all, you can study Electricity in your own home in spare time, without losing a day or a dollar from your present work. The International Correspondence Schools will teach you everything you need to know, just as it has been teaching other men in just your circumstances for more than 31 years. There is no doubt about the ability of the I. C. S. to help you.

Thomas A. Edison says:—"I have watched the progress of the International Correspondence Schools almost from the very beginning. To me their rapid growth is easily understood, because

I realize the practical value that is back of them and know something too of the success attained by many ambitious men throughout the country who have taken their courses."

And Dr. Charles P. Steinmetz, the "electrical wizard" of the General Electric Co., says:—"I am familiar with the textbooks and method of instruction used by the International Correspondence Schools in their courses in Electrical Engineering, and I also know of a number of young men who have taken these courses with great benefit. I believe that any young man who is interested in electricity, but who cannot find an opportunity to go through an engineering college, if he will apply himself to one of these courses will find it a practical and economical way to acquire a knowledge of the profession."

Just mark and mail the coupon printed below and full information about Electrical Engineering, Electric Lighting, Electric Wiring, Electric Railways, Radio or any other work of your choice will come to you by return mail. Today—not Tomorrow—is the day to make that all-important start toward success.

—TEAR OUT HERE—

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS, BOX 2198-C, SCRANTON, PA.

Without cost or obligation on my part, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject before which I have marked an X in the list below:

<input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> Business Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting and Bwys.	<input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertising
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring	<input type="checkbox"/> Min' Foreman or Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Stenography and Typing
<input type="checkbox"/> Radio	<input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> Business Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> Architect	<input type="checkbox"/> Banking and Banking Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service
<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue Print Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy (including C.P.A.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk
<input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder	<input type="checkbox"/> Nicholson Cost Accounting	<input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects
<input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Positions	<input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman	<input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping	<input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects
<input type="checkbox"/> Automobile Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> Business English	<input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating
<input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating	<input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry	<input type="checkbox"/> Business Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/> French
<input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy			

Name.....Street Address.....

City.....State.....Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department



is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rates in the Munsey Magazines:

	Line Rate	Combination Line Rate
Munsey's Magazine	\$1.50	\$4.00
Argosy-Allstory	2.50	Less 2% cash discount
Weekly		
Minimum space four lines.		

August 11th Argosy-Allstory Forms Close July 14th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

WANTED—Tailoring salesmen, make \$60 to \$125 per week. Biggest merchants in many towns have started with our lines. We are the largest made-to-measure tailoring house in the country, furnishing elaborate sample equipments, including 500 all wool fabrics and guaranteed absolute satisfaction, perfect fit, best workmanship, or no sales. Write me for line and all accessories to be sent free. Tell us all about yourself. ADDRESS HENRY P. ADAMS, SALES MANAGER, BOX 483, CHICAGO, ILL.

AGENTS—Send for sworn proof of \$5 to \$15 daily, introducing new style guaranteed hosiery: 57 styles, 17 colors; no capital or experience required. Just write orders. We deliver and collect. Your pay daily, also monthly bonus. Free auto offer besides. Complete outfit furnished. All colors—grades including silks. Mac-O-Chee Mills Co., Desk 27012, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Agents—Portraits, photo pillow tops, frames, sheet pictures, medallions, merchant's signs, waterproof and tea aprons, guaranteed hose, toilet requisites, luminous crucifixes, catalog 50 specialties free. 30 days credit. Jas. C. Bailey Co., Desk H-7, Chicago.

AGENTS MAKE A DOLLAR AN HOUR. Sell Mendets, a patent patch for instantly mending leaks in all utensils. Sample package free. Collette Manufacturing Company, Dept. 306-B, Amsterdam, N. Y.

AGENTS—Earn \$30 to \$35 extra every week taking orders for our high class tailoring—during your spare time—made-to-measure suits from \$14.50 to \$39.50. Your own clothes at low wholesale prices. No experience needed. Write for our BIG FREE SAMPLE outfit. THE PROGRESS TAILORING CO., Dept. U-104, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS: SELL FULL LINE OF GUARANTEED HOSIERY for men, women and children. Must have 12 months or replaced free. All styles, colors and finest line of silk hose. Often take orders for dozen pairs in one family. Write for sample outfit. THOMAS MFG. CO., Class 407, Dayton, Ohio.

ORANGEADE in Powder—just add cold water—most delicious drink you ever tasted. Fine for home, parties, Picnics, dances, etc. Send dime for ten glass pkg., or 50¢ for 7 kinds (70 big glassfuls) Cherry, Grape, Strawberry, etc., postpaid with particulars how to make Big Money. CHAS. MORRISSEY CO., 4417-29 Madison St., Chicago, Ill.

Agents, Men or Women, \$240 a month. Steady employment. Take orders for Jennings New Guaranteed Hosiery for men, women, children. Written guarantee with each pair. All styles. Finest silk hose. Low priced. Write for samples. Big money for spare time. Jennings Mfg. Co., Dept. 309, Dayton, Ohio.

SIDELINE SALESMEN WANTED: sell coal to your trade in carload lots. Earn week's pay in an hour. WASHINGTON COAL CO., Stock Yards Station, Dept. T, Chicago.

"\$10 A DAY AND MORE," our new book, shows clearly how you may gain sure success and large profits selling Guaranteed Hosiery and Underwear, factory to family. It is Free. Write today. C. & D. CO., 13-E Grand Rajah, Mich.

AGENTS—C. T. A. prices reduced again. Suits \$18.00, made to order, any size or style. Orders easy to get. Big profits. Sample outfit free. Write Chicago Tailors Ass'n. World's largest tailors, Dept. 360, Station C, Chicago.

WONDERFUL INVENTION—Eliminates all needles for phonographs. Saves time and annoyance. Preserves records. Lasts for years. 12,000,000 prospects. \$15.00 daily. Free sample to workers. EVERLAST, Desk 712, Metcalf Bldg., Chicago.

\$50,000 PICTURE MAN FRIEDMAN MADE TAKING ORDERS. Beginners can make \$100.00 weekly with my canvassing skill. Experienced men make more. Free circular "Profits in Portraits" explains. Samples free. PICTURE MAN FRIEDMAN, Dept. A, 673 Madison, Chicago.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC., ARE WANTED for publication. Good ideas bring big money. Submit MSS., or write LITERARY BUREAU, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

FREE TO WRITERS—a wonderful little book of money making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your copy now! Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

SEND ME YOUR SHORT STORIES AND PHOTOPLAY PLOTS. I'll Reviso, Typewrite in proper technical form and place on the market. Send manuscript or write H. L. HURSH, Dept. 4, 210 Munch St., Harrisburg, Pa.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

AT LAST—World's Greatest Adding Machine. Almost human. Retails \$15; work equals \$3.00 machine. \$500 monthly easily made, demonstrating to stores, offices, garages, factories. Simple, easy; adds, subtracts, multiplies, divides, automatically. Speedy, accurate, durable, handsome. Five year guarantee. Tremendous demand; amazing profits. Liberal trial offer. Protected territory. Write quick. Lightning Calculator Corp., Dept. A, Grand Rapids, Mich.

TAILORING REPRESENTATIVES MAKE \$65.00 and up weekly selling our line of made to measure suits and overcoats—\$18.50 to \$37.50 NO EXTRA CHARGE FOR LARGE SIZES, ETC. Send at once for our FREE sample outfit and make extra dollars that your efforts entitle you to. "OUR CLOTHES MAKE GOOD OR WE WILL." ATLAS TAILORING COMPANY, 215 So. Market Street, Chicago.

WE START YOU in business, furnishing everything. Men and women, \$30.00 to \$100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. W. Hillyer Razstale, Drawer 92, East Orange, N. J.

AGENTS STOP WISHING—Work you can make \$10 Daily selling Articles Everybody Needs. Particulars Free. Write B. & G. RUBBER CO., Dept. 329, Pittsburgh, Pa.

SELL SOMETHING NINE OUT OF TEN WOMEN WILL BUY because it saves double its cost the day it is bought. 50¢ each. \$2.00 profit on \$3.00 sales. PREMIER MFG. CO., Dept. 811, Detroit, Mich.

AGENTS: \$30.00 DAILY REPRESENTING FACTORY. Electric lighted vanity cases. Fastest seller out. Pay advanced. We deliver. Write for sample. GOLDSMITH, 29 So. Clinton, Chicago.

AGENTS—90¢ an hour to advertise and distribute samples to consumer. Write quick for territory and particulars. AMERICAN PRODUCTS CO., 8494 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Men & Women—Everywhere make \$3 per hour and more! Sell Iron Board Covers, Rubber Aprons, Shopping Bags, Embroidered Aprons, Sateen Coverall Dresses. Free Sample offer! AMERICAN BRAIDING CO., Dept. A, 329 W. Monroe, Chicago.

LIVE AGENTS MAKE \$10 DAY SELLING EUREKA STRAINER and Splash Preventer for every water faucet. Takes on sight. Widely advertised and known. Get details today. A. D. Sved Filter Company, 13 Franklin, New York.

GET OUR FREE SAMPLE CASE—Toilet articles, perfumes and specialties. Wonderfully profitable. LA DERMA CO., Dept. D, St. Louis, Mo.

TAILORING SALESMEN—Fastest selling line, suits, made to measure—\$29.50—one price, all wool. Profits in advance. Biggest, old reliable house. W. D. SMITH CO., established 1851, Dept. 21, Chicago.

HERE'S A BUSINESS—Requires only table room. We start and help build business. Work for us painting Land-scape photo print pictures. No experience outfit furnished. Free literature. TANGLEY COMPANY, 193 Main, Muscatine, Iowa.

Agents \$60—\$200 a week FREE SAMPLES Gold Sign Letters for Store Fronts and Office Windows. Anyone can put them on. Big demand everywhere. Liberal offer to general agents. METALLIC LETTER CO., 427-A North Clark St., Chicago.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

LAND OPPORTUNITY! 20, 40, 80 ac. tracts; only \$10 to \$50 down; bal. long time. Near hustling city in lower Mich. Investigate. Write today for free illustrated booklet giving full information. SWIGART LAND COMPANY, Y-1245 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

MISCELLANEOUS

YOU read these little advertisements. Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people would read your message—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe your own services? Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

The Biggest Opportunity of Your Life

**\$3 An Hour**

Carl P. King, of Kentucky, a machinist, says: "Since I received my outfit I've spent calling on customers has paid me \$2.00 an hour profit."

**\$625 A Month**

Andrew B. Spencer, of Pennsylvania, is an insurance man who represents us in spare time. We paid him \$625 for one month's spare time.

**Large and Steady Profits**

J. J. Maher, of Maine, finds the Comer business a sure way to steady and large profits. He averages \$250 to \$350 a month and frequently goes over the \$500 mark.

**\$250 For One Month's Spare Time**

F. E. Wright, South Carolina railroad man, finds the Comer Agency a great profit maker. \$256.56 for one month's leisure hours' effort.

Will You Give Me A Chance To Pay You \$48 A Week?

I want to make you a special new offer whereby you can earn from \$100 to \$1000 a month, cash. And I am going to tell you how to get started immediately without waiting or delay.

You can be your own boss. You can work just as many hours a day as you please. You can start when you want to and quit when you want to. You don't need experience and you get your money in cash every day when you earn it.

These Are Facts

Does that sound too good to be true? If it does, then let me tell you what J. R. Head did in a small town in Kansas. Head lives in a town of 631 people. He was sick, broke, out of a job. He accepted my offer. I gave him the same chance I am now offering you. At this new work he has made as high as \$69.50 for one day's work.

If that isn't enough, then let me tell you about E. A. Sweet of Michigan. He was an electrical engineer and didn't know anything about selling. In his first month's spare time he earned \$243. Inside of six months he was making between \$800 and \$1200 a month.

W. J. McCrary is another man I want to tell you about. His regular job paid him \$21.6 a day, but this wonderful new work has enabled him to make \$9.00 a year. Yes, and right this very minute you are being offered the same proposition that has made these men so successful. Do you want it?

A Clean, High-Grade Dignified Business

Have you ever heard of Comer All-Weather Coats? They are advertised in all the leading magazines. Think of a single coat that can be worn all year round. A good-looking, stylish coat that's good for summer or winter—that keeps out wind, rain or snow, a coat that everybody should have, made of fine materials—for men, women and children, and sells for less than the price of an ordinary coat.

Now, Comer Coats are not sold in stores. All our orders come through our own representatives. Within the next few months we will pay our representatives more than three hundred thousand dollars for sending us orders.

And now I am offering you the chance to become our representative in your territory and get *your* share of that three hundred thousand dollars. All you do is to take orders. We do the rest. We deliver. We collect and you get your money the same day you take the order.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Comer Manufacturing Company is the biggest business of its kind in the world. Every statement is true. Every promise will be fulfilled and anyone writing to them is assured of honest, square treatment.

You can see how simple it is. We furnish you with a complete outfit and tell you how to get the business in your territory. We help you to get started. If you send us only two average orders a day, which you can get in an hour or so in the evening, you can make \$48 a week and more.

Maybe You Are Worth \$1000 A Month

Well, here is your chance to find out, for this is the same proposition that enabled George Garon to make a clear profit of \$40 in his first day's work—the same proposition that gave R. W. Krieger \$20 net profit in a half hour. It is the same opportunity that gave A. B. Spencer \$625 cash for one month's spare time.

I need 500 men and women, and I need them right away. If you mail the coupon at the bottom of this ad I will show you the easiest, quickest, simplest plan for making money that you ever heard of. I will send you a complete outfit. I will send you a beautiful style book and samples of cloth. I will tell you where to go, what to say, and how to succeed. Inside of thirty days you can have hundreds of dollars in cash.

All you need do today is write your name down below, cut out the coupon and mail it to me at once. You take no risk, you invest no money, and this may be the one outstanding opportunity of your life to earn more money than you ever thought possible.

Find Out NOW!

Remember, it doesn't cost you a penny. You don't agree to anything, and you will have a chance without waiting—without delay and without investment—to go right out and make big money. Do it. Don't wait. Mail the coupon now.

C. E. Comer

THE COMER MFG. COMPANY
Dept. SY-159, Dayton, Ohio

Just Mail This NOW!

The Comer Mfg. Company
Dept. SY-159, Dayton, Ohio

Please send me, without expense or obligation, your special proposition, together with complete outfit and instructions, so I can begin at once to earn money.

Name.....

Address.....

(Print or write plainly)

Easy to Learn Cartooning at Home

**Earn \$60 to \$200 a Week In
This Fascinating Profession!**

Sport, humorous, serious and animated cartoons—never have they been in such big demand! Successful cartoonists now earn \$3,000 to over \$100,000 a year. You can learn to draw these cartoons that SELL. Many of our students earn big money even while learning!

Easy Home-Study Method

Prepared by one of America's foremost cartoonists, this course teaches you to originate and draw all kinds of cartoons. You learn at home in spare time, yet all your work receives through the mail the individual help and criticism of prominent cartoon experts. Many successful cartoonists taught by this method.



Send For Free Book

Learn more about this method and the amazing opportunities open to you in this attractive fast-growing field. Our newly prepared Free Book is crammed with valuable information about this work and explains fully this easy home-study method. Mail post card or letter for it TODAY!

Washington School of Cartooning
1182 Marden Building. Washington, D.C.

SEND NO MONEY

Save 50%

20 YR 14 KT GOLD-FILLED CASE

A rare opportunity to buy this high grade watch 50 per cent below cost. 12 size, thin model, 20 yr. 14kt gold-filled case. Beautiful dial. Hand-wound, steel movement. Full jewel, well known ALERT movement. Regulated and adjusted to keep excellent time.

Order today. Send no money. Pay only \$6.80 on arrival. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back.

FREE: 14kt gold-filled Waldemar chain and knife if you order now.

SUPREME JEWELRY MFG. CO.
Dept. 826, 434 Broadway, N.Y.

FRECKLES

**Don't Hide Them With a Veil; Remove
Them With Othine—Double Strength**

This preparation for the treatment of freckles is usually so successful in removing freckles and giving a clear, beautiful complexion that it is sold under guarantee to refund the money if it fails.

Don't hide your freckles under a veil; get an ounce of Othine and remove them. Even the first few applications should show a wonderful improvement, some of the lighter freckles vanishing entirely.

Be sure to ask the druggist for the double strength Othine; it is this that is sold on the money-back guarantee.

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

HELP WANTED

RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS, STENOGRAPHERS, CLERKS, TYPISTS, wanted by Government. Examinations weekly. Prepare at home. Write for free list and plan 301, payment after securing position. CSS, 1710 Market St., Philadelphia.

MEN—AGE 17 TO 45. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. Travel; make secret investigations, reports. Salaries; expenses. American Foreign Detective Agency, 329, St. Louis, Mo.

SELL US YOUR SPARE TIME, YOU CAN EARN FIFTEEN TO FIFTY DOLLARS WEEKLY writing showcards at home. No canvassing. Pleasant, profitable profession, easily, quickly learned by our simple graphic block system. Artistic ability unnecessary. We instruct you and supply you work. WILSON METHODS, LTD., Dept. G, Toronto, Canada.

BE A LABORATORY EXPERT. EARN \$300 TO \$500 A MONTH. STUDY MICROBIOLOGY, BACTERIOLOGY, LABORATORY TECHNOLOGY, SANITATION. WRITE FOR FREE 148 PAGE PROSPECTUS TODAY. INT'L PHYSICIANS & SURGEONS COLL. OF MICROBIOLOGY, ROOM 120, 550 GARFIELD AVENUE, CHICAGO.

HELP WANTED—MALE

EARN \$100 TO \$250 MONTHLY, EXPENSES PAID, AS RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR POSITIONS GUARANTEED. AFTER 3 MONTHS SPARE TIME STUDY OR MONEY REFUNDED. EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES. WRITE FOR FREE BOOKLET CM-30, STAND. BUSINESS TRAINING INST., BUFFALO, N.Y.

MEN NEEDED FOR U. S. MAIL SERVICE. \$115 to \$190. Experience or correspondence course unnecessary. Write E. S. BISHOP, Drawer 579, Joplin, Mo.

All men, women, boys, girls, 17 to 60, willing to accept Government Positions. \$117-\$190, traveling or stationary. Write Mr. OZMENT, 198, St. Louis, Mo., immediately.

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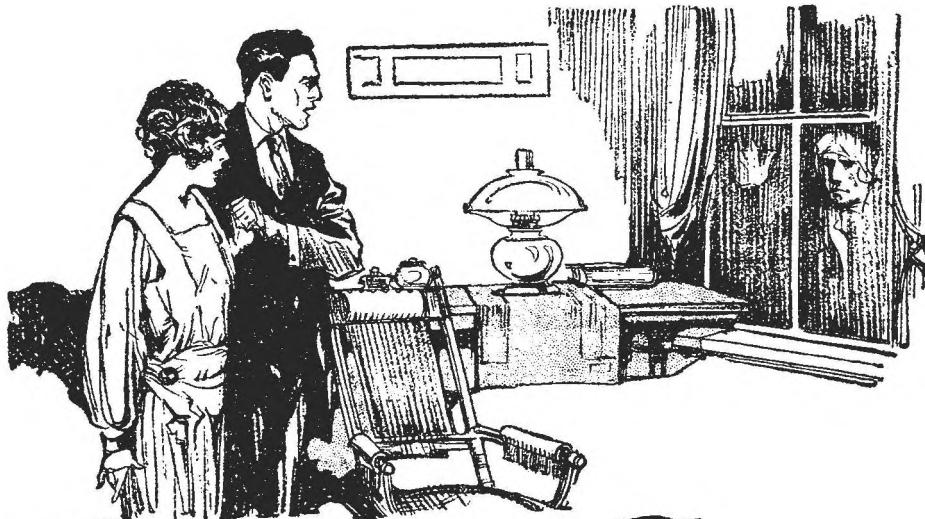
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Pit of the Golden Dragon

By **WILLIAM DUDLEY PELLEY**

Author of "February-Third Joe," "Watch the Yankee," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE "SIX O'CLOCK" ARRIVES.

GALESBURG, in eastern Kansas, is off the main line of the Union Pacific, on a connecting road that joins two continental systems. Few trains stop at Galesburg. Local service is furnished by a small engine, a baggage car and a passenger coach which plies between two junctions twice each day, carrying away or bringing up the traveling salesmen, the returning prodigals or the out-of-town visitors.

At the close of an April day sixteen years in the past, when the whistle sounded south of the town and this grubby little train

curved up through the outlying freight yards on shining rails, the last coach contained three men. All the rest of its passengers were women.

The first of these three men sat up near the forward door. He was elderly and scholarly in appearance and had buttoned his overcoat and pulled his hat down firmly in anticipation of a swift dash through the light spring drizzle to the town's only hotel across from the station, up Main Street. Bows of tortoise shell rimmed glasses were pressed against gray temples, his mouth was hard and firm, in his forehead was a vertical wrinkle. Something about him indicated that he might be a rather diffi-

cult person to placate if he suspected any young bank cashier was short in his accounts.

The second man in the middle of the coach also wore a soft felt hat and had buttoned his coat in anticipation. He was younger and wore no glasses. He possessed a moderate amount of male good looks—in a stiff, selfish, impersonal way—yet no one would ever slap him on the back and call him by his first name and he conveyed an impression of friendlessness, as though along with satisfaction over getting home went the uncertainty as to how he would be welcomed.

This uncertainty—or something graver—was troubling him mightily. At times a suggestion of stark fright widened his hazel eyes; as the freight yards were passed and the street lamps of the little town came into view he seemed to control his panic and turn petulant. He was the first to get to his feet as the train slowed, and by the time it came to a stop he was out on the car platform, a suit case in either hand. Those two suit cases were plastered and be-daubed with labels and stickers of steamship lines and hotels in the Orient.

There was another on that train, the third man, who kept himself as inconspicuous as possible and rode in the last seat of the last car, where he would draw the least attention. At first glance he might have been taken for negro or Mexican. But he was neither—his hair was straight and long, like a woman's. It was knotted under his enveloping hat with a jeweled clasp. His features were prominent and cameo clean in profile. When he arose and slipped out upon the rear platform as the train approached the Galesburg station, he showed himself six feet or more in height and his carriage was imperial. Somewhere he was a Somebody.

These three, then, came up to Galesburg that night: Olaf Wismer, the Federal bank examiner; Jack Cooper, foreign representative of the local iron mills, back from a seven months' trip in the Far East; a tall, dark, sinister looking man with woman's hair, whose identity was something with which to conjure, inasmuch as no one in Galesburg ever learned who he was nor why

he came—no one but Jack Cooper and one other, of whom more presently.

The train stopped with a grinding of brakes, a splashing of water and a tired whistle of compressed air. Jim Doherty, station agent, baggageman and telegrapher in the day time, bent his head against the wet and pulled his truck to the edge of the baggage car door. The passengers began to alight. Jim always went off duty as soon as the "six o'clock" moved on up the valley; he paid them little attention, intent on getting the express matter disposed of, and going home. So he did not see the bank examiner nor Cooper when they crossed the platform, wormed through the coterie of women and splashed through the slush and mud behind the station and across Main Street to the business section and hotel.

But Jim did catch a glance of the third male passenger in a manner which momentarily puzzled him. An express package was thrown out to him from the car and he missed it. The package fell down between platform and rails. Jim lowered himself down after it. As he looked under the car he saw a shape slink across the opposite track and disappear in shadow. It resembled a very tall man who looked like a negro, yet who wore his black felt hat like a Chinaman. Just before he faded into the shadow of the empty freight cars, however, he straightened and watched some one.

"Sneaky lookin' cuss," commented Jim to himself. "Wonder why he got off the back side of the train?"

But his package recovered, another bundle was tossed to him. In the subsequent business of turning the office over to the night telegrapher, Doherty forgot the suspicious looking stranger.

CHAPTER II.

A TELEGRAM—AND A QUESTION.

THE physical characteristics of Galesburg will call up familiar comparisons with hundreds of typically mid-Western communities, wherever the wandering sons and daughters of American folk peruse this page.

It lay along a muddy creek which winds down serpentine from southern Nebraska, twisting its way through adobe mud, through cottonwood and tumble weed and sage. At a juncture of river and long-since-obliterated Colorado trail, the town was founded and grew. Throughout the Middle West may be found hundreds of such communities—unpainted, weather-beaten, half paved, much billboarded, mostly wallowing in a desert of sand or mud.

A series of grain elevators lined along the railroad tracks, announced the town on the south. Those tracks ran parallel to Main Street; the railroad station in the heart of the business section was second in importance only to the courthouse over the way. From a store, a saloon, a hitching rail, a blacksmith shop, a printing office, a handful of cheap pine houses at first, the day came when the pond of spring mud before the courthouse was curbed, grass grew behind the station and was mown, a soldiers' monument was erected by public subscription, industries came in with the development of the iron deposits, grain elevators were erected, a village improvement society laid out flower beds, the saloon was eliminated, two banks prospered; the newspaper changed from weekly to daily and held its own. Galesburg, in that part of the State, became a shopping center and place of importance. Ten thousand people called it home even sixteen years ago—the kind of American town that New York novelists score in quadruple editions and cross-country tourists remember as the place where they came in after a day's ride across wind-swept prairies and after bumping up through a traffic jam of dilapidated Fords, found they could get a night's lodging with supper and breakfast for a dollar and sixty cents. For which they thanked God, took advantage of the price, pulled away from the next day and forgot completely before they had reached the western skyline.

Back over the years which had passed, however, like every typical American community, Galesburg had possessed its due quota of human successes and tragedies. And assuredly not the least of the latter was one Wilse Dilling, who each night took Jim Doherty's place as station agent and tele-

rapher in the muddy heart of the little metropolis.

When the man with the deep, vertical forehead wrinkle emerged from the Galesburg House dining room later that evening, he went into the poorly lighted lobby and procured a pad of telegraph blanks. Crossing to one of the ink splotched writing tables, he penned a telegram. Returning the pad of blanks to the desk, he accosted the night clerk.

"Where's the Western Union office?" he asked curtly.

"Over in the station," came his answer. "Go over and pound on the door till Wilse Dilling hears you. We don't send many telegrams out o' this place at night. There ain't nothing to telegraph *about!*"

The bank examiner smiled grimly and went out. Down Main Street, two blocks westward, he wallowed across to the dimly lighted station and entered the mediocre, tobacco scented waiting room.

It was one of those pine board stations built after a stock pattern from Rowe, Massachusetts, to San Luis Obispo, California. Accommodations for waiting passengers took up the left hand half of the structure, while baggage and express room occupied the other. In between was the station agent's office, lighted by a bay window bulging from the front and commanding a view of wide platform and trackage in either direction and surmounted by a great semaphore and electrical transformer system. In this office, behind the closed ticket window, telegraph keys clicked monotonously, musically.

Wismere crossed over and knocked loudly on the door.

"Come in," a voice finally invited.

The bank examiner found himself in a cubby-hole of a room heated by a small stove of sheet iron, with a bow desk in the three windows, a counter separating him from the man who sat thereat and much express and railroad matter littering walls, corners and dilapidated benches.

"I've got a wire that's got to go to-night," the examiner announced. "Government business and important."

The operator nodded and reached for the proffered message without turning around

or taking his hand from the key. Apparently he read the scribbled words mechanically while listening subconsciously to the message in transit.

Suddenly, however, the drift of the former hit him. There came a start of his body, a slight contraction of his shoulders, his hand trembled and locked the key. Still back to the patron, he appeared to stare mesmerically at the yellow sheet before him. It was abruptly quiet in the dingy railroad office, quiet but for the outside patter of the warm, spring rain and the faint humming along the far flung wires.

Then the telegrapher turned slowly around. He raised his face. And such a face! Wismer gaped rudely.

Biting deep into the operator's powerful forehead was a green eyeshade. An electric bulb, burning above, cast a greenish tinge over those features, painting them the hue of a drowned corpse. But it was more than the weird coloring that held Wismer's glance. The operator possessed the most disturbing countenance the bank accountant had ever beheld in his life.

Beneath the heavy forehead, huge black eyes loomed through massive brows. A heavy, accipitral nose increased the power of the profile. But more than these, mouth and jaw were neolithic. Primal man might have possessed such facial strength to crunch the bones of the slain beneath a red moon in the river beds of long ago.

Down each harsh cheek, from the corners of the heavy nostrils to the chin, were furrows like great saber scars. That full, balanced chin was cleft in its center. One wondered, as Wismer wondered, how such a countenance could ever belong to a night telegrapher in a little tank town out in the Middle West. Wondered—until one beheld the things which stood in a corner near at hand, ready for instant use—a pair of battered crutches.

The elder man's gaze broke away from the fascination of that adamant face, down the chest and torso of the worker seated on the opposite side of the counter before him. From his well shaped head to his cordy, hard muscled trunk, the telegrapher was a splendid specimen of perfect American manhood. From his waist to his feet he pos-

sessed the twisted limbs of one whom childhood disease had tragically handicapped.

"Well," demanded the bank examiner, "can't you make out my writing?"

"Yes."

"Then, what's wrong?"

"Nothing. You're—the Federal bank examiner?"

"I am. What about it?"

"N-n-nothing," returned the cripple again. "This will cost you ninety cents."

"You're sure you can read my writing? I don't want that message garbled."

The telegrapher collected himself. To make certain there would be no misunderstanding he read aloud:

"Galesburg, Kan., April 10.
"HOLMES, Dept. Federal Banking,
"Chicago, Ill.:

"Learned at Leavenworth, Joe Sawn and Mike Horrity discharged last week. Probably heading toward Lee Fang's place, San Francisco. Wire coast and have them watched. Going through Citizens and National here tomorrow. Send instructions regarding Melton matter, local hotel."

"WISMER."

"O. K.," the examiner declared. "Be sure it goes to-night. And you'll find me at the Galesburg House when the answer comes back."

The cripple nodded.

Wismer had no excuse to remain. He reluctantly went out. But with the door into the waiting room closed behind him, he stopped and thoughtfully lighted a cigar.

The examiner had seen an expression in the telegrapher's face, and something in his manner, duplicated scores of times in his twelve years' experience, on the faces of fear-terrorized weaklings in cashiers' cages, who had gambled on the easiest way to fortune and affluence with the funds of depositors. Yet this fellow was not a bank cashier. Why, then, should this message to Washington have so strangely disturbed him? Intuitively, the bank man felt something was not as it should be. He was minded to go back in and become better acquainted with the powerful faced cripple. He thought of something better.

He crossed the empty waiting room and went out the rear door. A thousand feet

away, across the little park intervening, the lights of Main Street showed nebulously through the groggy rain. But the immediate vicinity was deserted. Wismer skirted the outside wall of the baggage room and gained the front platform. Keeping close against the wall, so as not to be seen by the telegrapher, he carefully peered within.

A few feet away, at his desk before the middle window opening out upon the platform and the tracks, Wilse Dilling was sitting rigid with the examiner's message gripped in one gorilla hand. The man's eyes were staring straight ahead. Mouth and jaw were like granite.

In a grim, silent, slow paroxysm of emotion, as the examiner watched he saw the gorilla hand close upon the message and crush it. The biceps in the naked arm stood out like whipcords.

Then, as Wismer's perplexity grew, he saw the cripple's countenance change. The rage, the wrath, the strength, the determination—died. Over the features descended such a look of softness, of spirituality, of wonderful soul-longing and sublimity that the examiner was as shocked as by the paroxysm of inexplicable rage. Slowly the telegrapher removed the green eyeshade. Wismer fancied he saw tears glisten in the coal-black eyes.

For an instant that face and those eyes were upraised. The cripple's lips moved, though Wismer was unable to hear the whispered words that came from them. Then, as slowly and inexplicably, the neolithic countenance was lowered—down, down, down. The left hand still crumpled the examiner's message, and that grip was never relaxed. But the right arm came up and made a pillow for the cripple's head. Down upon his wrist he dropped his face, and once, just once, Wismer thought he detected the shoulder movement of a sob. The telegrapher's face stayed there for a long time—so long that Wismer was becoming drenched dangerously in the rain.

The bank examiner crossed over to his hotel. He removed his soggy overcoat and sought a chair in one of the front windows.

"What do you know about that crippled fellow over in the station?" he finally asked the night clerk when the lobby emptied.

"Has he got anything to do with the banks in this town?"

"Banks? Naw!"

"Never worked in any of them?"

"Naw—not as I know of."

"How long has he been telegrapher here?"

"Four or five years."

"A native of the place?"

"Naw. He come out from the East, I think."

"Married?"

"What! With them twisted legs of his? I should say not."

"Got any folks here?"

"Naw!"

"Has he got any chum that works in either of the banks here?"

"Chum? I don't think so. Keeps pretty much to himself. Say, what's bitin' you, anyhow? What you wanner know for?"

"Never mind. Nothing important. I just wondered, that's all. Strange face he has—very strong personality."

"Yeah, he can look awful fierce at times, if he wants to—but he ain't a bad sort, Wilse ain't. I guess it cuts him a lot that he's a cripple and ain't able to get around with the fellers and girls like he might if his legs warn't dummies. I guess it hurt him pretty fierce when Gertie Hadley got herself engaged to a feller named Cooper who travels for the iron works. Gert used to feel sorry for him because he had so much trouble gettin' around—pumps himself back and forth to work in a three-wheeled tricycle with his arms, you know—and every time she had business around the station she'd call in and pass the time o' day with him."

"For a time he sat in her folks' pew in church. I guess he got sort o' stuck on her, but never let on about it because he's so crippled. But Gert fell in love with another fellow, and that left Wilse out of it. Since then he ain't been much of anywhere nor said much. Everybody feels sorry for him, yet he ain't the kind that 'll stand for much gummy sympathy. He's just—Wilse! A sort of town institution now. Mis' Pease, his landlady, says she thinks he's aimin' to write a book."

"A book!"

"Yeah! Nights when he ain't working at the station he shuts himself up in his room alone and writes and writes."

"About what?"

"Nobody knows. He always locks it up."

"Is he hopelessly crippled? Can't his legs be fixed?"

"You can search me. He told the minister once that he had faith that some day somethin' would happen that'd let him into the money to have 'em looked at. But it'll take a hell of a lot of faith to raise the dough for an operation like he'll need, I'm thinkin'."

The clerk was called to the rear. He left Wismer frowning—frowning mightily.

Why should his telegram to Washington have worked such alarm as the cripple's face had disclosed. Was it *his* telegram that had done it? Might it not have been something else?

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRET OF MICAH HADLEY.

WIULSE DILLING locked his telegraph key so it would not bother.

No one else entered the office; the town accepted that it was closed for the night. Over his typewriter one drop light burned dimly. Faintly the rain pattered outside.

And the little nickel alarm clock hung on the wall indicated ten minutes past eight, then fifteen, then twenty, half past, twenty-five minutes to nine. Finally grim decision registered on the cripple's face. He reached for the telephone, gave a number, got his connection.

"Come down and take my place at the key for a couple of hours, Ned," he requested. "I've got to leave the office on important private business."

A youngster who had been studying telegraphy under Dilling responded with alacrity, glad of the opportunity to put his instruction to practical application.

The cripple arose, and with assistance donned a frayed raincoat which hung on a wall peg. He pulled his derby well over

his eyes and lit a cigarette to steady his nerves. Out of office and waiting room he swung on his crutches to a three-wheeled tricycle on the rear platform. Lowering himself into the little vehicle he hooked the crutches on one side. Down the platform ramp to the crosswalk he guided himself, then with his arms he pumped the vertical side sticks and wheeled away into the thickening, nebulous mist.

One block north of the Main Street corner, in School Street, stood two houses almost identical in pattern. Built on the same frontal line of walk and lawn, they faced eastward about forty feet apart. The first of these was owned and occupied by Micah Hadley, his wife, and only daughter, Gertrude. The second belonged to a widow named Pease, who supported herself in reduced circumstances by renting rooms. Wilse Dilling boarded there.

As Wilse turned into School Street now, from the Hadley home he heard music. Some one was playing a hymn, and the knowledge of the organist's identity and the sentiment of the hymn she played, gripped him suddenly by the throat:

"Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide;
Though other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless—oh, abide with me!"

He swung off his little tricycle, mounted the veranda clumsily, and rang the bell. The music stopped. From the front room, radiant with anticipation, came a girl—a comely girl in a white frock, with hair like spun gold. Across to the door she sped, pink with love and the flush of greeting. The overhead lamp blinked on. The door was opened.

Thereupon the smile froze on her sensitive face. Her disappointment was pathetic.

"Oh—it's you!" she choked lamely.

The telegrapher tried to speak, but for the instant his tongue was thick and unwieldy with embarrassment.

"I wanted to see your dad, Gertie," he finally explained. He could hardly bring himself to look into her face.

The girl tortured her handkerchief an instant and collected herself also.

"I was rude," she said. "Forgive me, Wilse. I thought you were somebody else."

"I know," said Dilling, his husky voice continuing, "I just want to see your father a minute. It's important."

"But dad isn't home, Wilse. He didn't come home to supper. I think he must be at the bank."

A trace of the girl's heartache could not be kept from her voice. The cripple raised his eyes and inventoried the beauty of her—riot of fine golden hair, perfectly proportioned body, sensitive face, cameo sharp in the side lighting—in a pause which quickly became awkward.

"Thanks," he said. But there was misery in his voice also. He turned blankly and lowered himself down the steps while the girl closed the door behind him and extinguished the veranda light.

That was all. Yet part of a tragedy had been voiced and enacted.

The tricycle creaked methodically. Wilse made his way back to Main Street.

He knew whom Gertie Hadley had expected. He had passed Jack Cooper earlier that evening on his way to relieve Jim Doherty while Cooper hurried across the Square to reach the hotel.

At the southeast corner of Main and Custer Streets, the cripple drew his little vehicle up against the brick wall beneath the heavy plate glass windows of the Citizens National Bank. He swung himself up the three steps and peered through the glass doors into the depths of the place.

A single bulb burned over the antiquated old vault. Out of Micah Hadley's private office on the right, another splotch of illumination fell upon the lobby floor. Wilse tapped softly on the glass.

A strange thing happened. Stealthily, as Wilse tapped impatiently again and again, old Micah Hadley's thin face peered around the corner of the inner doorway. His behavior was so lugubrious that a vague, clammy fear seeped through Dilling. Weird silhouettes played on the bank floor and the wall.

"Let me in, Mr. Hadley," he called. "It's me—Wilse Dilling."

Old Hadley finally heard; got it through

his head that the cripple was alone. He tiptoed forward and opened the door.

"What do you want?" he demanded hoarsely. "We ain't open for business—nights."

"I know. I want to talk with you, Mr. Hadley. It's important."

The illumination at the bank door was very dim, supplied mostly from the street arc on the corner. But Micah's features were disclosed, and somehow they were twisted.

"You got a message for me?"

"Not a telegraph message, but—Mr. Hadley, let me in before any one sees us talking here!"

The demand was so imperative that Hadley gave way. The big door clicked softly after the two and the spring lock snapped.

"Anybody here with you?" asked Wilse.

"No. What's up?"

The cripple swung uninvited into the president's office. Micah followed in. Dilling sank into a chair; he could not long hold himself upright on the crutches. Hadley remained standing.

"Mr. Hadley, I've got something to say that may get me in mighty wrong with you, perhaps. But I've got to say it all the same."

The old banker felt his way to his chair, his strange eyes riveted on Dilling's furrowed face.

"Well? What is it?"

Dilling fixed him with a hard eye, coal-black.

"You know my position in this town—telegrapher at the station, nights."

Hadley nodded.

"I handle most of the night letters."

Again the wordless nod. Hadley's blue veined hands gripped his high backed walnut chair like claws.

"And, Mr. Hadley, it's only natural that I should know—certain things—which otherwise I wouldn't."

"What, for instance?"

"About other people's business. About—yours."

The blood began to fade from Micah's face, but his queer green eyes never flickered.

"Well, go on. I'm listening. What do

you know about my business that calls you here to-night?"

"I hope to God I'm wrong, Mr. Hadley, but it's for your best interest I'm risking it—it's about all those New York telegrams you sent and received a week ago. I couldn't help putting two and two together. Mr. Hadley, don't—*don't* take it wrong when I ask it. But—are you all right here in the bank—you personally, I mean?"

The banker swallowed perceptibly.

"Why?" he asked, dry throat.

"Because I read those telegrams—I couldn't help it—and I've been watching you the past few weeks—and I've got some sidelights through Gertie. And it all shapes up that maybe—you're not!"

"What's it all to you, even if I weren't?"

The cripple's reply came with visible effort.

"Gertie—your daughter—has done a lot for me—in one way or another—when others around town haven't bothered because of my crutches. I've got her interest at heart—and yours—because you're her father. And if there was any danger—"

"What the devil are you insinuating?"

"Mr. Hadley, *are* you all right? I know you've lost lots of money on stocks and—"

"Damn your insolence! Do you mean—"

The old man started forward. But Wilse Dilling thrust out a powerful hand and checked him. In quite another voice, a tone like granite, he demanded:

"Whose money has been keeping up those margins—yours or your depositors'?"

"I'll smash your face!"

"No, you won't smash my face. I've known for a considerable time that things weren't as they should be. Now there's a Federal bank examiner in town intending to go through you to-morrow, and if everything isn't all right, it's time you knew it!"

Wilse was reasonably sure of his premise or he would never have risked it. He had not been mistaken. For a quarter moment the old banker stared at the telegrapher with his mouth open. Then he turned his skinny head and sent darting glances around like a frightened animal, hounded, desperate, panic-stricken.

"A Federal bank examiner! He isn't

due till the last of next month!" Hadley was gradually going limp in the cripple's firm grasp.

"I don't know when he's due. I know he's *here!* And I felt it was something that should be told to you ahead. He came in my place to-night and sent a telegram. And I had a feeling that it meant—"

"Yes? What?" The banker's voice was wobbly.

"Terrible trouble for you—for Gertie."

They sat for a moment in tableau. Then when Wilse relaxed his hold, the banker slumped. His clawlike hands pawed over the chair arms. His jaw sagged.

"Yes," he cackled. "Terrible trouble—for me—and Gertie."

"Then something *is* wrong. I wasn't mistaken?"

Something must have snapped in the old man's brain. A cry broke from his lips. He collapsed on the desk top and began pawing around crazily, groveling. Then came the most pathetic sight in this world, an old man's tears.

Wilse Dilling was badly frightened, but he kept his nerve.

"I wasn't mistaken, Mr. Hadley?"

But old Hadley failed to hear. His head went forward on the desk. He pounded it with skinny fists.

"If it wasn't for my wife and Gertrude I wouldn't stand it another minute—not another minute!"

The crisis of weeks—of months—had come suddenly. Perhaps it was the shock of the announcement that possible exposure was so close. Perhaps it was the uncanny intuition of an outsider. Perhaps it was simply due to happen, anyway. But old man Hadley, weakened by worry over losses and stark felony, as abruptly became a man obsessed.

"Mr. Hadley, listen to me! For God's sake, man, *control* yourself. How much are you in for? How much squares you—with the directors—the bank?"

It was Wilse Dilling's turn to be shocked. Old man Hadley wept and cackled and pawed and clawed.

"Seventy thousand dollars, Wilse. Seventy thousand dollars!" He said it

childlike, as though frantically searching for something at the same time under the papers on his desk top.

Seventy thousand dollars! Not a great sum in these days of millions, but a bad, bad hole when gnawed in the finances of a little country bank.

"How did you do it, Mr. Hadley—get the money out without discovery by the cashier, I mean? Tell me all about it. Maybe I can help. That's why I came in to see you to-night—to help."

The old man smeared his tears away, failing to find the thing he sought, granted he knew what it was.

"There's securities and notes in the vault ain't genuine, Wilse. I made myself bogus loans on 'em because—well, it was my women folks, Wilse. My wife and my girl. They think—everybody does—that I'm well off. I was once, Wilse. But I lost it. I bought oil stock, Wilse. I ain't never told 'em. I ain't never told anybody. I just been trying to make it back. I couldn't tell 'em; it'd break their hearts.

"There's my wife, Wilse; all her life she's worked hard. I was a fool to risk what we'd made. But I did it thinking I was going to make still more for her and Gertie. And I was getting old, Wilse, I was getting old. When I knew I'd lost, I couldn't bear to tell 'em. I just tried—"

"You mean all your bank stock and everything—is gone—that you're *poor*?"

"I own two shares, that's all. Two shares!"

"But you're president!"

"Because I know the business, Wilse. I been president so long I got all the business at my finger's ends. That's how I been able to keep things covered up. But I was afraid them telegrams from New York would give me away—Oh, God, ain't I worried and worried? What's there a bank examiner in town ahead of time for, now, unless he's got wind of something?" quavered Hadley.

"Do your directors know you've only got two shares of bank stock?"

"Yes, they know. But they think I turned the rest into cash to create a trust for Gertie. And I ain't got a cent! *I ain't got a cent!*"

"And there isn't any money in trust for Gertie?"

The old man shook his head. "And that's the hardest part of all, Wilse. That's what's eaten into me weeks and weeks more'n anything else, and made me desperate to try and get something back. She's expecting to get married to Cooper within the year and have money of her own to match his. It'll kill her when she finds she's poor. And it may spoil her life. If she's poor, Cooper might not want her—"

"It ought to be *her* that he's marrying, not her father's money," snarled the cripple suddenly.

"I know, Wilse, I know, I know. But anyhow, she's got to know the awful disappointment—"

"Isn't there anybody who'd loan you seventy thousand dollars to get past this tight place?"

"But what security could I give? And how could I explain why I want it so quickly—if the examiner's here to-morrow? I'm supposed to have more'n that in the securities of this bank. Wilse—have *you* got any money?" This last would have been asinine if it had been less pathetic. Old Micah Hadley was a man blasted, drowning, clutching at straws.

"I've only got about thirty-five hundred, Mr. Hadley, over in the savings bank. Some my aunt left me. Most of it's my savings. I've been hoping some day I could go to that big specialist in Vienna the Sunday papers print so much about, and see if he couldn't fix my legs. But you could have it if it would do you any good."

"Thirty-five hundred ain't nothing, Dilling. I'm in for seventy thousand, I told you—*seventy thousand!*"

Hadley seemed to have grown visibly smaller, to have shrunken. His shadow on the wall was as a hunchback, huddled forward in the chair. When the green eyes turned on Wilse, they were forked with strange light, dilating, abnormal.

"I know," said Wilse thickly. His face was tense. He was thinking of what exposure would mean for the girl he loved. He looked up after a moment's mental torture. He tried to smile reassuringly.

That smile! If he had kept his tense,

hard face, the damage might never have been done. But he smiled. Old Micah Hadley misinterpreted that smile. He thought he read a sneer in it, a secret gloating. The forked light darted in his depth of vision. Up in the chair the old man drew himself. Holding there, his lips moved wordlessly once or twice—before the scream came—and the slobbering unutterable rage.

“*You did it!*” scored Hadley. “You’ve tipped him off from them telegrams of my business you handled! It’s you that’s at the bottom of this—you with your palavering and offers of help! You! You! You! I might o’ known! That’s why you been asking questions—because the examiner’s in town—and you’re getting information for him to send me to the pen—me—an old man—just so’s you can have my daughter—”

“I’ve done nothing of the sort!” The cripple’s cry was one of hurt astonishment. Then, as the elder man seemed about to hurl himself forward: “You’re crazy as a loon and I never saw the examiner before in my life!”

“You! You! You!” raved the banker, the forked flames now leaping again and again in his eyes like the tongues of serpents. “If it wasn’t for you and your telegrams I might cover up somehow—make more money—get it all back when I win! But you thump around with them crutches, a-snooping and snooping and snooping—”

“Hadley! I—”

“Damn you! Damn you! Damn you!” The banker choked incoherently. He was becoming a maniac.

In a great paroxysm of unbalanced mentality he picked up an inkwell and heaved it at Dilling’s head. The cripple dodged and the missile went out of sight under a desk, ink spattering them both. The old man seemed blinded. He thrashed around wildly. Jaws slobbering, he found the defenseless cripple. He fell upon him and dragged him to the center of the floor, the chair overturning. Dilling’s gorilla-hands clutched the maniac’s throat. They went down together.

Over and over they rolled, toppling over a hatpole in one corner. A cane came down

with it. Old Hadley seized the cane. He beat frenziedly at the head and shoulders of the one who in his twisted brain was responsible for the debacle of his flimsy financial duplicity.

Wilse uttered a hoarse cry.

Old Hadley fled the bank.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FACE THAT MENACED.

IT was nine-twenty before Jack Cooper rang the front bell at the Hadley door. He was admitted by Mrs. Hadley, a tall, bony, cold-faced woman, without many enthusiasms, inclined toward small-town snobbery.

“It’s about time you showed up,” she greeted him. “Gertie’s been up in her room the last half hour, crying her eyes out like a fool.”

“I’ve been detained, talking with my sales manager,” the other defended.

The mother gave him a head-to-foot inventory in which small pleasure showed. Then she mounted the stairs. Cooper removed his coat uninvited and moved into the lighted front room. He stood back to the mantel, hands in trouser pockets, smiling.

It was several minutes before the girl appeared between the portières.

“Jack!” she called softly, poignantly, coming swiftly across.

He did not answer her greeting. He opened his arms and the girl went into them, giving herself to him without reservation—eyes, hair, lips. No word was spoken for a time. The man appropriated these things as though it were his right.

“You’ve been away a long, long time,” she finally whispered. “I’ve been very lonesome for you, Jack.”

Somehow the girl’s abject sincerity, the hurt he felt he had caused her by not phoning her immediately on arrival in town after his long absence, sobered the fellow, made him serious and a trifle angry with himself.

“I know,” he said huskily. “I’m glad to get back. At least, I’m glad to get back to you—although I’ll bet that while I’ve been away and dying to get back, you’ve

been carrying on with all the cheap skates in town behind my back."

It was a jarring, discordant note in the sweetness of their reunion—that crass attempt at humor. The manner in which the girl took no note, pulled herself together, forced back the tears and smiled as wholesomely as she was able, was a highlight of pathos.

"Sit down and tell me all about your trip—everything," she suggested. And she drew him over toward a deep-seated chair.

"You wouldn't understand, even if I told you," he replied. "What do you know about business?"

This was more subtle humor. Yet beneath it also was a flavor of resentment. He did not want to talk serious things with the girl until he had enjoyed her kisses, the sensation of her soft arms about his neck and the beat of her heart to his.

"Don't think I'm so provincial, dear," she admonished. "You know I'm interested. I'll never cease to be interested in your work because—because—well, I guess I'm just that kind of person."

He should have appreciated the golden worth of the girl, to declare herself so openly. But if he felt appreciation, he kept it hidden. He laughed and put his arms around her.

Not until the girl began to show herself a bit unresponsive, even to shudder in slight repulsion during one of his overlong caresses, did he grow serious and make an attempt to give account of the past seven months.

"Gertie," he demanded suddenly, "how'd you like to go back with me to the Orient?"

"Go back with you? Are you going back? Jack, what do you mean?"

"I mean I've had a job offered me out there that's a beaut—and there's something about the Orient, Gert, that gets you. I don't know exactly what the spell is, but once the Orient gets in your blood—"

"What part of the Orient, Jack? What kind of a job?"

"Singapore! I can go out there and manage an export house at a salary of—"

"Singapore! It's a long way off."

"But you said a minute ago that you weren't provincial. Prove it! Don't you love me enough to follow and live with me anywhere my business dictates?"

"Certainly I do, laddie. You know that."

"Well, then why not Singapore? That's why I was late in getting over here to-night. I saw old Gales and his son and put my offer up to them. They want me to stay with them, but it's a matter of money. Out there in the Far East I can earn twenty thousand a year; Gales and his son won't ever pay me more than ten. Don't you see what a chance it is? How about it? We'd get married and make a honeymoon of it—going to the new job."

"Jack," she said a moment later, her voice mellow with the sweetness and purity of her affection and loyalty, "I'd follow you all over the world and live with you in a hovel if it were necessary or would help you—if there were only myself to consider."

"But I'm thinking of more than myself. I'm thinking of father and mother. They're growing old. I'm all they've got. Since you've been away, father's been failing terribly. Sometimes I think he ought to resign from the bank. He can't carry the financial burdens he carried once. There are times when I come upon him acting strangely, muttering to himself. I'm frightened. If I went so far away, perhaps I'd never see father and mother again. If one of them died, I'd not even be able to return for the funeral—"

"What of it? When a girl marries, she's supposed to drop her folks and leave them out of her future, if she's any kind of a woman and really in love."

"Don't say that, Jack. Don't put it up to me that way. You're cruel!"

"I'm not cruel. I'm sensible. Women are called on to do it every day."

"I'd at least have to think it over, Jack," she said unevenly. "You've submitted the idea terribly sudden; you'll admit that, won't you?"

"Maybe."

He said it quickly, unfeelingly. Though she still sat close beside him, he had released her; his arm behind had dropped away listlessly. He had a habit of pulling

and twisting his front hair when in thought, his eyes vague. He wound a lock of his hair around and around in his fingers now and his eyes stared straight ahead. The girl might have been ten thousand miles away at the moment. He was piqued about something. His mouth was a trifle petulant.

"Jack dear," she whispered. "Don't think I love you any less because I hesitate. It's not a step to be taken lightly."

"Oh, I'm not asking you to take it tonight. I just asked you how you'd like to go back with me to the Orient—if I do. Let's forget it." He roused himself. "Tell me what's been doing among the rubes and hicks of the place since I left."

The evening passed. The hour was growing late. The man finally stood up to go, drawing on his overcoat and holding out his arms for a last good night embrace. He was standing back to the window that opened out upon the Hadley front lawn. In his embrace the girl was facing it directly.

As he crushed her to him it suddenly seemed to her that his love making was too selfish—never taking thought of her and her happiness. So she suffered it and was miserable. She had cherished the man's brief, business-like love letters. She had anticipated his return for many long days. Now to have him so careless of her in his attitude, as though nothing but his own interest mattered.

She opened her eyes. The man felt her stiffen. Her gaze was directly in line with the front parlor window.

Suddenly she pulled away from him, screaming.

Framed by the half-drawn shade and the lace draperies at either side, in the center of the darkened pane was a *face!*

It was a dusky, sinister face. It might have belonged to a negro. The tip of the nose was slightly flattened against the glass; the whites of the eyes were ghastly. Yet there was something about the apparition which told that the countenance did not belong to a negro.

Cooper gaped and went white to the lips. His jaded eyes opened wide. He also uttered a cry. He groped out a hand against

the mantel to steady himself. As man and girl stared, the dusky, evil features dissolved into the blackness of the rainy night.

The daughter's startled scream had brought Mrs. Hadley from the second floor. As the mother entered, Gertrude was clinging closely to her lover.

"A face!" panted the girl. "The face of a horrible man was looking in at us!"

Cooper unconsciously shook himself free from the girl's clutch on his arm.

"It was probably—only a tramp," he said in thin, unconvincing voice.

"He startled me so! I saw him so suddenly. And there was such a horrible grimace on his face as you kissed me, Jack. Oh, where's father? Why doesn't he come home? You mustn't go out, Jack. I'm—somehow, I'm afraid!"

"There's nothing to be afraid of," the man replied hoarsely, with an ill timed show of bravado. "Let me out the back way. I'll steal around to the front of the house and see if he's still lurking outside—the tramp." And Cooper wetted his lips.

"No, no, no!" cried the girl, trying to restrain him. "Jack, you mustn't leave us alone until father gets home. Please don't!"

Cooper laughed nervously.

"At least nothing 'll hurt you just while I go outside and scout around," he argued.

He had his way. They led him out through the kitchen. But immediately that he was out of the radiance of the one drop light burning in the Hadley kitchen, Cooper did not deport himself as a doughty defender of womanhood beating the wet, shadowed bushes for prowlers.

He leaped a fence, fell over some barrels, cut through back of a garage and came out an alley onto Main Street, *panic-stricken*. He had an adequate reason.

CHAPTER V.

THE TIME LOCK!

SLOWLY—his swimming environment clearing about him—Wilse Dilling returned to consciousness. He sat up and looked groggily around, holding one big hand against a cruelly throbbing head where blood from a bruised scalp clotted.

Finally all that had transpired came to him. He was still in the president's office of the Citizens National Bank, the office in littered confusion. More than that, he was alone; the crazed old banker who had fallen upon him in aberration had gone.

Wilse finally discerned the hands on the clock face above the door out into the lobby. It was a quarter after eleven. He had been unconscious two hours.

Laboriously, painfully, the cripple pulled himself up the side of a chair, recovered his crutches and swung upward. From a temporary seat in the battered old swivel chair he apprized the wreckage before him. Some of the furniture was pushed from place, two chairs were overturned, papers were everywhere. The balance of the ink in the bottle which had been hurled at him had run out on the floor beneath the counter and dried.

As the moments passed, a sense of the danger of his predicament grew upon him.

In the first place his worst fears of the past few weeks were realized—old Hadley was deeply involved in felony. If the bank examiner found a shortage on the morrow and the president was apprehended, it could only mean confession and swift punishment. How the experienced old banker could have weakened morally and succumbed to such temptation with the example of scores of younger absconders before him was not to be debated now. Seventy thousand was missing from the bank's cash which had to be replaced or tragedy was to follow, the penitentiary or suicide for Micah, eternal disgrace for his wife, blasting shame for the daughter who had become the one big thing in Wilse Dilling's life.

He—Wilse Dilling—had the situation in the hollow of his hand for this night only. When the bank opened on the morrow would be too late. Was there anything he could do, any expedient he could employ, any course of action he could follow, to avert the ghastly tragedy and save the girl's life from ruin even though he never realized a shred of credit for himself and no one ever knew but himself and God?

Psychologists maintain that when a person is lacking in certain physical senses or members, other organs become intensified and gain proportionately in acumen and

power. The telegrapher had no legs worth calling legs. He could not protect and defend himself like normal men. Unreasoning child love which leaps out to those who were sympathetic to him in the case of every physically handicapped person gave him a blind courage. His handicap accrued to the sagacity of his brain. He did some dynamic thinking there in the wrecked bank office as the hands of the clock moved slowly toward midnight.

He first hobbled out to the main doors and made certain old Micah, in his flight, had not left them open to excite the suspicion of a passer-by. Then he returned to Micah's office, closing the door behind him into the lobby so that neither silhouette nor shadow would fall on the outer floor. He drew all the shades. Then he set about righting the grubby little room.

Hatpole and desks were put back in their places. Papers were recovered from the floor and jogged into semblance of order. When the office satisfied him the cripple sank again into the chair. It was twenty-five minutes to midnight. Daylight would break about six thirty. Approximately seven hours were at his disposal to thwart the debacle if he could. He sank his face into his hands.

Some faint, intangible thought convinced Wilse Dilling that old Micah lacked the moral fiber to destroy himself. If he had possessed it, he would have realized the futility of his eleventh hour efforts to recoup and done it long ago. No, crazed though he was for the time, old Micah would probably seek safety in hiding or flight, for with the bank examiner due when the institution opened at nine o'clock, there was no opportunity for him to open the vault and do anything more to books, securities or cash than had been done already. The time lock would not permit that.

Wilse gave a sudden start. The time lock! It connected with the Western Union office at the station. If any one tampered with the vault during the hours of the night, it was Wilse Dilling at the station who was automatically advised. True, it had never happened during the cripple's employment, but it had been inspected enough and kept in working order by fre-

quent tests, so that Wilse knew its ramifications perfectly. The intervening counters and partitions did not permit a clear view of the vault door from the street—provided the station operator was not warned by the burglar alarm, discovery of any one trying to get into the vault would be reduced to a minimum.

The time lock! It vaguely held out a hope to Wilse. His uncanny mentality dwelt upon it tensely. Could the cripple use his position in any way to aid old Micah without doing anything that would result in discovery and jeopardy to the girl?

For another quarter hour he sat there—thinking, thinking, thinking.

His love of the girl was very great. She had been tender, solicitous, sympathetic, when other women of the town had been thoughtless or caustic. Scores of times before her final engagement to Cooper, she had befriended him—and had not been ashamed to walk beside his humiliating tricycle to the houses in School Street on their homeward way together—had sat with him on the steps on summer evenings while the stars came out, too big souled to notice or give cognizance to his affliction.

There had even been red letter holidays when she had given him unutterable happiness by riding with him over the hills and far away in one of his favorite rigs from the town livery—he could not remain insusceptible to all these things, for the girl was a man's woman. In her kindness of heart and altruism she never appreciated how great was the damage she was doing, that was all.

Gradually he had come to worship the girl—to enshrine her in his emotions a bit terribly. It was one of those strange, unrequited loves that come once in a generation and could only end in tragedy. For even though she married him, his handicap would ever be a jarring note in that union; he would always hate himself because he could not match the splendid physical vigor of her perfect womanhood.

For a time he had hoped that good fortune would favor him, that he might journey abroad and, under treatment of a great foreign specialist, be made as other men. But Cooper had come to town, traveling as

a salesman for the iron works. The engagement which swiftly followed had exploded Wilse's dream of recovery. He could only sink into the background now—play the rôle of the perfect lover, who loves and serves for the sake of love itself, without hope of recompense excepting that happiness was accruing to the one beloved. There have been such men; their names written large in the romance of the race.

So now the cripple took no thought for himself as he sought a way out of the dilemma there in the midnight and the banker's office. To save the girl the shame and ostracism of her father's weakness was all that mattered; to do it somehow before nine o'clock next morning—that was his problem.

The time lock! It kept occurring to him over and over.

At twenty minutes past twelve he aroused himself. The daring of his plan was so great that he felt cold all over. But it had to be done. There was no other alternative. If he failed, matters could be no worse than they were at the moment, with the Nemesis of the bank examiner sleeping a few blocks away, down Main Street. He had everything to gain and not much to lose—excepting his life, his honor, and himself. But what of these? His love for the girl had gradually become an aberration, though he little knew it at the time—desperate dilemmas required desperate measures. Fortune had already favored him by making him the local telegraph operator and controller of that time lock. He would see.

He reached up and snapped off the one lamp overhead, leaving himself in darkness.

In the rear, the main lobby of the bank opened into an inside hallway where the janitor kept his mops and pails. At the end of this hallway was a flight of stairs down into the cellar. That cellar contained three windows at the back, all heavily barred, which opened into an alley. Those barred windows were hooked up with the general burglar alarm system, all ending in the Western Union office.

Wilse had been in the bank cellar with the wire crew twice when something had gone wrong with the system and the time lock failed to function. He knew that if

the door at the head of the stairs was unbolted he could fix the switches at the office so that no signal would arouse the sleeping town if the iron bars were pried away into the alley and access gained to the basement therefrom. That was necessary to make the cripple's plant look real, without the aspect of an "inside job."

Through the darkened bank the cripple felt his way to the rear passage and the basement door. He drew the bolt, went down the cellar stairs, struck a match and looked around.

There was much unexplained rubbish in the cellar—crates, old files, a few barrels, dozens of dusty ledgers. The coal bins were at the back, next to the alley for easy filling. The windows were high beyond these.

Momentarily the cripple was discouraged at the aspect of the place; he would have to dispense with crutches if he broke away the bars and entered from the alley later. That meant crawling across a coal bin, through the rubbish to the stairs. It seemed hopeless until—

Six inches beneath the cellar rafters were a series of water and sewerage pipes, secure-

ly hooked overhead with lag screws. They passed all three of the alley windows over the bins, turned a sharp angle and hung near enough to the stairs for the cripple to drop from them and continue his way up into the bank. If they would bear his weight, access was easy. So was escape. He could swing by his powerful hands and arms along these pipes, each way.

He tried them. They held.

Wilse went back up the stairs, left the door unlocked behind him, passed through the bank to the front, watched his chance and slipped through the big glass doors. No one saw him as he settled into his rusty little vehicle. He pumped his way down to the station.

Thereupon, after calling in on Ned Porter, the emergency operator, and advising Porter he wanted him to continue at the key through the night, he appeared to adjust certain switches and buttons and departed.

No one knows where he spent the next two hours. He simply went out to his little tricycle on the platform and trundled off into the mist.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



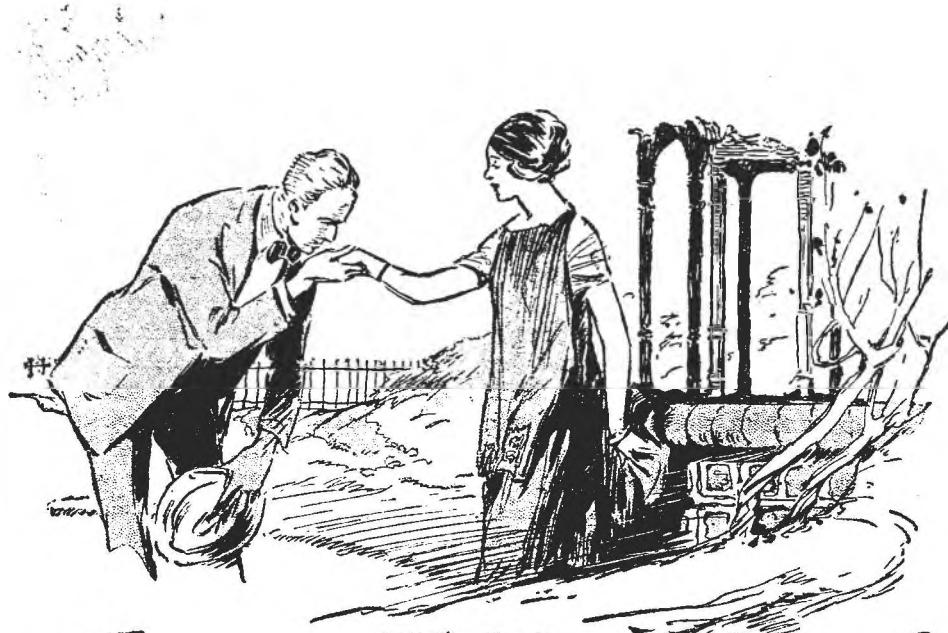
REGRET

LIFE offered Love to me,
But asked a price
So great I could not see
Such sacrifice.

Life asked my honored name,
My friendships true.
My hope of wealth and fame
As Love's fair due.

But I refused and thought
I saved the fearful cost—
Fame is too dearly bought
When Love is lost.

Harry Varley.



Jimmy Helps Himself

By **HENRY DODGE**

A NOVELETTE IN TWO PARTS—PART I

PROLOGUE

THIS is really a story with two heroes, Ben 'Abd es Sadok and James Ellison Peyton. Of Ben 'Abd es Sadok nothing good can be said. He departed this life in the year of our Lord 990, violently and horribly, his breast pierced by a steel tipped pike, screaming vehement but unintelligible curses at the face of the wielder of the pike. This was a Genoese gentleman, one Ghiballin Grimaldi, who was fighting under the banner of the cross, with Duke William of Provence. These things occurred at a place long known as Turbia, on the day when the last of the Saracen pirates were finally driven out of Southern France.

The eyes of the dying Moor could look down through a few thousand feet of tumbled rocks and deep valleys clothed in wild olive, to the Mediterranean below; to a

shining bay, guarded by a rocky promontory, where the Saracen pirates had their nest and gambled with their lives and the lives of others for the riches of the Genoese traders sailing abroad.

The Seigneur Grimaldi twisted his pike from the Moor's breast and took the sword from the rigid hand by the simple expedient of first hacking that hand off at the wrist. Then he tumbled the body over the cliff onto the rocks below and tossed after it the helmet which lay upon the brink.

The deceased left behind him no mourning and revengeful comrades; they were all scattered among the rocks at the foot of the cliff. He left only his sword—and the Tears of the Peri. But these last no one took.

Just nine hundred years later James Ellison Peyton was born in a shady side street in New Haven, Connecticut. Through

more than thirty years of his life he never heard of Ben 'Abd es Sadok, and it is safe to say that no one that he ever knew could have told him of our other hero who had prepared these adventures for him. But the two lives finally did cross, and fate brought Jimmy Peyton to La Turbie, to stand on the cliffs where Ben 'Abd es Sadok had died, and look down through the rocky defiles and olive groves, to the sapphire Bay of Monaco and the palms and dazzling roof tops of Monte Carlo. Men still gamble there, but the play is tame and the dangers are petty compared with the fearful stakes and bloody adventures of Ben 'Abd es Sadok and his crew.

I.

THE express from Paris thundered through the tunnel under the seaward spur of the Tête du Chien. There was a momentary vision of plane trees in the old square of the Condamine—then for an instant the shadow of the great Rock—and the train shot out into the blue and green and gold of Monte Carlo on a spring morning. The bluest of blue seas and skies, the greenest of feathery palms, and the most golden sunshine to be found in any spot in this world. A flash of blue waters on the right, the lofty cactus fringed embankment on the left, with just a glimpse of the tips of snowy turrets outlined against blue sky—a momentary vista of red roofs and white walls set in green, seen with the rapidity of a moving picture. Then the picture snaps out of sight and the screen is empty save for the dingy little station, the prosaic, bawling porters, and the line of hotel buses waiting beyond under the shadow of the cliff.

Thus one arrives in Monte Carlo; a plunge from darkness into dazzling light, a cinematographic glimpse of brilliant color and mounting towers—and then the station under the cliff, and the humdrum business of luggage and porters. It is as if it were too lovely, too cloying, too satisfying to be given to the traveler all at once, and he must be prepared for the beauty he is to be shown by this fleeting vision.

Jimmy Peyton pushed his bags through

2 A

the open window of the compartment into the arms of the porter and followed the other passengers down the corridor. The fragrance of roses, the pungent reek of petrol, and the salt smell of the sea—the triad of odors which make up Monte Carlo—had come to him for the first time through the open window. He found his pulses beating a little faster. All the way from Paris he had looked forward to this holiday with Charlie Trench, whom he had not seen since they left college. He had been eager for a few days in a place which he had always wanted to see, but it had been only the anticipation of a tourist looking for the tempered excitement of new scenes and the pleasure of seeing an old friend once more.

But the little snapshot from the car window had been more than just a foretaste of something new and pleasant. The soft breeze that had come through that window was laden with a new quality. He did not realize that it was not just roses, or petrol, or the salt of the sea, that was making his blood run faster and sharpening his eagerness to get out of the train and finish the tiresome business of arriving. He would not have admitted that what he felt in the air was romance, but that is precisely what it was. He only knew that the business which had brought him to Paris was something vaguely in the past, and that New Haven was in another planet.

Anything might happen in a place like this, he thought. He wanted to get out into that gorgeous outdoors he had seen through the window. The passengers blocking his way in the corridor annoyed him unreasonably. He wanted to move faster. In a detached sort of way he wondered what he would be doing at this time to-morrow, and he felt that whatever it was it would be something that he had never dreamed of even wanting to do before.

James Ellison Peyton, bachelor, Yale 1912, ex-captain A. E. F., solid, respectable, conventional, who read the New Haven *Courier* because his father had read it; who arrived daily at his office at exactly nine and left on the stroke of five thirty; who spent the same three weeks every August at Watch Hill, and went to Center Church

every Sunday during the rest of the year—this James Peyton had drawn into his New England nostrils the breath of Monte Carlo, and into his New England nature, somehow, the spirit of the place. He did not know it, but he was doomed to adventure. He had been much in France, as a student and as a tourist, but he had never seen the south.

He was the last of the line of passengers in the corridor. He had been looking out of the wide window, restlessly waiting for the line to move, when he noticed a woman, directly in front of him, stoop quickly, cast a frightened glance up the platform, and then turn breathlessly to him.

"*Monsieur*," he heard her say hurriedly, in whispered French, "I am in great trouble. Can I ask you to do something extraordinary—something outrageous, I admit—and give you no reason?" She searched his face. "You can help me so much, if you will?"

Before he could steady himself for a reply she clasped her gloved hands against her breast and whispered again, earnestly: "You are alone here? No one expects you?"

"No," he stammered instinctively, definitely eliminating Charlie Trench from his immediate program. "No, *madame*, I am alone."

Charlie would never be up to meet this early train, he was sure of that. He remembered that much of him.

"Will you accompany me from the train and take me into your carriage to my hotel, and tell any one who asks—that I am your wife? It is only for a moment, and I will never forget what you do. Some day I can tell you why."

Peyton found himself hunting hastily for excuses, but curiously enough none occurred to him. Then quite suddenly he discovered that he wanted none. The fear of the unusual, the side-stepping of the unconventional and the adventurous, would have given any one of his forbears a perfect alibi in such a situation, and twenty-four hours earlier he himself would have made gentlemanly excuses—invented a wife waiting for him, or a house party to join. But as we have said, New Haven was far away,

and yesterday was ages ago, and he heard some one reply in a voice strangely like his own, and with the greatest self-possession:

"But, perfectly, I am at *madame's* service."

A look of relief blotted out the anxiety in her face.

"Oh, but you are good, *monsieur*!" she said softly. Then she added: "Quick; we are the last in the car! Here is my hand bag and the receipt for my trunk. You must do that for me as well."

"Naturally, *madame*," he replied with a smile.

He took the bag and passed by her to the door and down the steps, turning back to offer her his hand.

As he turned again on the platform to find the porter he became aware of two men standing beside them, one of whom—an elderly and distinguished looking gentleman with the rosette of the Legion of Honor in the lapel of his coat—was bowing, hat in hand, before his companion.

"I have the honor of addressing Mme. Robert?" inquired the elderly gentleman, with a confident and disarming smile. "If so, I have something to communicate to her."

The lady turned sharply in his direction, with a look of annoyance.

"No, *monsieur*; I am not Mme. Robert."

The confidence of the man seemed to waver. He looked at her more sharply, and glanced at Peyton, who, not knowing in the least what the little scene was about, had at last found his voice.

He spoke angrily. "You have made a mistake, *monsieur*—a stupid mistake." He towered over the little gentleman. "This is my wife. Come, my dear, the porter is waiting."

She took his arm as he returned the bows of the elderly gentleman and his companion, who with profuse apologies turned away and walked down the platform, scanning the faces of the other passengers as they went. Peyton's luggage was loaded onto a taxi. He helped her in with an impressive courtliness, called "Hotel de Paris" to the chauffeur, and with wonder

in his heart, and by his side a woman whom five minutes before he had never clapped eyes upon, was driven up the winding road into Monte Carlo.

He felt no particular physical attraction for her. She was beautiful, with a dark, imperious beauty which had in it, however, more than a hint of softness, and in her deep eyes, beneath their flashing brightness, lay a shadow of lonelines and sorrow. She was not young, certainly much older than he—forty, perhaps.

He had no feeling of having dropped into a romance, and he would have been quite sure, if he had thought of it at all, that her request was not a mere stratagem to make his acquaintance, and take the initiative in a romance of her own. No, it was adventure, and not romance, which was meeting him at the gateway of Monte Carlo; and, without thinking, he was holding out his hands to it in welcome. He was quite happy, a little exhilarated, and perfectly at his ease.

The lady turned to him after a moment as they left the station yard and entered the curving ascent into the gardens.

"My friend, if you think that I am just a wicked and unprincipled woman, I cannot blame you. I cannot tell you now why I have asked this of you, a stranger, but you shall know as soon as it is possible. I can tell you that I am doing nothing wrong. As for you, *monsieur*, you may have made possible for me the greatest happiness that could come to me; and if there is anything that I can do for you, you may ask it of me at any time."

As he turned to meet her eyes he saw that they were wet with tears. She put her hand on his.

"Thank you a thousand times," she said softly. "I think you are an American. I did not know that any one but a Latin could have done what you are doing for me, with such understanding and—delicacy. Now, *monsieur*, will you tell the driver to put me down at the Hotel Victoria? I will add to my debt by asking you to have my other luggage sent there. My name will be—Mme. Dulac; and if you can find time to come one day to see me, perhaps I will have found words to thank you."

He gave the order to the chauffeur, and, fumbling for his pocketbook, handed his card to her.

"*Madame*, I am to be at the Hotel de Paris, as you know. If you have any need of me, more than this, you must tell me."

He looked out of the window of the taxi, and then back at the woman beside him.

"You are with me as I see Monte Carlo for the first time—and, thanks to you, *madame*, I am finding it more lovely than I had dreamed."

Ah, Jimmy Peyton! Something has happened to you! Do you recognize yourself in that speech? Were all your forbears Puritans in brown serge, or was there a cavalier among them who knew how to wear a ruff, and swing a sword, and kiss a lady's hand? Is it some Virginia ancestor who is speaking now, or is it just Monte Carlo and sunshine and soft air laden with the scent of roses? Your heart does not beat faster as you look at this woman who has tumbled into your life, so why did you bend and kiss her hand just now, when you finished that last speech? It was not the woman. It may have been the forgotten ancestor. But I think it was just Monte Carlo.

There was not a trace of coquetry in her manner as she looked at him with a little smile.

"M. James Peyton, I did not know there were Americans like you, or I should have married one of them. Still, did you ever kiss a woman's hand before—and just for that reason—just because you thought she had made something beautiful for you?"

"No," stammered Peyton.

"I thought not," said Mme. Dulac with a smile. "But you are due to learn how, my friend. That jumps to the eye."

He left her at the steps of her hotel and drove on to the Paris, his brain grappling with the astonishing fact that he was swimming in adventure, and liking it. Curiously enough, he was not thinking so much of Mme. Dulac as of the resistless urge of his surroundings and his newborn longing to step out of the shell of conventionality that had always repressed him. Mme. Dulac had led him to the gate of this garden of adventure, but her unconscious

rôle had been merely to point out the way for him to enter.

He thought of Trench waiting for him at the hotel. Trench *did* know the Riviera and would be a splendid companion, but was he the good sport he used to be? Perhaps his years in the consular service had turned him into something like the other consuls Jimmy had known—a little blasé in what had come to be a too familiar life, a little inclined to preach, and a little intolerant of the tourist and his failings. What would he think of this business of Mme. Dulac-Robert?

Trench was in the lounge when he arrived, and made him welcome sedately. He *had* changed. He was a consul, after all. He had always worn glasses in college; he had always held back a little from the bizarre, but he had been a good sport, Jimmy reflected. Now his glasses seemed more emphatically academic than ever, his outlook on the world more amusedly intolerant, and his horror of the unconventional sharpened. It was the real consular manner.

After Jimmy had changed and made a start at unpacking, they had gone to the Café de Paris, across the Place, for luncheon. Jimmy was trying to explain to Trench what a glorious place Monte Carlo was—the air, the color, the romance in the very stones of the pavement.

"Good Lord, man," said Trench, eying him curiously when the rhapsody was finished, "why the poetry? I've never seen this lyric streak in you before. Of course it's beautiful here; but don't forget that it's a dangerous place in which to get emotional. It's a fairly good idea to just look on and see other people do it."

Jimmy decided not to tell him about Mme. Dulac. He would preach and be practical and draw on his experiences with fool Americans who got into trouble. Better let it go for the present.

Trench picked up the *Éclaireur de Nice*, in which they had been reading the lists of arrivals in the hotels, and as he turned from the front page something caught his eye.

"Here is an odd one," he said after a moment. "The man must be crazy.

There are no Moorish remains on the Riviera. Listen to this."

He read aloud, translating as he went:

"This advertiser would like to be informed of the whereabouts of any Moorish tiling or wrought iron work, particularly well heads, still existing *in situ* in this region, with a view to purchase and removal. The advertiser is a collector and will pay liberally for genuine specimens. Any person owning or knowing of authentic remains of this kind may communicate with S. N., Hotel de Paris, Monte Carlo."

Trench laid the paper down.

"I've studied the archaeology of this region for years, and I know every foot of the Riviera. There's a lot of Roman stuff all about here, but I'll swear there isn't a vestige of anything Moorish or I would know of it. Looks funny, doesn't it," he continued reflectively, studying the advertisement again, "that this chap should come here for his specialty? He can get all he wants in Spain if he is only after relics of the Saracen occupation."

Jimmy registered polite but obviously feigned interest.

"Isn't he choosy, too?" Trench continued. "Only wants tiling and iron work—well-heads. There are some magnificent collections of Moorish cutlery and of inlaid work, and the jewelry is worth while—if you can get it. I could understand that, but browsing around after architectural fragments—and wells—to purchase and remove, seems a bit pretentious for an individual, doesn't it?"

"I beg your pardon. Oh, yes, doesn't it?"

"There's something besides a collector behind that advertisement."

"Looks so to me," said Jimmy indifferently.

He had not come to Monte Carlo to discuss archaeology with Trench, particularly while sitting on the terrace of the Café de Paris on a glorious April day.

In front of him lay the Casino, with its double line of people passing in and out under the huge *porte cochère*. A twinkling vista of blue water, dazzlingly brilliant in the sunlight, peeped out between the building and the marble balustrade of the upper terrace, and back of the patch of water the

great gray mass of the Rock of Monaco rose up with tier after tier of Old World streets nestling against its terraced sides, and dominated by the brown towers of the cathedral. Beside him a green stretch of palm bordered garden sloped gently away up the hill, and the bed of cyclamen at his feet showed like a huge carpet of green and white.

The scent of roses was stronger than ever. At the next table two pretty girls were trying to make a fox terrier drink *café au lait* out of a saucer, and looking toward the men as if to share their amusement with them. He had lunched as he had not lunched for months, had smoked three of Trench's incomparable cigarettes, and was savoring the last few golden drops of a cognac that should have been decorated—as its maker probably was. He had nothing in the world to do but sit in the sunshine and do nothing. He was wearing a tie never before worn, and he was conscious that it showed up astonishingly well with his gray flannel suit. He gazed down at his feet stretched out in front of him and felt that he rather fancied them in white buckskin.

Calling the waiter, he reached for his hat and stick.

"Come on, Charlie. Let's permit the old gentleman to collect his Moorish junk in peace. What do we do now?"

"I'd thought we could go up to La Turbie on the funicular this afternoon. You can see the whole place from there, and it's a good way to start on Monte Carlo."

"Right," said Jimmy cheerfully.

He paid the luncheon check, and left a tip which startled Trench into horrified protest. He put on his hat one-half inch farther to one side than he had ever dared to do in New Haven, tucked his stick under his arm, and turned to follow Trench.

"I'll stand for the view, but don't show me any Roman ruins. I couldn't properly enjoy them to-day, Charlie."

II.

THE funicular railway to La Turbie begins its ascent from the little station

perched upon a jutting shoulder of the hillside next to the Crédit Lyonnais. Just before reaching it, on the way up from the Casino and the gardens, one passes the door of one of those institutions which exist nowhere so flourishingly as at Monte Carlo. They are doubtless the same the world over, yet here the Mont de Piété seems more than a glorified pawnshop; it has attained the dignity of one of the lesser institutions of the principality, only second in its real importance to the Casino and Ciro's. No revolvers or razors find their way onto its shelves, no alarm clocks or baby carriages recall its prototype of Sixth Avenue or Soho. Its customers bring jewels set in platinum, ermine and sable and silver fox, and *objets d'art* that a museum might covet. The creations of Boucheron and Cartier, of Revillon and Worth, and heirlooms that a dozen generations have cherished, pass over its counters.

Those who become its clients do not come from want of bread, but from want of excitement; not from the necessity of living a little longer, but from the desire to play a little longer, to feel for a few more days or a few more hours the slip of the green felt under their fingers, to hear the chant of the *croupier* and the click of chips against the ivory rake.

Yet here, just as the wide world over, tragedy and despair slink through its doors, hiding their heads, and feverish haste and hope revived hurry forth again. In spite of its windows curtained in rose silk, its marble steps and white paneled walls, it is only a pawnshop after all.

Peyton and Trench were striding up the slope toward the funicular when Peyton suddenly grasped his friend's arm.

"Charlie, do you see that girl?"

"What girl? I can see a couple of dozen from here."

"Right there! Just coming out of that shop."

"The Mont de Piété? I see her. What about her?"

"What about her! Did you ever in your life—Good Lord, man, did you *look* at her? She's wonderful!"

"H-m!" said Trench judicially. "She's not bad looking, is she?"

The girl had turned and was walking ahead of them toward the station.

"Not bad looking! Ye gods! She's the most heavenly thing—What in the world was she doing in there?"

"Hocking the maternal earrings or the paternal timepiece, I suppose. She's hardly old enough to be allowed in the Casino herself."

"What a damn shame"—Jimmy was almost inarticulate—"to let that lovely—Who do you suppose she is?"

"My dear boy, I am not, in spite of my familiarity with this region, a walking directory of its unattached females. Now, if you are going to lose your head over the first pretty woman you see, we had better spend our vacation in Mentone, where the air is just as balmy and all the rest of it—I will not quote your apt though highly colored language at luncheon—and where the women are much less dangerous, being largely Anglo-Saxon, considerably older, and for the most part enjoying bad health."

"I want to know that girl," Jimmy said doggedly. Trench's sarcasm had fallen on deaf ears. "Do you suppose she's going up on the funicular? Yes, she's turning into the station."

"Possibly you are thinking of asking her to marry you," Trench remarked.

"Maybe I will," retaliated Jimmy, turning a savage look upon his friend.

They bought their tickets and came out onto the platform. The girl stood there alone waiting for the car. As they appeared she turned, and Jimmy knew right away why he had come to Monte Carlo. Probably no Peyton in the long line of them had ever fallen in love at first sight, or at least they would never have admitted such a weakness. This Peyton did, however; he knew it; he welcomed it; he gloried in it. He would have admitted it to any one—to Trench if he had asked—to the girl herself, then and there.

The glimpse he had had of her in front of the shop had not told him the half of her beauty. She was, in years, only a girl, but tall and with the carriage and figure which the south gives to its women from girlhood. She might be French or Italian; dark, and with that incomparably

beautiful flow of color under olive skin which is the birthright of the women of Provence and Northern Italy. From under a mass of glorious black hair, a mass of unruly curls and tendrils, beneath a drooping hat of white straw, her eyes looked straight into his.

He could not have told you much about her eyes, although he was gazing into them with an intensity that took no account even of her embarrassment. He only knew that they were clear and dark and lovely, and that he could not look away from them.

Trench took him by the elbow and hissed in his ear.

"Here, you chump!" he muttered. "Come out of it. You can't stare like that!"

Jimmy saw the girl's parted lips close, the blood come to her cheeks, and her eyes falter under his gaze. She turned away and took a few steps up the platform, averting her face. He came to himself with a jerk.

"I say—I was staring, wasn't I? But isn't she a dream! She wasn't angry, was she?"

"Get hold of yourself! She's probably furious, and I don't blame her. Here's the car."

They were the only passengers, save for a few peasant women with empty baskets. As the car slid alongside, the girl stepped to one of the doors. She carried a small leather vanity case in one hand, suspended from her wrist. As she wrenched at the handle of the door, the case flew open and a shower of loose bank notes spilled out onto the platform. She stooped, reached for them frantically, and managed to recover a few which the breeze had not had time to blow away.

Trench had hurried to the other end of the car and was opening the door of the last compartment. Jimmy, who had not moved from his tracks since the girl had first turned away, sprang forward, pounced upon bill after bill, lost his hat in a sudden rush after one particularly elusive bit of crumpled paper, which almost blew over the edge of the platform, and ended clumsily on all fours, reaching wildly under a bench for the last of them.

The girl had uttered a sharp cry of dismay when it had happened, but as Jimmy came forward, smoothing out the notes in his hands, she drew herself up composedly, and though she was biting her lip to keep from smiling she seemed to his enamored eyes a statue of dignity.

He paused before her and held out the sheaf of notes. His mouth opened, but no words came to him.

He took a long breath. "I think—these are yours, *mademoiselle*?"

Her smile at last broke out. The goddess was unbending. "I think they must be, *monsieur*. Yes, they are undoubtedly mine."

She took them and crammed them again into the leather case. Jimmy cursed himself inwardly for his awkwardness. What a stupid fool he had been! Stumbling about like a schoolboy and then making an asinine speech like that! But the goddess was gracious.

"Thank you, *monsieur*. I am sorry my clumsiness has given you such great trouble. I am very grateful."

Then, miracle of miracles, she held out her hand. Jimmy gulped, and took it. He must say something now.

"Thank you—thank you," he managed to articulate. "Oh—ah"—he moistened his dry lips—"thank you!"

She stepped into the car and closed the door. Jimmy fell back a pace and gazed dazedly about. Trench stood at the other end of the car waving wildly and shouting something at him.

"Hurry up, you chump. We're starting!"

Jimmy ran back and threw himself in just as the car, with preliminary jerks and grunts, moved off.

"Thank you," snorted Trench, gazing disgustedly at him. "Oh, thank you! Suffering cats, but you have a fund of brilliant repartee to-day!"

From the rear seat which Trench has chosen because of the uninterrupted view it commanded during the ascent, Jimmy, staring straight forward, could see only the back of the girl's head, the floppy white hat and the dark tendrils of hair curling against her neck. Trench, after failing to

engage his interest by admonitions as to the impracticability of scraping acquaintance with the *mondaine* by any such time honored methods as those just employed, switched to the view. He was equally unsuccessful in that. The gorgeous panorama of the coast unfolded itself beneath them as they mounted higher and higher, but Jimmy had a view of his own to study, more restricted, it is true, but therefore all the more tantalizing and infinitely more beautiful.

"The big white building on the Rock," said Trench resolutely, "is the Oceanographic Museum. In a moment—"

"Wonderful," murmured Jimmy under his breath. "Have you ever seen such skin?"

"In a moment you'll be able to see Cap Ferrat."

"Do you suppose she lives up here," replied Jimmy pertinently.

Trench tried a new tack. "From this height," he sighed, "the bay always reminds me of a huge sapphire—or a pool of jewels dropped from the sky." He looked at his friend out of the corner of his eye.

Jimmy turned, and eyed him quizzically.

"Good Lord, when did you begin being sloppy about scenery?" Then with a return to the subject in hand: "Do people really live 'way up here? Have villas and all that? What if she gets off before we do?"

He was vouchsafed no answer and for a while the journey was made in silence as far as Trench was concerned. Jimmy gazed at the back of the girl in the seat up ahead of him and at intervals challenged his friend explosively with divers striking proofs that the famous beauties of history and fiction had been sadly over advertised.

Suddenly near the top of the mountain, the car halted with a jerk at a little station. The girl rose, slipped through the door, and was on the platform before Jimmy realized it. She closed the door behind her, turned for a brief glorious moment to look back at him, and crossed to the station. He struggled to his feet, hat in hand.

"Sit down! What are you going to do?" Trench jerked him by the arm.

"Why, she's getting off!" said Jimmy.

hopelessly, the gross injustice of a scheme of things which permitted such a calamity written on his rueful face.

"Sure, she's getting off," said Trench. "But you're staying on, my boy."

The car jerked again and Jimmy sat down heavily. The little red painted shelter hid her from view and he found suddenly that the air was several degrees cooler upon the mountainside and that the cliffs towering up toward the west were shutting off the sunlight.

III.

TRENCH was beginning to feel that, as a cicerone, he had not been appreciated. One goes to La Turbie for three things—to see the remains of the Roman town, to look down upon a panorama that is unequalled along the whole Riviera, and, while drinking in the view, to sit on the terrace of the little pink and white stucco hotel perched on the edge of the cliff and sip vermouth and cassis. Obedient to his instructions Trench had not once mentioned archaeology, though they had walked past a fountain in which the soldiers of the first Augustus had washed their linen and which was still, after nineteen centuries, giving water for the housewives of La Turbie. The view had been received with a lukewarm enthusiasm. Although the Prince of Monaco's white yacht lay in the harbor far below them, like a toy ship upon a plate of blue glass; though Corsica lifted the mirage of its pinky tip above the fainter blue line of the horizon, though the glorious undulating, rocky coast stretched away to the left, turning from gray and green to blue and finally to a translucent purple as it lost itself in Italy, Jimmy's gaze wandered to a little red roofed shelter, dimly seen among the trees, part way down the mountainside, as he strained his eyes to discover what lay in the olive groves behind it.

Last of all he had not liked the vermouth and cassis.

They had not been half an hour on the terrace and he seemed bored already. Trench's pleasure in showing one of his favorite haunts to his friend had been damped by lack of appreciation, and he was ready to go. Anyhow, he reflected, he had

letters to write, and Jimmy was not properly enjoying himself. That darn girl had done it!

"Come, let's be getting on," he said finally. "We've seen all there is to see, and I could do with a couple of hours on my correspondence before dinner."

"Right," breezed Jimmy, jumping up with alacrity and showing the first enthusiasm he had manifested since they had arrived. "Do you know, I've had no exercise for a week. If you're in a hurry and have to work, take the railway and I'll walk down. It can't be more than a few miles, all down hill."

"Walk it if you want to," said Trench. "That's a thing they all have to do once. You can't miss the road and you'll be back long before dinner."

They strolled over to the station, where Trench was left, grumbling at this lust for exercise when one might ride comfortably.

Jimmy turned back and struck off through the town by the highroad that winds downward to the coast, past the nestling villas of La Turbie, half hid in the feathery green and silver of olive groves, by terraced gardens, set like giant steps against the hillside, round the rocky spurs that stretch their inquiring fingers toward the sea. He knew now that people did live up here. Did the girl live in one of those villas he had seen from the terrace? If, from the highroad, he could find again the station where she had left the train, he might conceivably see her. Trench had apparently not suspected any ulterior motive in his plan to walk down, and he himself could not be said to be consciously hunting for her. It lay in the back of his mind, a half expressed hope rather than a definite purpose, and drew him toward those tree clad slopes where she had disappeared. The road was long; the mountainside held many villas; yet in his heart he felt that he would see her again.

After he had left the town behind and struck downward, he caught a glimpse of the little red roof over the trees to his left. To reach it he turned away from the highway along the cliff and entered a narrow road that wound through a wood alongside a high stone wall.

It happened so suddenly that he was taken quite unawares. Ahead of him he saw a break in the wall—an iron gate. He came abreast of the gate and looked into a garden. She was sitting with her hands clasped in her lap, on the edge of a well, her figure standing out as vividly as a silhouette against the green background of the garden, and framed by the rusted iron tracerу of the well's arch which rose above and about her.

She had not heard him, and he stood staring at her, not daring to move. Even in the momentary shock of seeing her again, his eyes had taken in the well on which she sat. The iron arch was fixed in a well head that rose like a circular seat from a stone flagged platform. The coping and sides were faced with crudely enameled tiles in brilliant colors like the tiling he remembered having seen in Seville, and on the side toward him he could make out an inscription in Arabic letters. Although his mind and his eyes alike were filled with the picture of the girl, a tiny corner of his brain jerked back subconsciously to the advertisement that Trench had read to him. He faintly remembered Trench saying that there were no Moorish remains hereabouts—and that there was something queer about this hunt for them.

The girl raised her head as if she felt some one near her and turned suddenly. Her brown hands flew to her breast. She rose from the seat and stood quite still, looking at him through the gate.

What incredible luck! He had found her again! Yet what could he say now that would not be rude or banal? She was hardly a dozen yards away from him, and they stood, stock still, looking at each other just as they had done on the platform.

His voice came back to him. He took off his hat and advanced to the gate, and she came a few steps to meet him.

"I hope, *mademoiselle*, that the money—that you lost none of it. I had so little time—the train was starting."

"Oh, no, *monsieur*, thanks to your kindness." She spoke slowly and timidly, hardly above a whisper, and though she smiled a little with her lips, her eyes were grave, and she turned a half frightened glance over

her shoulder. Through the dense verdure of the garden, beyond a clump of lofty bamboo, the chimneys of a house and a scrap of red tilted roof appeared.

Could he ask her to open the gate? He could not leave now, without finding out more about her, without talking to her a few minutes longer. He was sure that she wanted him to stay, but could see that she was frightened. He remembered the conventions with which girls like her were hedged about in France, but he knew, too, that the very oppression of these barriers made them the more eager to break them down if they only dared.

"I am walking down to Monte Carlo, *mademoiselle*," he said stumblingly, "and I saw—your well, through the gateway."

She was about to answer when she caught herself. One did not carry on conversations with a strange man—even on the other side of an iron gate. Yet she wanted to with all her starved, unhappy little heart. She had never seen any one like him before. The men she had met—her father's friends—were of a different sort, and she knew now, looking at Jimmy, that they were of the wrong sort. Something was happening to her, just as it was happening to the man outside the gate, whose eyes were holding hers.

He was an American or an Englishman—an American, she guessed—though her knowledge of foreigners was pitifully small. Why should she not talk to this wonderful man, who, she was sure, had hunted for her and found her in her garden? What harm could there be in this handsome, blond foreigner with the honest gray eyes, this splendid man beside whom the men she knew were ridiculous? It would give her something to think of to-night, while she listened to the vapid compliments of Pucelli.

She thought quickly. Her father would not return until dinner time—not then, if his luck held. He could play long on twelve hundred francs, for he staked more carefully now. Baptiste, the butler, was on the other side of the house and seldom came into the garden anyhow.

What was it he had said? He had noticed the well through the gate? Her Latin sense of propriety was strong, but her Latin

coquetry lay very close beneath the surface. So he had stopped to look at the well, had he? This American must learn that you do not look into a girl's eyes in Provence—and talk of other things!

She crossed the open space to the gate and smiled.

"The well, *monsieur*?" she said, and he caught the shade of coldness, the suspicion of disappointment, in her tone.

He hurried on. "I mean—I saw you sitting by the well—and it seemed—so—so odd to see you again—so soon."

There was a little pause.

"Why were you walking down, *monsieur*?" she asked. Could she not even tempt this man to tell the truth?

"I felt that I must take a little exercise, *mademoiselle*." His courage was ebbing away rapidly. "Then I saw your well—and—"

She seemed to make up her mind quickly. Advancing to the gate she swung it open. "Will you not enter, *monsieur*, and see—the well to better advantage?"

He came into the garden and looked about him. It was unkempt and ill kept. The paths were thick with weeds and almost obliterated, and the shrubbery was thick as a jungle from lack of care. What had once been formal beds of flowers were now only straggling oblongs of rank vegetation. Perhaps it was, for its uncared for wildness, the more beautiful and appealing, but still it was a garden forgotten, a neglected paradise.

She caught his glance taking in the decay about him.

"You will excuse our garden, *monsieur*," she said, seating herself again on the edge of the well, and motioning him to a place beside her. "It is not like the gardens you have expected at Monte Carlo. My father"—oh, he thought, she has a father!—"does not interest himself in it any longer. He is—so busy now."

Jimmy turned to find her eyes again on his. He looked deep into them as he answered:

"It is the most beautiful garden I have ever seen in my whole life," he said with conviction, but all he saw, as he said it, were the little flecks of golden light, which

he was discovering for the first time in those eyes.

"*Monsieur* is a connoisseur of—gardens, as he is of wells?"

"No. This is the first time I have ever taken much notice of a garden," he replied still gazing straight into her eyes.

She rose hastily and stepped a little away from him. Perhaps she was repenting of her own steps into forbidden territory.

"I am afraid I cannot show you more of the garden to-day." She added the single word almost in a whisper.

He heard the half promise in it, but it was not enough. He could not risk the possibility of losing her now.

"*Mademoiselle*, let me stay a moment longer." He was in a panic lest she should dismiss him and did not know quite how to say what he must say. "I want to tell you something about this well. I did speak of it just now because of something I saw in the newspaper this morning."

She turned a puzzled glance upon him. "About our well?" she asked.

He had not forgotten the pawnshop. Then her simple dress and the regal way in which she bore herself, the neglected garden and the thought of what it once must have been, made him feel sure that the fortunes of the family were not above welcoming this offer in the paper.

Another thought came to him. Trench had been suspicious of the advertisement; had felt that there was something not quite straight about it. Yes, she had better know of it.

"Perhaps it is about your well, *mademoiselle*. Do you know if there are any other remains of Moorish times in this region?"

"I think not. My father says he knows of nothing but this well. But tell me quickly, I pray, what was in the paper?"

He was striving to recall the dimly remembered notice that Trench had read to him.

"Well, some one who signs himself 'S. N.' is advertising in the *Eclaireur de Nice* for Moorish remains such as tiling and iron-work. He mentions wells. He wants to buy them—says he is a collector. The man I am staying with says it sounds wrong, somehow—that no one would col-

lect things like that. They are for the state, for museums. He thought there was nothing of the kind on the Riviera. Then when I saw this well—I wondered—”

“What, *monsieur*?”

“Whether you would not like to know about him. He seems willing to pay—”

She stopped him with a gesture.

“Forgive me,” he begged. “I should know, of course, that you would not—I have been rude.”

“Oh, please, *monsieur*,” she cried. “I am not thinking of that. I am thinking of something else, rather curious—and a little frightening.” She was silent for a moment, her brows drawn together in thought. Suddenly she turned to him. She was no longer the timid girl he had seen through the gate. Her mood of coquetry, too, of a few moments ago, had passed.

“*Monsieur*, you have already been very kind to me once this afternoon. Perhaps what you have just told me may be very important, and if so, I am twice indebted to you. I may be imaginative—what I am thinking may be fantastic, too fantastic for words, but—queer things are popping into my head. I am going to tell you something—confide in you, and then add to my debt by asking you to find out for me who this man is who wants—wells.”

“Why, of course I will.”

The words tumbled out eagerly. She was asking him to do something for her! He would see her again! He did not know that he was beaming like a pleased child, that he had never looked so happy—or so handsome—before. But she saw it.

“That will not be hard,” he went on. “I can find out. I’m sure I can.”

“Oh, if you can, I will be so thankful. But now you must listen to me, so that you will understand. We are in the twentieth century when things such as the thing I am going to tell you about do not happen, but you must forget that or you will think that I am just a silly girl. I am troubled over that notice in the paper and a little excited.” She pointed to the well. “This was dug hundreds and hundreds of years ago and this coping and iron-work were put here then. They were Saracens—pirates, and stayed on here long after the rest of

France was cleared of them. Finally there was a sort of crusade and an army of the King of Provence drove them out. Just here at La Turbie was where the battle was fought and father says that our villa and garden are on the site of the fortress of the Saracen chief. We are very proud of living here because our ancestor was the captain who finally drove them away. He killed their leader himself. The Moor’s sword is in the palace museum in Monaco now. You see—the prince is our relation,” she added a little proudly.

“The prince?”

“The Prince of Monaco, *monsieur*. We are all Grimaldis. Our ancestor was given this coast by John of Provence as a reward.”

“Oh,” said Jimmy, blankly. Then his face fell.

“But you’re not—not a princess, are you?”

“Oh, no, *monsieur*,” she said hastily, and, it seemed to him, a little reassuringly.

“Now I must ask you not to think that I am too imaginative. There is a story in our family that the Moor left behind him—hidden here on the site of this garden—some wonderful jewels. We do not know what they were, but the tradition is that they were of extraordinary value—emeralds, father thinks. We have never seriously looked for them for the story is only a legend after all, but I—I suppose I am romantic—I feel that it is true. My grandfather told me that he thought they were in this well and I have always believed that in my heart.”

“In the well!” thought Jimmy. What a romance this was, into which he was tumbling! Jewels in a well—on a mountain top in France! And this glorious woman sitting beside him and telling him of it!

“I have always loved this well, and perhaps I have sat here and dreamed for so many hours on end that I have finished by convincing myself that this dream is really true. And the inscription—would you like to know what it says?”

She pointed to the characters on the side of the well.

“The tears of the Peri are sweeter than

drops of water from a pure well,'" she read. "That is what it means. Is it not beautiful? The tears of the Peri!"

She said nothing for a moment or two and Jimmy waited for her to begin again, his bewildered brain grappling with the situation—with the fact that it was really he to whom this was happening.

"*Eh bien, monsieur*, those have been my dreams and now you come with this story of some one who is hunting for a Moorish well. I know this is the only one this side of Spain, and few people, I am sure, know of this one. Why does he want it, and who is he? Do you not see that it makes me more sure than ever that I was right? Some one knows about the jewels and is trying to find them. We do think that some one in Morocco somewhere, some Arab, some descendant perhaps of the man who hid them, knows the story, because years ago, in my grandfather's life-time, two Arabs were shot trying to enter the garden. Is it not all very suspicious, *monsieur*? Now this man is trying, but he does not seem to know exactly where to look."

She broke off for a moment and looked at him questioningly as if seeking to see whether he were laughing at her.

"That is what I think," she said resolutely. "Is it too absurd? I have dreamed all my life of finding them. If I can find out who this man is it may prove that I am right. And, oh, *monsieur*," she leaned toward him and stretched out her clasped hands, her lips trembling, "you cannot conceive what it would mean to us—to me especially—to find them!"

She averted her face for a moment and was silent, as if ashamed of her outburst. Then she stood up and faced him bravely.

"It is best that one should be frank. Already I have gone beyond the bounds in talking to you at all—you know that, I am sure—and in telling you this story. But I have dared to ask you to help me because I need help so much, and because I trust you. You should know why you are helping me."

"Please, *mademoiselle*," he broke in upon her, eager to do what she asked of him, just because she asked it, without reason,

without explanation. "Please, I have no right to know, perhaps. I will do whatever you say."

"Yes, you must know—the trouble that has come to me. My father is—terribly in debt to a man—his friend—the Marquis de Pucelli. Father has not been fortunate in his—investments, and Pucelli has advanced to him so many thousands of francs that he cannot possibly repay them." There was another short silence. "The awful thing—which touches me—is that Pucelli says he is in love with me, and my father has given his consent—we are affianced. Poor father! It is not his fault, he does not know how I loathe—" her voice broke—"Oh, do you see why I must—he will not have to repay the money if I marry this man, and he is my father and he is very proud and very miserable. So I pretend—"

She broke off suddenly, and stood like a statue before him, her face turned a little away, her hands limp at her sides, the tears creeping from between closed lids and running over her cheeks.

Jimmy stepped toward her, his face flaming and his blood hammering in his ears. He loved her. Now he was sure of it. And he hated this beast of a Pucelli—hated, really hated for the first time in his quiet, prosaic life. He felt exalted and he felt ashamed of his sex. In the emotional heights to which he had mounted, he almost forgot that he wanted this girl, this incredibly beautiful thing, for himself.

"Listen," he said standing before her with fists clenched. "Look at me!"

She raised her eyes in wonder at his tone.

"I'll find out what you want," he said crisply, "but that isn't all. This is a damnable shame. It's unbelievable. It isn't going to happen. Do you hear? Whatever happens you're not going to do that. You're not going to marry him!"

She was looking straight at him now.

"What are you going to do?" she whispered.

He did not answer, but took the hand she had thrust out to him, bent low over it and kissed it. You have made progress since this morning, Jimmy Peyton, as

Madame Dulac prophesied. You have kissed a woman's hand for the second time to-day, but you have lost your clumsiness. This girl does not detect anything awkward or unaccustomed in your act, and she knows that your heart spoke and not just your lips, for she pulls her hand away quickly and holds it to her breast.

"I'll come to-morrow morning early, to tell you what I find out. Can you be in the garden—at nine?"

"Yes," she breathed.

She walked by his side to the gate and stood there looking up at him.

"Good-by," Jimmy said. He stepped through the gate and pulled it shut.

"*Au revoir*, until to-morrow."

"Oh," he turned swiftly. "My name is James Peyton."

"Our name is Grimaldi," said the girl. "Comte Hector de Grimaldi is my father." There was a second's pause. "I am Giselle," she added more softly.

"Good-by—Giselle," he whispered. He turned to the road and strode off down the hill.

IV.

WHEN Jimmy arrived at the hotel, he hastened up to their rooms and found Trench bent over his desk.

Trench turned a puzzled eye upon him.

"Where have you been? What's up? You look as if you had—"

"I was detained," answered Jimmy tersely. "I only walked a little way and then I took the funicular. Get up. You're coming down to interview the manager with me. Snap out of it!"

"My good James, it's six o'clock, and you'd better sit down and rest before dinner. You arrive looking as if you'd broken the bank—"

Jimmy handed him his hat and propelled him toward the door.

"I'll tell you on the way," he said briefly. Trench was hustled into the elevator, pulled out again, and steered through the lobby toward the desk, before he was vouchsafed a word more.

"You're to ask for the manager of the hotel, tell him you're the American consul at Nice—"

"He knows me," interposed Trench.

"Fine—and ask him for the full name of the person registered in this hotel, who has the initials S. N. He would probably tell me politely to go to the devil, but you can do it."

Trench registered intelligence.

"S. N." he stammered excitedly. "Why, that's the man who advertised—"

"For Moorish remains, particularly wells. Exactly. I've found a tiled well. *The well*, in fact."

"You've found a Moorish well?" Trench gazed at him awe struck. "Good Lord, I've been over this ground a hundred times and you unearth Saracen remains in a few—tell me, did you notice the enamel? Did it appear to have been applied in the Cloisonné manner, like the Toledo tiles, or could you detect the use of an engobe, as in the Alcazar type?"

Jimmy waited patiently.

"When you're quite through, we'll start. No, dammit, I didn't notice the enamel. This is business, not archaeology. You find out who this S. N. bird is, and we may find out a lot of other things you don't expect."

Monsieur Mallet, the smiling, frock-coated director, to whose sanctum Trench's card had paved a way, proved amenable. He acknowledged *Monsieur le Consul's* introduction of Monsieur Peyton with marked respect and treated *Monsieur le Consul's* question as one containing, perhaps, the germ of a mystery of great diplomatic moment. With many bows he excused himself to confer with his colleague.

He returned almost immediately.

"There is a person—a gentleman—who descends at our hotel only yesterday, with the initials you mention, *Monsieur le Consul*."

"What is his name," said Jimmy.

"He is Monsieur Salih Nasar—a Mohammedan gentleman, I gather. His domicile is given as Tangier."

Jimmy leaned back in his chair.

"Ah," he murmured with a faint smile of satisfaction. "Quite so."

"A thousand thanks, *monsieur*," Trench said. He bowed. Monsieur Mallet bowed.

"If *Monsieur le Consul* desires any

further information, or the aid of myself and my staff, now or later, it will be my profound pleasure to serve him—discreetly, it goes without saying."

Trench glanced at his friend, then turned to Monsieur Mallet. "Monsieur Peyton may perhaps avail himself of your kind offer."

"But, perfectly, *monsieur*," murmured Mallet, turning an expectant face upon his other questioner.

Jimmy considered a moment.

"Is this gentleman alone?"

"He arrived alone, and we had not hitherto had the pleasure of his acquaintance, but my colleague informs me that he lunched here yesterday with another gentleman who is well known to us—the Marquis de Pucelli."

Jimmy jumped to his feet. No longer was he the polite if slightly impatient listener.

"Pucelli!" he shot at Monsieur Mallet. "Who is Pucelli? Is there more than one here in Monte Carlo?"

The director smiled imperturbably.

"I believe Monsieur le Marquis is the only one."

"Forgive my abruptness, Monsieur Mallet." Jimmy seated himself again. "Could you, without embarrassment, tell me something of him?"

Trench came to life and played up.

"Monsieur Peyton is in my confidence," he said. "You may feel quite safe in speaking as freely to him as to me."

Mallet reflected a moment before he spoke.

"The marquis is a well known figure in Monte Carlo. He is a young Italian, a bachelor, has a charming villa at Cap Martin, and is, I believe, enormously wealthy. I might add, *monsieur*, as we are, so to speak, discussing this *in camera*," —he looked at Trench, who nodded, answering the unspoken question with a movement of his hand—"that it is not the climate nor the—ah—natural beauties of Monte Carlo which commend themselves to him. *Monsieur le Marquis* is a student of mankind, or rather of the more interesting half of mankind, and his manner of indulging his—shall we say, hobbies—is not

such as makes him always a desirable guest."

"Damn him!" muttered Jimmy between his teeth. Then again to Mallet:

"Did your guest and Pucelli seem to be only chance acquaintances?"

"Ah! no, *monsieur*. They met in the lobby and greeted each other as old friends. *Monsieur le Marquis* is oriental in many of his tastes and has been much in Tangier and Algiers. Doubtless they had met somewhere—over there."

Jimmy thought for a moment, then rose.

"Is this Salih Nasar in the hotel at present, do you happen to know?"

"He has been here all day, *monsieur*, but I learn that a few moments ago a lady called to see him in regard to some advertisement he had published." Jimmy and Trench exchanged glances. "I think they left the hotel together. The lady was announced as Mme. Dulac."

"Dulac, *monsieur*?" Jimmy's face betrayed the liveliest interest. "I know a Mme. Dulac. Did you see the lady?"

Mallet was apologetic. "I did not see the lady. I regret, *monsieur*."

Trench turned a blank, mystified face upon his friend. Who were these people Jimmy seemed to know so well? He seemed to be of no further use in the inquiry, which had apparently been taken out of his hands.

But Jimmy had no more questions. They both rose and bowed to the little man.

"We are infinitely grateful to you, M. Mallet, for your frankness," said Trench. "You may be sure that all you say is received quite officially. I need not apologize, I presume, for neglecting to acquaint you with my reasons for conducting this inquiry?"

It was delivered in Trench's best consular manner, and no one would have guessed that he had not the remotest idea what it was all about.

They bowed themselves out of the office, and entered the lounge. This time it was Trench who took the initiative. He seized his friend by the arm and turned him around.

"Now, young fella-me-lad," he said "it's my turn. You don't seem to have lost any

time in getting into the picture here, and I want to know—”

“Lord, man, don’t talk now,” Jimmy exclaimed impatiently. “We must find that man and see what Mme. Dulac has to do with it. They may be around here now.”

“They’ll be here fifteen minutes from now, too.” Trench’s manner had become decisive. “Before I let you get into anything more I want to know just what you’ve been up to.”

He steered Jimmy to a settee in the corner and planted himself beside him.

“Remember that I’m not authorized to use my official postion sleuthing for irresponsible tourists without knowing where I stand. I’ve taken my eyes off you for two hours and you’ve turned up with a well that no one ever heard of, a mysterious gentleman from Tangier, a clearly expressed dislike for a rounder named Pucelli, and a Mme. Something-or-other whom you picked up Lord knows where.” He eyed Jimmy accusingly. “What have you been doing?”

Jimmy looked at him long and closely, closed his eyes for a moment, and decided to tell him the whole amazing story.

“Well, Charlie—I met—that girl.”

“Oh, Lord!” sighed Trench hopelessly. “I shouldn’t have left you. How did you meet her?”

“Oh, I called on her.”

“I suppose you found her house and sent in word that Mr. James Peyton, of New Haven, would be glad of an opportunity to exhibit some new variety of boorishness.”

“No, I met her in her garden and—we got to talking.”

“How in Heaven’s name did you get into the garden?”

“She asked me in.”

“She let you in?”

“Oh, yes. She seemed glad to see me.”

“She must have been, after your performance at the station. Did you crawl around on your hands and knees for her again?”

“No. We sat most of the time and talked. Sat on a well.”

“Ah!” said Trench, brightening. “So that’s where the well is? And Mme. Dulac, was it? Where did you pick *her* up?”

“Oh, she’s just a very charming woman

—a trifle old, perhaps—who’s supposed to be my wife—at least, until I get orders to the contrary.”

“Supposed to be your wife?” Trench shouted. He groaned and slumped back into his chair. “Why did I get you to come here? I can’t be responsible. One thing more, where did you meet Pucelli? Was he sitting on the well, too, or did you break into his garden later on, when you had grown tired of annoying unprotected women?”

“I don’t know him at all,” returned Jimmy, his face hardening, “but he’s going to know who I am before we’re through with this thing!”

He had dropped his joking tone, and his manner was grave.

“Now, Charlie, you listen and keep listening. Don’t preach until I finish.”

Slowly and diffidently at first, but gathering sureness as he proceeded he told Trench the whole story of his meeting with Mme. Dulac and of his visit to the garden at La Turbie. At least, he told as much as it was meant for Trench to hear. He gave him all the essential facts, though there were certain phases of his recent education in wells—and gardens—which were painted with a sparing brush.

“And so,” he concluded, “the man is an Arab or something, after all. I guess that gives us enough to go on, doesn’t it? It makes the story reasonable at least.”

He looked at his friend for encouragement.

“Yes,” Trench answered slowly. “It certainly is enough to go on.”

He had been quite converted and forgot that he was intending to lecture Jimmy. He had listened without a word, but he had been thinking deeply. It did look as if they had stumbled upon something.

Jimmy was speaking again.

“If the jewels, or whatever they are, are there, they must be found quickly, for it looks as if this chap knows how they are hidden, even if he doesn’t know yet just *where* the place is. As I told you I’m going to see her—Mlle. Grimaldi—to-morrow morning. I’ll tell her, of course, to start hunting at once, for there’s no telling just how soon this Salih man will find out things

for himself. There must be a lot of people—friends of the family—who know of the well—and might answer the advertisement. And Mme. Dulac—what does she want to see him about?"

He paused a minute and his frown became deeper.

"Just one thing troubles me. The girl will want to tell her father about it. Somehow, I don't like to see him getting these jewels—if there are any. The fact that he's doing this beastly thing—marrying her to that swine—and the pawnshop, and everything else. He may be just the kind who would pawn them and leave things as they are."

"I feel just as you do," said Trench. "Tell this girl what you've found out, help her to make a search, if possible, but try to persuade her not to tell any one else for a while. If she finds anything it will be time enough to decide about her father. He sounds like a bad egg, anyhow. The important thing is to keep this Salih person off the track, or beat him to it."

He looked at Jimmy keenly, quizzically as he continued:

"It doesn't sound as if you'd have any insuperable difficulty persuading her not to tell her father. She has told you the family secrets. She has discussed her *financé* with you. She may have wept on your shoulder! I wouldn't be surprised at anything now. If you can get a French *jeune fille* of good family to do that in an hour without an introduction, I'll say that the art of persuading was in its infancy until you arrived. I'm all through lecturing you, my boy. I can only admire you!"

He saw that Jimmy was not receiving this sort of raillery with particularly good grace, and dropped his bantering tone.

"Well, old man, that's all of that. I'm with you in anything you want me for, that's not against the peace and dignity of the State Department or the sovereign Principality of Monaco."

Jimmy stood up and reached for his hat.

"You're a brick, Charlie. We're going to see some fun. I suppose the next step is to flush our birds. Maybe they're still together. Let's try the Casino, have a general look around, and then get some dinner. I'd

give a good deal to have a squint at this Tangier gentleman, and my quasi-wife."

V.

THE lady known to the elderly gentleman with the rosette of the Legion of Honor as Mme. Robert, and who had given to Jimmy the name of Mme. Dulac, had lunched alone in her room in the Victoria. The charming American who had made it possible for her to be here at all had seen to it that her trunk was sent, and after unpacking she had spent almost the whole afternoon sitting at her window, chin in hand, looking out over the tops of the mimosas in the hotel garden, thinking and wondering and planning. Only once had she moved. She had gone to her desk and written, one after the other, many drafts of a letter, tearing each one up and throwing it away as soon as it was written. It was a very difficult letter, indeed, and it seemed that she could compose nothing to her satisfaction.

Finally, late in the afternoon, when the sun, disappearing behind the rocky mass of the *Tête du Chien*, had left her window in shadow, she rose from her chair. She turned on the lamp of the writing desk, seated herself and picked up the newspaper that had come up with her luncheon tray. For a few moments she read listlessly—the arrivals, the notices of opera and concert in the Casino, the Paris news—when suddenly her wandering attention seemed to focus itself upon something which absorbed her. She read the article through and laid down the paper, her forehead wrinkled in thought. Then she turned again to the page where the astonishing words were printed—astonishing to her, who was sure that she could read their real meaning between the lines. She went through it again with a little frown, word by word, slowly and thoughtfully. When she had finished she lay back in her chair and closed her eyes.

She seemed to make up her mind suddenly, for after a moment she rose quickly and hurriedly dressed for the street. She chose her hat and gown with meticulous care, however. This interview was too important. She must make an impression on

this gentleman before she could hope to succeed in the startling plan which had flashed across her mind.

With a final glance in the mirror and a last deft, hurried adjustment of veil and hat, she left the room. A few minutes later she presented herself at the reception desk of the Hotel de Paris.

"Will you be good enough to inform your guest who advertises in the *Eclaireur de Nice* under the initials 'S. N.' that Mme. Dulac is here—in reference to the advertisement?"

"*Bien, madame.* If *madame* will take the trouble to be seated in the blue salon, I will make inquiries."

She went into the little empty room to wait, taking a chair across from the door, watching to see what manner of man this "S. N." would prove to be. She should not have come, that went without saying. Her success lay in playing a lone hand—in remaining unknown, in keeping herself strictly to the one big thing at stake. Yet the significance of the notice in the paper had been too obvious, and she had realized that in it lay possibilities which might mean for her the success of her scheme. For she knew where the well was which S. N. was seeking, and in the illuminating moment when she had read the few words in the paper she had been certain of his motive. Her plan, for which she had dared to come to Monte Carlo, required great luck and great tact—or it required money. How much she did not know, but certainly more than she had. Here perhaps was the means of getting it.

She rose and paced up and down the little room. Had she done right to mix in this new affair? Was it too dangerous? The thought came to her suddenly that perhaps it was a trick of the *Sûreté*. Then she realized that the newspaper had been printed before she arrived.

Just then some one parted the curtains and came into the room. The turned and saw a plump little man in the red fez and ceremonial frock coat of the Turk in European dress. A pleasant little man at first glance, bearded, swarthy, with slightly protruding, lustrous, semitic eyes smiling behind thick lensed spectacles. Then sudden-

ly she disliked him. His eyes were sharp, not smiling—too sharp to be honest.

The little man bowed.

"I have the honor to address Mme. Dulac? Will *madame* be seated? I am Salih Nasar."

She acknowledged his bow and seated herself in the chair by the window.

"*Madame* has done me the honor of calling, I am told, in answer to my *réclame* this morning?"

"Yes, *monsieur*."

"I assume, then, that *madame* is in possession of Saracen antiquities of which she would be willing to dispose?"

"No, *monsieur*, I am not precisely possessed of such things myself."

"Ah, perhaps it is that *madame* suggests her services as *intermédiaire* between myself and the owner? In which case, it goes without saying, a certain honorarium for *madame* will be quite agreeable to me."

"Again, no, *monsieur*," the lady smiled. "I do not propose myself as an agent of any one. I perceive in the paper that *monsieur* makes a collection of Saracen antiquities, and mentions particularly tiled well heads. It happens that I know of such a well of undoubted authenticity, and it occurs to me that you might be willing to purchase from me the information as to its location and its owner, in order to make it possible for you to purchase the thing itself."

Salih Nasar peered at her through his spectacles and said, after an imperceptible pause:

"*Madame* is a woman of acumen. Such information would be worth something to me—provided, of course, that I find that the thing itself is authentic."

"You can convince yourself of that, *monsieur*, and I will add two things. First, you will probably not find it except with my aid, and second, it is unique in this region. You are searching in a strangely barren field, *monsieur*, for a collector of Moorish remains," she added significantly.

She paused a moment and her eyes never left his face.

"And what would you consider a reasonable—honorarium for this information?"

"I am most anxious to secure good speci-

mens, *madame*. Your information would be worth five thousand francs."

She smiled, an ingenuous, disarming little smile, spreading out her hands in a gesture of regret.

"Ah, *monsieur*, I fear we do not understand each other. Is not the figure you mention a little low—under the circumstances?"

"The circumstances?" he repeated politely, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes, *monsieur*, I am sure that we need not talk at cross purposes. The well, as I feel sure you know, is a most unusual one. Even though it must have long since dried up, its possibilities are still enormous, are they not?" She still smiled straight into his eyes as she went on. "If it can no longer give you water, it might still yield something that would sparkle quite as brightly."

Salih's motionless features still held their expression of polite attention and not the flicker of an eye or the tiniest movement of a muscle betrayed the fact that he was fairly choking with surprise and disappointment.

"Possibly, *madame*," he replied quietly.

"Therefore, I feel," she continued, "that a more just measure of the worth to you of this information would be fifty thousand francs." Her eyes left his face. "Suppose we say twenty-five thousand francs when you have seen the well and judged of its authenticity, and the remainder when you have determined that—it has not really run dry?"

He looked at her closely, a little spark of something like admiration appearing in his apathetic eyes. There was a silence while each measured the other. Finally he nodded slowly.

"The figure is quite satisfactory, *madame*."

VI.

AFTER Jimmy's recital was finished, the two men had risen and were strolling through the lounge toward the revolving doors of the main entrance when Jimmy grasped the other's arm.

"Charlie," he whispered, "they're in there!"

"Where?"

"In that little room, over by the window, talking. Lord, I'd give anything to know what they're saying."

"Hold on," replied Trench hurriedly, "there's a terrace on that side of the hotel that ought to run directly under those windows. There'll be no one there at this time and it's pitch dark. Come on."

Followed by Jimmy he made his way through the lounge, between the tables where the late tea drinkers still dallied, and out onto the terrace. He led the way around the corner of the hotel to the seaward side. It was deserted now. They tiptoed along until they came under a window of the salon, from which issued a low, confused murmur of voices.

The voices were indistinct, as the music of the orchestra in the lounge overlaid all other sounds. But they could distinguish a man's and a woman's tones. They raised themselves on tiptoe until their heads came just under the window ledge, straining their ears to catch the words.

Suddenly the orchestra stopped. There was a little burst of applause that rose and died away, and in the dead quiet which followed, the voices above their heads came clear and distinct.

And this is what they heard:

"It is agreed then, *monsieur*. You will call for me at my hotel at noon and I will take you there. You will be able without even entering the garden to convince yourself that the well is genuine. That is all I can do for you. And I hope, *monsieur*, that it will be productive."

The man's voice answered.

"Ah, *madame*, I do not ask how you come by your knowledge or what is your motive in selling it to me. You can be very sure, nevertheless, that you may be putting right something that for centuries has been very wrong. What I am seeking came from India, ages ago, to Egypt. From Egypt, they were stolen and fell into the hands of those who had no right to them. They went to Genoa, and then my people took them again, from a ship, and brought them here. Here they have been lost for nine centuries and more. The Tears of the Peri have made many journeys, but now

they are coming back at last to their rightful owners. You are not of my faith, *madame*, but you are just, I know, and you may feel sure that I am only doing justice. The Tears of the Peri belong with my people."

There was silence for a moment and then the sound of other voices in the room, invading the privacy which Mme. Dulac and her companion had enjoyed. The shadows of the newcomers showed against the oblong of light thrown on the terrace as they crossed the room. Stepping back warily to the balustrade, Jimmy saw Mme. Dulac and the Moor move away from the window to the farther side of the room, out of any possible earshot.

He clutched Trench by the arm.

"Did you hear that?" he hissed.

"Yes," Trench whispered back. "So that's your temporary wife! I hope she hasn't given away the whole works to him yet."

"Apparently not. She's going to take him to see it herself. But he's given it away to me!" He was hoarse with excitement. "Did you hear what he called them?—the Tears of the Peri! Well, there's an inscription on the side of that well, in the tiling—I didn't tell you about that—something about 'The Tears of the Peri.' Mlle. de Grimaldi told me the translation this afternoon. Don't you see?" He shook Trench's arm. "Charlie," he cried jubilantly, "I am going to see what's behind those tiles to-morrow morning!"

Trench was at last thoroughly infected with Jimmy's excitement. He faced him in the darkness.

"Jimmy, this is more fun than I've had since I've been in the service. I'll bet we're on the right track. Beat him to it!"

They made their way around the terrace again, glowing with excitement, and re-entered the hotel. They were heading for a corner of the room which commanded a view of the entrance to the blue salon, when a little, elderly gentleman breezed through the revolving doors and advanced into the lounge. He saw the two Americans, and hastened toward them. Jimmy saw with a start that it was the gentleman who had interrogated Mme. Dulac at the station,

and before whom he had acknowledged her as his wife.

The gentleman hurried up to them, beaming with pleasure.

"Ah, my dear friend Trench! What a pleasure to see you again in Monte Carlo! And you, *monsieur*"—he turned to Jimmy—"I am happy to have the opportunity of seeing you once more. I am sure that, under the pilotage of *monsieur le consul*, *madame* and yourself are finding your visit most pleasant."

He was the last person in the world that either of them wanted to see.

Trench stammered a good evening and introduced Jimmy.

"May I present my friend, M. Peyton? This is M. Boujassy, the *Chef de la Sûreté* of Monaco."

The little man smiled.

"M. Peyton and I have already met, though I had not the pleasure of knowing his name," he replied warmly. "As a matter of fact, it was he whom I came to see, and it is but an added pleasure, *monsieur le consul*, to find you. I fear that I was the cause of some annoyance to Mme. Peyton this morning upon her arrival, and I had hoped that *monsieur* would permit me to offer my sincerest apologies both to *madame* and to himself."

He turned a friendly and confiding smile upon Trench.

"Our duties are not always pleasant, as you know, and this morning, misled by a fancied resemblance which Mme. Peyton bore to a lady I was—requested to meet, I accosted her on the station platform."

Trench mumbled something. He was very unhappy, and warm, and uncomfortable. He had known all along that this Dulac affair of Jimmy's was a question of the *Sûreté*, but he had hardly anticipated the awful possibility of being dragged into it himself.

He looked sidewise at Jimmy, who was swallowing hard, but smiling, though smiling wanly.

"My dear sir," Jimmy was saying, "please do not apologize. I quite understand that such mistakes must occur. We have already forgotten the incident."

"*Monsieur* is very kind." Boujassy

bowed again and added: "Might I have the privilege of expressing my regrets to *madame* herself"—he raised a deprecating hand—"if, it goes without saying, it would not derange *madame*? I fancied I saw her enter the hotel not long ago."

Trench's world crumbled about him. He was caught in a trap. He would be dismissed from the service. A consul—and mixed up in an affair of this sort! Obstruction of justice! Deceiving a police officer of a foreign country! Lord, no, it was unthinkable! He must stop this thing before it went any further. Boujassy was evidently suspicious, or he would not have come to the hotel. Therefore Jimmy must produce his wife, and that was impossible now.

He found his voice at last. "I think that *madame*—"

Jimmy took his arm and squeezed it, unseen. He, too, scented the danger of excuses.

"Exactly. I think that *madame* is awaiting us now in the salon with another friend, who is dining with us. She will be charmed to renew M. Boujassy's acquaintance, though I am quite sure that his apologies are unnecessary."

Still holding Trench by the arm, Jimmy led the way to the blue salon, M. Boujassy trotting along beside them. He was really frightened by this time. This was more than an adventure. If he could only produce Mme. Dulac this man's suspicions would be quieted, but even assuming that she would rise to the occasion, how could he handle the Moor who had never laid eyes upon him in his life?

They entered the room. Mme. Dulac and Salih were still there. They looked around as the three men came through the door, and Mme. Dulac, who at first had noticed only Jimmy, smiled. Then she caught sight of the other two, and her heart gave a frightened leap and almost stopped. So, the game was up. She had failed. She could not believe that her charming American had betrayed her to the *Sûreté*, but they had found out somehow. She waited for the words which were coming.

Jimmy crossed the room to her side, the other two just behind him.

"Well, my dear, here we are at last,"

he said gayly. "Charlie was a little late, as usual. Shake hands with her," he hissed into Trench's ear. He turned to the Moor, who had risen in surprise, and looked him steadily in the eye for a fraction of a second. "Good Lord, I hope he plays up!" he thought. "And my dear friend, how are you? Forgive me for not being downstairs to welcome you when you arrived. You remember Trench, do you not?"

Trench, caught in a net from which his waning courage showed him no way of escape, left off pumping Mme. Dulac's hand to bow to the Moor, who, stupefied and furious, but still wary, inclined his head gravely.

"My dear," continued Jimmy, "may I present M. Boujassy, whom you remember seeing this morning? And this, M. Boujassy, is my friend, Salih Nasar, of Tangier."

Salih Nasar advanced a step and opened his mouth to speak. He had had enough of this undignified mummery.

But Jimmy forestalled him.

"M. Boujassy, my dear"—he addressed the lady, but his eyes were fixed upon the Moor—"is the *Chef de la Sûreté* of the principality."

Salih Nasar's eyes narrowed almost imperceptibly, and he closed his mouth abruptly. He had changed his mind. He bowed deeply to M. Boujassy and answered that he was enchanted, which was very wide of the truth.

"*Madame* will forgive me," said Boujassy, completely disarmed and with any faint lingering of suspicion banished by the presence of his friend Trench and by the charming manner of M. Peyton and his lovely wife—" *madame* will forgive me, I am sure, for having intruded at this hour, when she is engaged with her friends; but, meeting *monsieur* and my old friend just now, I begged the honor of being presented to *madame*, to crave her pardon for the unfortunate incident of this morning!"

"But, *monsieur*"—*madame* was all smiles and graciousness; she was playing up indeed—"it is nothing. Truly your apologies embarrass me."

"*Madame* is too kind, and I can only say that I and my colleague regret the incident most deeply."

He was very pleased with all the world. But how absurd he had been to suspect. They were friends of M. Trench. He beamed upon them all.

"This has been a great pleasure, but I encroach upon your dinner hour. A thousand pardons." He bowed to each in turn. "Bon soir, madame; bon soir, messieurs; au revoir, Trench. Drop in upon me some day." He hustled out of the room, leaving the four standing in silence, looking at one another.

Jimmy took the floor again.

"Is this your first visit to Monte Carlo, monsieur?" he inquired blandly of Salih.

"Oui, monsieur." The Moor was playing safe. Could these Americans—and one of them a consul—be of the *Sûreté*? It was incredible, but he was still wary.

"Do you not find it delightful?"

"Oui, monsieur."

Jimmy turned to the others.

"What a pity that M. Salih Nasar is here only on business and must return so soon! It would have been so pleasant! M. Boujassy, too, would have been enchanted to see you again, I am sure, monsieur. In his delightful profession it is always such a pleasure to him to meet"—he accompanied his words with a bow to Salih—"accomplished amateurs like yourself."

He smiled into the troubled eyes of Mme. Dulac, and sighed.

"I know how hard it must be to tear one's self away from Monte Carlo at this season. Our friend must unfortunately leave by the morning train to-morrow. I assume, of course"—he transferred his genial smile to Salih, though his eyes were hard as steel—"that your business here is finished?"

Salih was boiling inwardly with a rage that he could scarcely control—rage at this devil of an unbeliever who was tormenting him, who had found out his secret somehow, *Sûreté* or no *Sûreté*, and was baiting him with it. Could it be that he must give up, after coming so far and succeeding so well? But there was not the faintest suspicion in his face of the turmoil in his tortured brain as he answered, with a vast dignity: "It is finished, monsieur."

"Then I will wish you *bon voyage*—a

pleasant journey back to Tangier, *monsieur*. Good night."

The look Jimmy bent upon Mme. Dulac was formal enough, but in it she thought she could read at least that he was not reproaching her. She could not guess what had been happening, but somehow she was crossing his trail, interfering in his plans. She realized, however, that he must know that she was not fighting him knowingly. He could not think so meanly of her as that.

"Good night, *madame*," he said. "Shall we go, Trench?"

As he turned to leave she started to put out her hand to him instinctively, then drew it back, knowing that there was nothing to be said. She had cast in her lot with the other side.

Jimmy hesitated a moment, his eyes upon her face. Then, with the stupefied Trench at his side, he crossed the room and passed into the lounge.

Mme. Dulac sank back into her chair. A few moments ago she had seen success dangling within her reach, unexpected, unbelievable success. Now, in a moment, it was gone. Salih had been warned, though why she could not tell, and the chances of her winning the fifty thousand francs seemed very meager. Could M. Peyton have known that he was ruining her only chance of happiness?

Salih had seated himself again and drawn out his cigarette case. Would *madame* smoke? She shook her head. *Madame* would permit? He selected a cigarette and replaced the case. Calm, imperturbable, with the same impassive expression that he had worn ever since he had entered the room, and the maddening deliberation of one who cruelly draws out a moment of painful waiting, his hand traveled to the pocket of his waistcoat and drew out a tiny gold filigreed phial. He unscrewed the jeweled cap, and the scent of jasmine floated for an instant between them as with a little rod of glass, attached to the cap, he slowly and painstakingly traced a line down the side of his cigarette. He closed the phial, replaced it, and lit the cigarette. He took a few contemplative puffs, looking nevitably at Mme. Dulac. Then his eyes

seemed to grow larger and took on a new and menacing expression.

"*Madame*, who were those people?" he said.

She faced him courageously.

"*Monsieur*, I have never seen any of them in my life until this morning. The elderly gentleman and the young man who introduced us I saw for a few moments at the station this morning. M. Boujassy, if that is his name, accosted me, mistaking me for some one else. The other was there and witnessed the occurrence. The third man I have never seen in my life."

She was thinking swiftly and clearly. In truth she was as much puzzled as her companion, and she must not let him think, if she was to keep in his good graces, that she was in any way an accessory to the surprising scene that had just taken place. There was just a chance, after all, that everything was not spoiled.

"As to who they really are," she continued earnestly, "or why they came here, I have not the remotest idea."

She was speaking the very truth, and the sincerity in her words, which could not be doubted, apparently convinced him.

"As to what it all means, *madame*, I can make a very shrewd guess—a guess in which you are in no way concerned." He rose and looked down at her. "Eh bien, it begins to look interesting—our—venture. My researches do not seem to meet with universal approval."

She looked at him questioningly.

"I will fulfill my part of the bargain, *monsieur*. I shall wait for you at noon at the Victoria. Will you come—or will you take the morning train?"

"I keep my appointments, *madame*," he replied gravely. He bent low over her hand. "May I have the pleasure of conducting *madame* to a cab?"

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK



AW! SHUCKS!

I WISH I had a little house,
One window, an' one screen;
One house fly sittin' on my sill,
One vine, one lima bean!

One little weatherbeaten dog,
Some mongrel with a heart;
To wag his stubby tail at me,
An' always take my part!

I'm sick of faithless human friends,
Of women, an' of men;
I wish I had a little house,
An' one good layin' hen!

Then I could eat my egg in peace,
Beside my friendly fly;
An' cook the bean up for the dog;
Thus I would live an' die!

Mabel Rains.



Dan Barry's Daughter

By **MAX BRAND**

Author of "The Night Horseman," "Black Jack," "The Seventh Man," etc.

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PART I

JOAN, eighteen-year-old beauty who believes herself to be the daughter of Buck Daniels, ranchman, has been zealously guarded by him against the world of young men. This night she hears the call of the wild geese flying to the north, and she is strangely stirred. Then the ripe moon rises, and Joan slips away from the ranch house, saddles a horse and sends him racing over the countryside. Afar, she hears the happy, silvery laughter of other girls and she follows this musical trail to the schoolhouse where a dance is in progress. Joan spies on the merrymakers until a glimpse of a tall, broad shouldered, bronzed youth causes a delicious panic in her untried heart. She is about to flee when he challenges her in the darkness, and she pauses to flirt delicately with him, sight unseen. When he demands her name, she remembers that Buck Daniels is a killer, and she fears for this strange man's life. Leaving him only the memory of her voice as a clew to her identity, she rides away at full speed into the night and for the moment escapes pursuit. Interwoven with this shining promise of romance are the grim threads of tragedy wherein two innocent men perish at the hands of a pitiless cutthroat.

CHAPTER VII.

OUT OF SIGHT.

THERE was an excellent reason for that. Harry Gloster had heard her horse break out of the shrubbery and, running to the place, he was in time to see the bay gelding, glistening in the moonshine, darting away at full speed. Even with an equal start he knew that he

could not keep in touch with that fugitive. And through a strange country by night it was impossible to trace her.

Yet he was so excited that for a time reason had nothing to do with his actions. He ran a short distance on foot before he realized his folly. Then, standing for another moment, he watched the horse fade into the moon-haze and knew that he had lost her indeed.

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for June 30.

The sound of her voice and "*Que viva la rumba*" was all that he had by which to trail her. It would have been better to have had nothing at all. He tried the effect of cold-blooded argument as he turned and walked slowly back. In the first place, he had not seen her face. In the second place he knew nothing whatever about her. She might be a mere imp of the desert with sunfaded hair and freckles strewn across her nose.

But he found that impulse was breaking through reason again and again. He had heard only her voice, but it was a voice to dream of—low, sweet-toned, gentle—and all the freshness of girlhood was in it. She must be beautiful, he told himself, with such a voice as that.

He was beginning to feel that an ugly fate had hold of him in this country. In the first place, there had been that singular meeting with a man whose eyes had such power that they had pierced through and through him and got quite at the heart of his story. He was fleeing for the Rio Grande and if he was caught the chances were considerably more than three out of four that he would be swung from the gallows for having shortened the life of a fellow man.

Lee Haines had looked him through and through, and for that very reason he should have started south again as fast as a staggeringly weary horse could take him. But he had lingered until he was drawn into battle again, and in that fight he had made a mortal enemy of Joe. Joe Macarthur he had learned that the man's name was, and Haines had understated the formidable character of the fellow.

Now, then, that one man had discovered that he was a fugitive and that another was on his trail to "get" him, certainly he had reasons enough for wishing to leave the town at a full gallop. But he had deliberately lingered, jogging only a mile or two south and then making a detour.

Joe Macarthur would thunder south along the trail which a dozen people could point out to him. Let him go! Harry Gloster would start later and by a different route. For he had no desire to meet a man

who was a professional in the use of a gun.

He himself could occasionally hit a target—if it were large enough and he had time enough to aim with care, but this magic of swift drawing and murderous straight shooting combined was quite beyond him. Fighting for its own sake he loved with a passionate devotion.

But to face a gunman would be suicide. So he had lingered in the town until the dark, and then he started forth leisurely on a trail that ran south and west. So it was that he came to the lighted schoolhouse. Twice he rode by it, and twice he turned and came back to listen to the gusts of young voices and to the bursts of the music. All common sense told him to be off and away. But it was a year since he had danced, and Harry Gloster was young.

So he went inside the school, but once inside he regretted his step more than ever. Something had died in him, so it seemed, during that last year. The music was flat; not a smile which his great size and his handsome face won for him penetrated his armor of indifference, and after he had spent fifteen minutes in the hall he got up and left. He was on his way to his horse when he heard

"*Que viva la rumba,
Que viva, que viva placer—*"

ring sweet and thin from the thicket.

And now he was coming back toward his horse with the solemn realization that there would be no shelter for him below the Rio Grande. For, sooner or later, he must come back to find the trail of this nameless girl, and when he returned he would be placing his head in the lion's mouth of the law. But he knew himself too well to dream that he could hold out long against the temptation.

He paused again on his way to the horse. The music had a different meaning, now. His pulse was quick. His blood was hot. And there was a tingle of uneasiness which ran from hand to foot. Had he known that Joe Macarthur himself was in that dancehall, he would have entered again and taken his chance, which was not a chance at all.

Up the steps he went, and into the hurly-burly of a dance which was just beginning. He was too late to get a partner. As usual, there were three men for every two girls at this Western dance. Every girl was swept up in half a minute after a dance began, and still there were men along the walls and smoking on the steps.

Harry Gloster went to the orchestra. It consisted of a drummer, a cornetist, a violinist, and an individual playing a braying trombone which from time to time shook the whole place with its thunder. Into the hand of the violinist Harry Gloster slipped a five dollar bill.

"Switch back to '*Que viva la rumba*,' when you get a chance," he said, and walked hurriedly away; for if he had stayed the old musician would doubtless have had pride enough to refuse the money. It was a tag dance which he was watching, a queer institution installed particularly for merrymakings in which there was a shortage of girls. Once the dance was under way the men from the sides worked onto the floor and touched the arms of those who were dancing with the girls of their choice. And so there was, perforce, a change of partners, and many a girl found herself whirling away in the arms of a man she had never known before.

Harry Gloster, from the side, watched the jumble of interweaving forms—saw the vain effort of dancing couples to elude the approach of the taggers—heard the uproar of laughter which almost drowned the strain of the waltz. There was a brief pause in the music, then the orchestra struck into the pleasant rhythm of "*Que viva la rumba*," and the dance, which had hardly paused, started again more wildly than ever.

Gloster, searching the faces, felt that they had been transformed. That old touch of magic which he had felt in his boyhood, now had returned. Yonder in the moonshine he had been touched by the wand and poured full of the enchantment. And he knew it well enough. But so long as the illusion lasted, why should he give up the happiness? One dance, then away for the border!

How should he choose? They all ap-

peared delightful enough to him now. Their smiles were like glimpses of blue sky after storm, and their bodies seemed floating and whirling lightly on the stream of the music. Yonder one with red hair was tagged so often that she was repeatedly whirling from the arms of one man to another, and yet her laughter never stopped. Should he touch her arm?

And there was another, slender, joyous—who changed partners often enough, but never lost her step. And here was a third with great, brown eyes and brown hair coiled low on her neck and dressed in a clinging mist of a gown like sunset-tinted bit of cloud—

Instantly, Harry Gloster was through the press, moving with wonderful lightness for so large a man. He touched the arm of the man who danced with that pink-clad vision, and received a stare of surprise from under level black brows.

"Next time around, Nell," said he, stepping slowly back and still keeping his glance fixed upon Gloster.

"All right, John," she answered, and then was away in the arms of Gloster.

"Nobody was tagging you," he said.

"No," she answered, demurely.

"Why not? Engaged to friend John?"

"Maybe," she answered, without raising her eyes.

But Harry Gloster only laughed.

"I've broken the ice for you, then. Here comes a couple to get you. Shall I let them have you?"

And at this, finally, she looked up. They were great brown eyes, indeed, and filled with an almost too perfect meekness.

"Can you help it?" she asked.

"Say the word and I'll show you the trick."

Some of the meekness left her eyes and a glimmer of mischief took its place.

"If you can—" she said.

It was done with miraculous skill. A slight increase in their speed—they whirled toward one prospective and eager-faced tagger, then away from his reaching fingertips—then toward the other, and away again, like a leaf which wind currents throw up and down, suddenly, but never with jar or jerk.

"How in the world did you do it?" she was laughing up to him.

He drank in that laughter, frankly, meeting her eyes as he had never met the eyes of any woman before. What did it matter? She was only a ghost. The reality was far away, fleeing through the haze of moonshine.

"You're going to forget John—for this one dance," he commanded. "You're engaged to me, understand?—for five minutes!"

"What do you mean?" gasped Nell.

"You know what I mean."

He dodged an aggressive tagger and then sped on.

"If John doesn't get me," she was saying, "on this round, he'll be furious."

"It does John good to be furious," answered Gloster. "We're too happy to be bothered."

"We?"

"You are or will be. I'm happy enough to make up for two. It's overflowing. D'you feel it come out of my fingertips at your back, like electricity?"

Her eyes were frightened, but her lips were smiling.

"What are you doing?"

"Taking you with me. For five minutes, you understand? Going to see how much action we can crowd into that time—"

"And after that—"

"I'm going away. Never see you again!"

"You're not like other people," she said almost wistfully.

"Not a bit. Here's John again! Dance faster. Longer steps! We're going to dodge him if you help—"

And help she did. She became as light as that whirling leaf he had thought of before. It seemed that his mere volition was guiding her.

"The devil!" muttered Harry Gloster. "Someone tagged me then. But we're going on—"

"Oh, there'll be trouble about it! It's the rule!"

"D'you care about rules?"

"Not the least in the world!"

She had caught the fire at last. A rioting carelessness was in her eyes.

"There's another hand at my shoulder!" They had swerved deftly away, but John had apparently been watching the previous tactics of this big stranger, and his hand touched Gloster. But Gloster danced on, with the girl in his arms.

"What will happen? What will they do?" the girl was breathing close to his face.

"That's for them to worry about. This dance is *ours*!"

He drew her a little closer.

"I feel your heart keeping time—with the music," he whispered.

"You mustn't look at me like that!"

"Why not?"

"They'll know what you're saying—"

"They'll only wish they'd said it first—"

"And John will be wild—"

"The wilder he is to-night the tamer he'll be to-morrow! By the Lord, you're too wonderful to be true!"

"I won't listen to you!"

"Close your ears to me, then, and listen to the music. D'you hear it?

"Que viva la rumba;
Que viva, que viva placer;
Que viva las niñas, chulitas, bonitas,
Y guapas que saben querer."

"It's talking for me, Nell!"

"There! You were tagged again!"

"What do I care?"

"Oh, everyone is looking at us!"

"Let them look. You're worth seeing, Nell!"

"They'll fight you about this."

"Do you mind being fought for? I'd like to fight for you, Nell. There's John again—but this time we've dodged him. But look at them coming! A dozen ready to tag me. Nell, you're a popular girl! Confound them, they won't have you yet!"

"Please!"

"Please what? Do you want me to let you go?"

"I—I—no!" She pressed a little closer to him. "Don't let them take me!"

"Que viva la rumba,
Que viva, que viva placer—"

He sang it in a ringing bass.

"Every person is looking at you!"

"No—at you, Nell. Two minutes out of my five are left. I'm going to have you to myself that long!"

"What are you going to do?"

"Take you out of this place before they tag me with a club."

"Take me where?"

"Outside. We're going to sit on the moonlight side of a tree, and I'm going to make love to you, Nell, as you were never made love to before."

"Do you think I've gone mad? I won't go a step with you!"

"Hush, Nell. I know that you trust me."

"Not a bit."

"Look me in the eye when you say that."

She flushed gloriously and her eye wavered under his glance.

"You're a dear, Nell. But I want to have you where it's quiet to tell you just how dear you are. When we get to the end of the hall, out through the door we go together. You understand?"

"Yes—no! Of course I won't go."

"I won't try to make you. Tell me for the last time? You're going to hear me? Only for two minutes, and then I'm gone!"

"Oh!" cried she. "My head is swimming!"

"With the music!"

"I'll go. I don't care what they say!"

"Nor I what they do."

They reached the end of the hall, swung deftly through the outer line of the dancers, and were suddenly through the door, leaving a gasp of wonder behind them. They stood at the head of the steps, worn and hollowed by the scraping feet of school children. Before them was the moonlit world.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OUTLANDER OFFENDS.

THREE was no lack of brains behind the level black brows of John Gainor.

His temper was as eager and as sanguinary as that of any man, but he was possessed of a controlling discretion. When, after having tagged Gloster, he saw the

big man dance serenely on, his first impulse was to jump at his throat and tear him away. But the very size of Harry Gloster was enough to make Gainor doubly thoughtful.

So, instead of acting on the first rash impulse, he stepped back to consider the situation again. Had it been the first time that Nell had stepped from the conventional path, passion might have carried him away, but he had watched her flirting a dozen times, and this was simply the old story retold, he decided. It would not do to make himself ridiculous before the crowd.

Again, he was by no means sure how far he could go with Nell. Whether she was in love with him or with his father's ranch he had never been quite able to make up his mind. On occasion he presumed on the rights of being her fiancé, but those occasions were few and far between. That same night he had already laid down the law to her, and she had submitted, as he thought, with tears.

So far, so good. But if he tempted her again, might she not fling away from him and wreck all his hopes with a single fiery sentence? He knew her well enough to feel the danger. And this, plus the physical dimensions of Harry Gloster, made him pause to consider.

In another moment he was glad that he had delayed, for Gloster was tagged by half a dozen other men, and yet still went serenely on and showed not the slightest intention of abandoning his partner. It was not Gainor alone who had been insulted, but a whole group of men, and every one of them was on fire with rage. Moreover, they were not fellows to lie down under such an insult. Indeed, Gainor could not have named a more formidable group of cow-punchers, selected at random, than Bud Lane and Lefty Wallace and the others who had just been offended.

In fact, they were such men that he could not imagine what had led Nell to permit her partner to offend them. For Gainor knew that, no matter how willful and careless and emotional Nell might seem, at heart she was a profound little diplomat, and only gave offense to-day that she might

be the more gracious to the offended to-morrow. She had been worshiped by a score of admirers in her time, and although they were without hope to-day, they still continued to worship.

Something most extraordinary must have happened to sweep Nell off her feet in such a fashion. He studied her with a painful anxiety and closeness. What he saw was that there were ample grounds for fear. For Nell was transformed and radiant in the arms of this big man. She leaned back in them and looked up to him with laughter on her lips. She was so enchanting that the heart of John Gainor throbbed.

But still he took no hasty steps. It was not until he saw the couple swing off the dance floor at the end of the hall and disappear through the door that he began to act in the offensive.

The whole room was buzzing with it. The orchestra labored in vain at the animated strains of "*Que viva la rumba*," for the dancers were lagging at their work and busily exchanging murmurs and glances. On the farther side of the room the half dozen men who had been directly insulted by Gloster had gathered in a close group. And for these John Gainor made. The ground was plowed. He had only to drop the seed with a few words.

"What shall I do, boys?" he asked. "Take this for a joke, or go out and tear into that fellow? What's his name? Who is he? Friend of any of you?"

"Slick stranger!" said big Bud Lane. He was one of those blond, gentle giants who do not know fear, but who are rarely kindled to anger. It took a long time for rage to penetrate to the farthest corners of his being; but this was one of the exceptions. "That gent ain't one that works with friends. He plays a lone hand. And if it wasn't for Nell, I'd go out and bust his head wide open for him."

"That's it," nodded Gainor sadly. "I don't want to offend Nell. I dunno what happened. He must 've hypnotized her."

"That's what he done. I seen how fast he was talking," put in Lefty. "There ain't any honest man that can talk as fast as he was talking. A gent don't get thoughts that quick."

"I'm going out to have a look at him," declared Gainor.

"I'm coming along," said Bud.

And the rest, with a resolute clamor, crowded along, while a hush fell over the dancers and the orchestra increased its pace to rush the piece to its close.

Outside passed that little impromptu posse.

"Mind you, boys," said Gainor, "no guns!"

He would be held up as the ringleader of that group and if serious harm came to Gloster he would be made to account for it.

"It's fists!" rumbled Bud Lane. "I don't want a gun. I just want to set my hands on him—"

And he stretched out his big fists. Gainor looked upon him with vast approval. He recalled having seen Bud pull over two strong men in a tug-of-war. He had seen him throw up a three-hundred-pound bale of hay "four high" with the hooks.

And the story of how Bud Lane wrecked Murphy's place when he was short changed there was a tale of Homeric qualities. Every year the story was told and every year it grew a little, perhaps, but the sheriff himself was witness to the final picture of five men piled crisscross in the center of the wreckage on Murphy's floor with Bud Lane sitting on top of them and rolling a cigarette. Gainor remembered that tale, and he moistened his dry lips.

But where were Nell and the stranger?

The "posse" passed to the foot of the steps and went by the sheriff himself. He was sitting on a stump smoking, and he grinned at them in a friendly fashion which plainly bade them go as far as they liked. For the sheriff was a wise man and he knew the difference between a duty done and a vote lost.

"We're all right, boys," declared Gainor as they went on. "Sim Haynes passed me the wink. We can go the limit with the big stranger!"

"There they are!" whispered some one.

And to the shocked and astonished eyes of John Gainor there was revealed the following picture. Beneath a tree not twenty yards away sat Nell and the stranger, brazenly facing toward the moon, and that cruel-

ly clear white light showed them leaning close together—mortally close.

It could not be, and yet it indubitably was true, that the arm of the big man was around Nell, and that her head was back against his shoulder, and that she was faintly smiling up to him with eyes half closed. A sword of fire was struck through the heart of Gainor. The big man leaned. His head of tawny, shaggy hair obscured the face of the girl. He had kissed her!

John Gainor found himself walking alone toward the place. He had covered half the distance before the first swirl of rage abated. And he slackened his pace so that the others might catch up with him. They paused a short distance away as Gainor stepped forward again and stood before the guilty pair.

Nell sat up with a little cry. Hypnotism it surely had been. She looked around her with bewildered, unseeing eyes, and then suddenly threw her hands before her face.

But Harry Gloster arose, leisurely and faced the other. After all, he was not so tall. He seemed much larger than he was considered by himself. In cold fact, when compared with another, he was hardly more than six feet. John Gainor thrilled with surprise to find that he was looking almost level into the eyes of the stranger.

"I—we've come out to have a little talk with you," he declared.

"I'm a busy man," said Harry Gloster, shamelessly. "But go ahead and do the talking."

Gainor bit his lip. It was a rare thing for his father's son to be talked to in this fashion.

"Most like," he said, "you ain't been to many dances?"

"Considerable some," admitted Gloster.

"Which you don't seem to know what's manners on a dance floor."

Harry Gloster sighed.

"Son," he said. "I'm a plumb peaceful man. Are you trying to pick trouble with me?"

"We're looking for an apology," said John, more mildly. "You've insulted six of us here."

"I hate apologies," said Gloster easily. "I sure hate 'em."

"The damned pup!" exploded a voice from the background. "Lemme talk to him!"

"Did I hear you cussing out me?" asked Harry Gloster, smiling.

"You sure did!" cried Andrews, pressing to the fore. "And, what's more—"

He proceeded no farther, for he was struck down by something as inescapable as a lightning flash. It is the instinct of a fighting man to lean back and start his fist far behind him so that it flies through a wide arc and it is seen coming far away.

But now and again one comes upon warriors who understand the value of the jab. The jab, strictly speaking, is not a movement of the arm. It is a jerk of the entire body, a convulsive twist of muscles which shoots the whole mass from head to foot into motion.

The arm is simply made into a rigid part of the body and the fist is the focal point which strikes the enemy. The whole distance the striking fist covers is short. Perhaps it only travels six inches. But the effect is astounding.

Imagine, for instance, a hundred and fifty pound cube of iron lifted six inches from the floor and allowed to drop. The shock makes the floor quake. Now supply the iron mass with a projecting knob with a surface of a few square inches and let the mass fall again. This time, if it does not break the flooring with the concentrated impact, it will at least grind deep into the solid wood. Such is the jab.

With feet braced and fist extended and arm made rigid, the body is suddenly twisted and the blow darts home. Amateurs never use it unless they are possessed of an inborn genius. Even in the professional ring there are few, wonderfully few, adepts. But now and then, as the gladiators come together in the middle of the ring, it is seen that one of them, without an apparent blow having been struck, shudders from head to foot and suddenly collapses inert along the floor.

There is no use waiting for the count. Rubbing and water and care will bring back his senses in five minutes or more. What has struck him, then? Dismiss all doubt. It is the jab which has been used.

Or perhaps there is a variation. Instead of striking straight with rigid forearm, the fighter twists his fists and jerks it in and down a trifle. The result is hardly less of a shock combined with a tearing jar which, if the blow lands on the side, almost rips the flesh loose from the ribs, and if it strikes on the jaw converts a man's muscles into water and lets him flow to the floor a stunned, senseless thing.

From which it might be judged that all fighters would use this blow. But that is not the case for two reasons. A long, straight punch or a sweeping swing is so terrible to the eye, so impressive to the imagination, that it is an undying temptation. But the chief reason that the jab is not popular is that so few can use it, unless the word is applied to its distant cousin, the stiff armed, long distance left jab. And the reason it cannot be used by most is that it requires a sort of explosion of nerve energy, a tensing of muscles until they become rock, so that the striking is like the leap of an electric spark.

All this has been said to explain what happened to Andrews. For to every one, including himself, it afterward seemed a miracle. He had floundered in close to Harry Gloster with his fists ready. He was a big man, was Andrews. He was not a giant like Bud Lane, but he was fully the equal in mass of Harry Gloster.

Suddenly he was struck to the earth and lay writhing, unable to groan, his arms wrapped around his ribs, his mouth gasping and his teeth biting at the air which he could not get. And all that had happened to account for this catastrophe had been a slight twitch of the body and shoulder of Gloster.

He now stepped over the prostrate Andrews and faced John Gainor. Gainor did not like fighting because even money cannot avoid wounds. Nevertheless, he was not a coward. And if ever a man had reason to fight well, he had it.

Yonder sat his lady in the light of the moon, entranced with terror and wonder—with perhaps a primitive dash of delight to see herself fought for. And around Gainor, with a rush, came five hard fighting men. So John Gainor put all his might behind

his fists and drove them at the head of the other.

The blows plunged through thinnest air. Harry Gloster had stepped with amazing lightness to the side and now another light dancing step brought him close in. His feet were firm planted, his body loose. Suddenly it contracted. Body and head jerked stiffly halfway round and a bony fist jarred against Gainor's jaw.

John threw up his arms, left his feet, described a perfect half circle, and landed on the back of his neck, his full length away from the spot where he had stood. It had not been like the striking of a blow. It was rather an explosion of dynamite. Flesh could not resist.

To the honor of the other five, be it said that they would never have imposed such odds upon any man, no matter what a villain. But they had no choice. They were assailed by a dodging tornado, so to speak. They saw before them a solid bulk of two hundred pounds.

They struck at the midst of that bulk, and their fists either bit the air or else glanced from a raised shoulder or a brawny arm. And in return they received a machine gun fire of blows which were like the hammer of a double jack against the steel drill head.

No swinging punches which could be blocked in the distance or avoided, but short, sharp hammer strokes came home against them. If a man happened to be firmly planted, he went down to rise no more for some minutes. If he was recoiling from the attack, he was merely half stunned. There was a brief swirl.

When Harry Gloster stepped out of it, two more men were down. And of the other three, two were gaping and wild eyed. Only big Bud Lane had not been touched.

At him drove Harry Gloster, high on his toes with little swift dancing steps so that he seemed to float over the ground. But the other two threw themselves between.

A piston thrust of the left hand and one went down with a gasp. A jerk of the right and stalwart Lefty crashed at the very feet of Bud Lane.

But the battle now had swept to the grip of Bud himself. He was no dancing

fighter. He did his best work with the foeman inside his arms, and that was where Harry Gloster found himself.

He had no time to strike again. A semi-jab landed on Bud's ribs and felt to him as if he had grazed a projecting knob of granite. But the pain merely made him exert himself, and when he exerted himself he was irresistible.

Gathered in that bear hug, Gloster swayed a moment and then they went down together. It was what Bud wanted. He had wrestled all his life, and on the ground he was perfectly at home. Lying flat on his back he was still as formidable as a mountain lion.

He reached for a half nelson as they were falling, got it, told himself that the glory was his—and then found that his hand had slipped off. Gloster had "shelled" his head between the outthrust of his big shoulders.

There was a whirling activity under Bud Lane. He felt as if he were lying on six small men instead of one big one. And no matter where he reached he could not secure a grip. Suddenly the victim was away. A voice was calling joyously above Bud: "All right, partner. Another whirl—best time I've had in ten years—"

Bud Lane sat up, dazed and unhappy with wonder, and at that moment he saw the sheriff himself step into view with the long and glistening form of a six-shooter in his hand.

"Son," he said to Gloster, "you've had a nice little party out here. I figure that maybe I'd better take you to town where you can have a nice little rest! This is after sunset and I sure enough hate to see a gent working overtime!"

CHAPTER IX.

"QUE VIVA LA RUMBA."

THE fear which drove Joan lasted well-nigh until she had reached the house of Buck Daniels. Then it disappeared, only to be replaced by another dread. What if he should know that she had left the house?

However, that was a bridge that must be crossed when she came to it. She brought

Peter back to his corral, and unsaddled him by pauses, her mind was so filled with other things.

But she recalled the necessities of the moment enough to scatter earth over Peter's sweating body. In the morning it would look as if he had simply rolled, during the night, near the water hole at the farther end of the corral, and no one who did not look very close would distinguish the sweat-marks.

When she had done this she went back toward the house. It had been a very futile and foolish thing, she felt, this ride through the darkness, and, above all, the talk with Harry Gloster. And yet, somehow, she was returning richer than when she had started.

She entered the house and went through it with the same ghostly silence, and again, as she climbed the stairs, there was not a sound underfoot. But when she opened the door to her room she saw the broad outline of a man's shoulders against the stars beyond her window. It stopped her with a shock of fear, but the gentle voice of Buck Daniels spoke immediately.

"Joan?"

"Yes."

"I'll light the lamp."

His voice was perfectly quiet and half of her fear died away until she watched his hand as he held the match to the wick of the lamp, for that hand was trembling. And a sudden concern for him swallowed her terror.

She half expected that he would raise the lamp and stare at her by its light. And if he did so it seemed to Joan that he could not help but see much that was newly written in her face.

But, although the language of Buck was not polished nor his manners either, he was full of a native gentleness. It never had showed more than at present as he went back to his chair, sat down, and rolled a cigarette, his eyes never lifted to Joan.

It was as if he bade her rally herself for the ordeal; it was like a declaration that he would not spy upon her mind. And when at length he raised his glance to her, it was with an effort that crossed his forehead with wrinkles of pain.

"Joan, dear—" he said, and stopped.

She wanted to run to him and fall on her knees by his chair. She wanted to throw her arms around him and pour out the whole story of everything that had happened since she last saw him. But the thing which had held her back like a hand more than once before held her back now.

"Have you been doing this much?" he asked at last.

She shook her head. "Never before."

"Never?"

She nodded.

He went on smoking and watching her steadfastly until he had finished his cigarette, and then he said, suddenly: "Here you are standing and me sitting down!" And he started to his feet.

"Dad!" she cried, tears rushing into her eyes. "After you've worked all the day and then waited up for me so many hours tonight?"

She curled up on the bed with her elbow on the footboard. That brought her face perilously close to him. He would be able to watch and estimate every alteration of her expression. Nevertheless, there she sat.

It seemed to her that he would never begin. She would much rather have faced an outburst of extravagant anger and yet more extravagant threats and commands. But she felt rather helpless in the face of this working soul of Buck Daniels. He went forward slowly, with a weight of grief and anxiety weighing him down.

"Joan," he said at last, "I guess I've made you pretty unhappy here."

"Oh, no!"

He shook his head.

"That means 'yes.' Well, I ain't very entertaining, and you're pretty young. Maybe you'll be glad to know that we're going to leave the ranch pretty soon?"

"Leave the ranch?"

"I got an offer a while back. I think I'll take it."

"That offer from Mr. Calkett?"

"That's the one."

"But you said that was terribly small?"

"It's large enough. It'll do to move us."

"But where dad?"

"East."

"East!"

"To some city. Maybe to New York."

"Oh, do you mean that?"

"That'd make you happy, Joan?"

"Oh, yes!"

He sighed.

"But what about you, dad? What would you do away from the mountains and the desert?"

"Man of my age gets on mostly any place."

"Dad, it would be only for my sake! But because I take a ride by night, why should we have to leave the country?"

"Will you tell me where you went, Joan?"

"I can't do that."

She watched his face turn gray, although he said not a word.

"I want to tell you, dad—but something—"

"Joan, something has happened between us. It's been a couple of years since you've changed toward me. What is it?"

"Nothing," she said stanchly.

"Tell me the true of it, Joan."

She shook her head again, and as she did so she heard a voice come clear and small across the night from the direction of the road—a voice full of quavers such as are thrown into singing by the jolting of a buckboard. And the song he sang was:

"Que viva la rumba;
Que viva, que viva placer;
Que viva las niñas, chulitas, bonitas,
Y guapas que saben querer."

It brought her to her feet, trembling, listening with her soul in her face. And as the voice faded out with a swiftness which spoke eloquently of the speed with which the singer was traveling, Joan looked down to Buck and knew that he had seen enough.

"You've been seeing a man!" he cried. "My God, is that it?"

His horror was so strong that she went a little back from him.

"Why shouldn't I see a man?" she asked.

"Who is it?" groaned Buck Daniels in a sort of ecstasy of rage and grief. "What's his name?"

She shook her head. It was a very wonderful thing to see Buck so perturbed. She could never have imagined it. But

watching him now, she knew that he was a man capable of violence. He was beginning to walk up and down the room, pausing sharply now and again, and then walking on once more with his fingers working and a wedge of muscle thrusting out from the base of his jaw.

"When did you first meet him?" he asked at length.

"To-night," she answered.

"Don't tell that lie to me!" he thundered. "This gent has turned your head. Want me to think that he did it at one meeting? No, you ain't *plumb* crazy, and don't think that *I'm* crazy, too."

She had never heard such words from him before; she had never dreamed that he was even capable of uttering them. But she made no reply, merely sitting quietly and staring into his excited face.

"Talk, talk!" he commanded. "Lemme hear what you got to say for yourself!"

She shook her head; and this denial threw him into such a frenzy that she was almost afraid, for the moment, that he was going to strike her. It was not really fear that she felt, however, so much as a sad marveling at these passions in him.

"What was the song that I heard somebody singing a while ago on the road—the one that made you jump up to listen?"

She hesitated. But as she wavered, doubtful, so many things came back upon her mind out of that strange and happy night, that the song began to swell in her throat of her own accord. And so it came out, in the end, clear ringing, but small as the whistle of a bird:

"Que viva la rumba;
Que viva, que viva placer;
Que viva las niñas, chulitas, bonitas,
Y guapas que saben querer."

He greeted this quiet little ditty with a growl of disapproval.

"I dunno that lingo," he declared, "and I'm glad that I don't. No good never come out of it. What's that song about?"

She hesitated. When one thought of the actual translation of the words, syllable by syllable, it was enough to bring the color into her cheeks. The swinging rhythm, the music itself, the pleasure of singing had ob-

scured the syllables before. She even bit her lip now, as she remembered that she had sung this song for a man—to a man—a stranger.

"It's a—a song of happiness, I suppose I may call it," she said at last.

"Happiness? Happiness? And in that lingo?" growled Buck. "They don't have no such songs as that in that language. You're keeping things back from me, and that makes me know that this is the beginning of the end. There ain't no doubt about that. It's the beginning of the end, because we'll never trust each other again."

"Dad!" she cried. "Oh, dad, why do you say that?"

"I got a thousand good reasons. I got reasons so good—they'd turn your blood cold!"

"What do you mean? Won't you tell me? Do you think I can't stand hearing them?"

"You couldn't stand it," he said. And, going back to her, he laid a hand upon her shoulder and another upon her hair. "There's things about you," he said, "that nobody living can guess, except me. When you sit alone and do your thinking and turn over your queer ideas in you head, you think that nobody knows. But I know, Joan. I know things about you that you'll never know, God willing."

"And you've tried to keep me here away from people so that I might never find out?"

"That's it."

"But now I'll go mad with eagerness to learn."

"You will learn, now that you've started on the out trail. But I'm going to fight to keep you back from it as long as I can."

"Why do you do it, dad? Why can't I live as other young girls live? Is there anything wrong with it?"

"Not for them. They can do their laughing and their chattering. But you're meant for something else. And I've sworn that I'd keep you to a quiet life—"

"Who had the right to make you swear such a thing as that?"

"Your mother, Joan."

"My mother!"

And she saw a picture of that gentle face, unsmiling, with the gold hair framing it and tarnishing slowly to gray. Could such a woman have locked up a secret?

"Oh, what is it?" she pleaded.

"You'll learn it all. Only I hope to God that the day when you learn it is far away ahead of you. If these were the old days when a man had power over his family, I'd close you into a room and keep you there for a year, until the last echo of this '*Que viva la rumba*' had worked out of your head!"

CHAPTER X.

IT'S THE NICKNAME THAT COUNTS.

"**W**HY the devil," said Sheriff Sim Hargess, "do you waste all that fine singing on the empty night? Might get paid for it in town!"

"I'm a gent open-handed by nature," declared Harry Gloster. "I like to give things away—including my songs."

"All I got to say," growled the sheriff, "is that you might save your singing for them that would appreciate it a pile more than I wou'd."

"I ain't singing to you," declared the prisoner who was chained to the seat beside the sheriff. "I'm singing to the world in general. How d'you know what might be hearing me?"

"A coyote, maybe, taking lessons off yonder on a hill," suggested the sheriff.

"Maybe," said Gloster with the most perfect good nature. "I wouldn't grudge him none. Speaking of singing, the drinks are on me, and I'm setting up to entertain."

"Rats!" said the sheriff. "You talk plumb foolish."

"You got no heart in you," said Gloster. "What functions for you is just a chunk of the law. If I was to shake you, I could hear the pages rustle. Otherwise, you'd see that I was overflowing with happiness."

"I never took none to singing," observed the sheriff dryly.

"Don't give up trying, though," urged Gloster. "Listen to this!"

And, tilting back his head, his voice rose and rang:

"Que viva la rumba;
Que viva, que viva placer;
Que viva las niñas, chulitas, bonitas,
Y guapas que saben querer."

The sheriff groaned as the last note floated afar. And then, out of the thin distance, a coyote wailed an answer.

"You've waked 'em up," grinned the sheriff. "You got your audience, I see. Where'd you learn that fool thing?"

"Mexico."

"For Mexico it might do," said the sheriff pointedly.

"You're talking sort of straight," said Harry Gloster suddenly.

"That's me. I always make a habit of talking right out what I mean."

"Then swaller your tongue when you're talking to me," said Gloster, and turning in the seat as much as his handcuffs and the chain permitted, he stared fixedly into the face of Sim Hargess. "I don't need your conversation to make me happy."

The sheriff met that cold eye for an instant and then turned his attention back to his span of mustangs. He felt, in fact, that he had gone too far. And like every man who felt that he was in the wrong, he was beginning to hate his companion. But, after a moment of silence, he found that his anger was dissipating. He was a man among men, was Sim Hargess, and presently he said:

"I guess you're right, partner. You got a right to sing if you want to. I'm kind of out of sorts to-night."

"I'm sorry for that," replied the other amiably. "What's wrong, may I ask?"

"Got a fine little sorrel filly. Went lame on me this morning."

"That's sure tough," agreed Gloster. "Lemme have a look at her when we have a chance. I know something about a hoss."

He turned and looked back to his own mount trotting contentedly behind the buckboard, swinging over to one side to get free from the dust.

"Yep, that's a good one you got for yourself."

"Not bad."

"We been so dog-gone busy that I forgot to ask your name."

"Sandy Williams," said Gloster. "That is my name."

"I mean your real name."

"That's it."

The sheriff laughed.

"You waited just a minute too long before you spoke," he said. "But we'll let it go at that, Sandy. By the way, where did you learn how to handle your fists? Been in the ring?"

"Nope."

"You ain't? But you sure can step! I started out to get you as soon as the fight begun. Didn't want the mob to smash you all up. But when I seen your style, I thought I'd wait and let you work."

"Thanks," said Gloster. "It was a fine little party while it lasted."

"While it lasted, it sure was."

They reached the town and presently the jail. It was a snug little building, recently built, and the sheriff was immoderately proud of his accommodations.

"Wall a foot and a half thick," he said, tapping on it. "All hard stone, too. And these here bars are all tool-proof stuff. There ain't no better steel made."

Harry Gloster paused on his way down the aisle and gripped a bar in his manacled hands. There was a convulsive twist of his shoulders and the great steel framework shuddered violently. In the distance a lock began to swing and jingle.

"You're big," muttered the sheriff, watching closely, "but you're stronger than you look—by a pile."

"I sure hope that I don't have to bust out and spoil all your decorations," said Harry Gloster politely. "Hate to leave a hole in that wall."

The sheriff grinned and led on to the door which the deputy who acted as jailer had opened before them. There were a dozen cells on the floor, each surrounded by open bars. It was possible to survey every cell in detail at a glance.

Into one of these Gloster was led and the irons removed. He was made comfortable. Fresh drinking water was brought to fill his pitcher, and then he was locked

in for the night and left reclining on his bunk and smoking a cigarette with a meditative air of content.

"You had a look at him?" asked Sim Hargess of his deputy when they were seated in the office a moment later. "You had a good look at him, George?"

"Fair to middling."

"If you was to pick out a nickname to fit him, what would you land on?"

George studied a moment. "Might call him—er—'Little Joe,' or 'Happy,' or something like that."

The sheriff nodded.

"Little Joe would be a fit," he declared. "But how would Sandy do?"

"Sandy? His hair's too yaller for any name like that, don't you figure? But how come you're aiming to pick out a name for him, Sim?"

"Said he was called 'Sandy' Williams."

He paused again.

"How did he look to you, George?"

"Sort of good-natured."

"Wouldn't mind getting into a fracas with him?"

George reached for his gun. Instinct and much training at the draw made the gesture lightning fast.

"Not if there was enough light for straight shooting," he said, with a rather twisted grin.

"That's the way I figured it," nodded the sheriff, and the frowned very seriously. "George, that fellow's got a record of some sort."

"He has? What is it?"

"I dunno. I'm going to find out. He wouldn't be traveling with a crooked name if there wasn't something wrong with him. We'll have a look around the country and listen in on what we can. Take a telegram down to the office, will you?"

And so, before many minutes, a message was ticking across the wires, north and south and east and west, inquiring from the sheriffs of many counties if a yellow-haired man over six feet tall and weighing about two hundred pounds, but looking thirty pounds bigger, were wanted for any crime.

But while this was going on, the yellow-haired man who weighed two hundred pounds and might look to be even thirty

pounds heavier, lay on his back on his bunk in the jail with his head pillowed on one thick arm, sound asleep and smiling in his dream.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HAPPY PRISONER.

IT had been the intention of Lee Haines to leave the town the next morning.

And he had been on his way across the veranda of the hotel after paying his bill when he received news which halted him. A tall, well-proportioned fellow with a very handsome face and black eyes under level black brows was passing. A black plaster covered one side of his chin and the face seemed swollen and discolored.

There was a chuckle from a chair near by after the young fellow passed.

"Young Gainor ain't going to be so darned free handed after this," rumbled a cowpuncher, cocking his sombrero on the back of his head.

"He ain't," agreed his nearest neighbor. "He sure got plenty. Pretty near got a busted jaw, they say. Took him fifteen minutes before he could sit up and ask where he was."

There was another laugh.

"He swears that somebody sneaked up behind him and hit him with a crowbar on the back of the head."

"Wasn't no such thing. I seen it all. He got soaked so hard that it lifted him off of his feet and landed him on the back of his neck."

Lee Haines looked thoughtfully after the retreating back of the man who had just passed. He was well above average size. He was solidly built. He might weigh, perhaps, a hundred and eighty pounds.

And then Haines found himself subconsciously struggling to create the picture of the man who had lifted this fellow off his feet with a blow and dropped him upon the back of his head. But his mind refused to function for such a purpose. He kept imagining a giant seven feet tall with a fist as big as a water bucket. The problem fascinated him so that he turned to the cow-punchers with a question.

"Did I hear that straight? Somebody lifted him off his feet and dumped him on the back of his neck?"

Two grave pairs of eyes encountered him and examined him. He was a stranger, and a stranger was not to be answered in haste. But one of them decided that he would do.

"Ain't you heard about the fracas?" he asked in turn.

"I slept late," said Lee.

"Gent named Sandy Williams cleaned up John Gainor and six more last night at the dance."

"Seven men!"

"All of seven. It was a mighty pretty thing to watch. Drifted through 'em like quicksilver through sand. All good fighting men, too. Gainor, yonder, he's spent a lot of time on boxing lessons."

"What's Sandy? A giant?"

The two considered the question soberly.

"He looks bigger than he is," one said, and the second agreed.

Lee Haines recalled the stalwart who had walked into the hotel dining room the day before, but who, when he sat down, was hardly higher at the shoulders than Lee himself. He recalled, too, the blows that had dropped Joe Macarthur and left him senseless.

"Got a bush of curly yellow hair?" he asked.

"D'you know him?" they asked in chorus. "He's a stranger around these parts."

"I've seen him. Seems to be quite a man."

They declared fervently that he was two men rolled into one, and there followed a graphic description of the fight.

"Which he was laughing all the way through," one declared. "You'd of thought that he was dancing, or something like that. Took everything plumb easy. Floated around and jerked his fists into 'em, and every punch was like the tap of a sledge-hammer."

"I knew a man once—" began Lee Haines, and then his voice trailed away and his glance was lost in the sweep of a distant cloud. "What's become of Sandy?"

"Jail."

"Eh?"

"Five hundred dollars bail. For disturbing the peace, they say. But take it by and large, it was a mighty quiet disturbance. Judge Conley'll give him about five days in jail to let him think things over and then turn him loose. Conley is a good sort. He talks mighty loud, but the things he says ain't so bad."

Lee Haines forgot the journey which was before him. Instead, he went to the jail, and there he interviewed George, the deputy and jail keeper.

"How's the patient?" he asked.

"Wants more ham and eggs. It 'd bust the county to feed two like him. He's all stomach."

"May I see him?"

"Everybody else has seen him. I guess you can," nodded George. "Might think he was a ghost and not a man the way folks come around to stare at him."

"Does he mind it?"

"Not him. He's got a word for 'em all. He'll have a word for you. You watch!"

He escorted Haines into the main room of the jail, and then sank onto a stool.

"Don't try to pass him nothing. I'm watching," he yawned. "Darned if I ain't tired out. There he is."

It was more than Haines had dared to hope for. He went hurriedly down the aisle between the rows of bars, and presently he was before the cell in which was Harry Gloster, alias Sandy Williams.

And he found Harry on his knees, working with a deft and hasty pencil on the smooth stone flagging which had been whitened by much scrubbing. And growing upon the floor was the face of a girl, shadowy, coming out of a mist of many lines in the background. All that was real of her features and expression was the big eyes and their straight, far off look, and the curving smile, faint upon her lips.

One might have said that it was a portrait of every pretty girl in the world; certainly it was a picture of no individual. There were too many places where the imagination was left to do as it pleased.

"Well? Who's that?" asked Haines.

The other whirled on him.

"Another?" he growled, and then, see-

ing who it was, he arose to his feet with a smile. "Hello, Haines," he said. "Things have been happening since I saw you last."

"Quite a lot," nodded Lee Haines. "You got into one mess on my account. Now you're in another on your own. What I've come to find out is this: How important is it for you to get across the border?"

The other considered with a perfect gravity.

"The difference is between living and dying, taking it by and large," he said, and he actually grinned at Haines.

"I thought it was something like that," nodded Haines, without showing the slightest surprise or shock. "What the devil made you hang around here all yesterday?"

"No reason. Just because I was a fool."

"Why did you fight last night?"

"Been a month since I've had a fight."

"That's not true. You mixed with Joe Macarthur yesterday afternoon."

"That wasn't a fight. He just did the receiving. I got the jump on him, you see."

Lee Haines sighed.

"You're a queer one," he declared. "Is that the girl you left behind you?"

He pointed toward the floor.

"That's the girl I haven't seen," he said.

"What's that? The one you've dreamed about, eh?"

"More than that. I heard her voice once."

"What sort of crazy talk—" began Haines, and then shook his head. "You're past me, partner. Where did you pick up the knack? That looks like professional work to me!"

"I've always handled a pencil and paints when I run onto 'em. My father showed me how when I was a kid."

"Your father?"

"Up in Colorado, you know. Consumption."

Haines nodded.

"Is it straight that your bail is five hundred?"

"Something like that."

"Son, I've got less than a hundred dollars with me."

"Why, Haines, I don't expect you to help me out of this boat. You didn't put me here. It's not your party."

"I believe you mean it," said Haines, gnawing his lip thoughtfully. "You saved me yesterday; you expect me to ride along and let you rot to-day. But there are things about me you don't know yet! Partner, I'm going to have you out of this."

"That's sure fine of you, Haines."

"The thing to do, of course, is to get that bail money before they find out what's against you and hold you without bail."

"That's the natural way of going about it, I should say."

"Tell me one thing: if they get you for whatever else you're accused of, are they sure to convict you?"

"On the testimony against me, they could hang ten men."

Haines looked at him sharply. He had spent more than half of a wild life among criminals of one kind or another; but he could not place the open face of Harry Gloster in that category unless a sudden burst of passion. That, he decided, must be it. The outthrust of the jaw, the imperious nose, the restless eye were all typical of a highly excitable nature.

While he paused, a small thread of singing came wavering into the jail through a barred window which was open.

"Que viva la rumba;
Que viva, que viva placer—"

"Oh, Lord!" cried Harry Gloster, and suddenly his shrill whistle caught up the air:

"Que viva las niñas, chulitas, bonitas,
Y guapas que saben querer."

"Is that a signal?" asked Haines.

But Gloster, a man transformed with happy excitement, returned no answer. He did not even speak when Haines bade him farewell and left the jail.

CHAPTER XII.

A VAIN SACRIFICE.

HERE was a swirl of people before the veranda of the hotel when Haines stepped down from the door of the jail. The group was constantly recruited. It revolved around a shining bay horse of

which Haines could see the tossed head and the shining coat only by glimpses through the crowd.

But what chiefly held his eye and the eye of all the others, was a girl standing on the verge of the veranda, with her hand raised, as if asking for attention. And she was getting it in a rush.

The hat which she had been waving to call attention was in her hand. Her head was exposed, covered with a softly waved mass of golden hair—the metal gold which turns to fire when the sun strikes on it.

And her flushed face, her eager eyes, drew men as honey draws flies. Lee Haines was past the days of romance, perhaps, but nevertheless, he hastened with the others toward the focal point.

"Say it over again," someone was calling as he arrived. "We're late. We didn't hear you the first time."

"I'm going to sell this horse to the highest bidder," the girl answered. "You can try out his paces, if you wish. But I'll give you my word that he's gentle—"

There was a deep hum of chuckling from the crowd. Not a man there who did not enjoy a little pitching when he swung into the saddle of a morning. It was the quickest way of warming up both man and beast for the day's work.

"Let's have a look at him," they began to urge. "Get out of the way, Shorty. You've had a chance to size up the hoss! Lemme have a look, Sam!"

But those in the front rank, merely turning their heads with grins, announced that they had the first seats and that they intended to hold them, come what might. And so the little crowd became a heavily jammed mass. When a newcomer strove to press through he might send a wave of motion through the whole group, but he could not dislodge a single man.

But no one was looking at the horse. Instead, there was a profound concentration of attention upon the face of the girl. They gazed silently, with great wide eyes which banished the man in their faces and let the boy shine through.

They dwelt on her timidity, shrinking before so many eyes, and on her courage which spurred her on and brought the high

color into her cheeks. And they drank in the delicate contours of her face and her throat, forever changing as she turned her head.

It was as if a wild creature had dared to come in among the habitations of man in the middle of the day. An aroma of strangeness hung around her.

"Who is it?" whispered Haines, laying his hand on the shoulder of the man in front of him.

There was no answer.

"Who is it?" he repeated, increasing the strong pressure of his fingers.

His hand was struck away, but there was no other retort. In the meantime, the girl was apparently embarrassed and bewildered by the battery of eyes which searched her with never a pause. She reached down, and putting her hand under the chin of Peter, raised his head.

"Can you all see him?" she asked.

"Scatter out, you there in front," came a roar of voices from the rear. "We can't see nothing."

Of course, it was not Peter they alluded to and although they were close enough to see the girl, Lee Haines did not blame them for wanting to be closer. He wished to be closer himself. He felt a tingle of pleasure at the thought of standing near her, as though, indeed, she were surrounded by an electric atmosphere.

And he knew that a close eye would find no imperfections, that the careful examination would reveal no trace of wrinkles around the eyes, no weariness about the mouth. It was as if the freshness of the dawn were to step into the middle of the noonday and refuse to fade with all its delicate colors.

"Peter, dear," he heard the voice of the girl saying, and his heart melted at the sound. "Come up here where they can see you. Good boy! Up!"

She clapped her hands together, leaning and smiling down to the horse. And up he leaped like a dog, and whirled hastily to keep his eye on this unaccustomed crowd. There was a rumble of admiration and applause, for both the girl and the horse.

And indeed, Peter was as worthy of attention as the girl, in his own way. He

stood not more than an inch or two over fifteen hands, and he was delicately made, but every scruple of his body was formed with a perfect hand. He could have stepped into a book as a type of what a horse should be. And yet he had strength as well.

One could see that he could run smoothly and as long as a clock could tick. There was a catlike nimbleness about him. And as he stood on the boards of the veranda, shifting his feet as he felt the old wood yield under him, he gave an impression of wonderful lightness, as though he would have bounded, the next instant, over the heads of the crowd and darted away for freedom.

Into the place which he had left vacant at the edge of the veranda the crowd had washed instantly. A thick row of sombreros tilted up as their wearers stared at the girl.

"Here is Peter," she said, and as she extended a hand toward him he pricked his ears and thrust out his nose to sniff at it. "And, oh, if I should tell you what a good horse he is, you'd hardly be able to believe!"

"We'll believe," rumbled someone, and there was an eloquent grunt from the others. They would have believed anything from her lips, felt Lee Haines. He was ready for the same thing himself.

"You won't have to chase him across fields the way I've seen some people chasing horses. When you go to the fence and call he'll come to you. And if you haven't any sugar, he's just as happy!"

There was a faint chuckle from the crowd. The thought of carrying sugar for a horse was a stretch outside of their imaginations.

"You won't need a whip or spurs for Peter. He'll run till his heart breaks for you!"

Her eyes grew bright with tears, so great was her earnestness. In quite forgetting all her timidity in her enthusiasm for Peter, she stood straighter and her voice rose a little, while she passed an affectionate arm under Peter's head—and he stood as still as a rock.

"And he's always the same. He's never

tired. You can ride him every day. He'll never be lame. He's true gold all the way through! On my honor!"

She paused and drew another breath.

"I have to sell him," she said sadly. "To some man who'll be kind to him, I know. For who could help being kind to Peter?"

She paused again with a hand extended frankly, as though to invite them into her perfect confidence in all mankind, and there was a little sway and stir in the crowd as every man vainly strove to get closer.

"And so, if any one will offer a price—"

"I'll say three hundred," said one.

"Three fifty!"

"Four!"

"Five hundred dollars!"

"Five fifty!"

It was much money for cattlemen to pay for a horse, but Lee Haines knew that they were bidding for a smile from the girl, not for the horse itself. And though yonder in the jail was a man to whom he owed his life and for whom he would have laid down his own safety, yet he knew that if he had the money in his pocket he would have joined the most enthusiastic bidders. The mere cow-punchers had drawn away a little, hopeless when they saw such money offered. It was only the ranchers who were calling now.

But the voice of Joan halted them, saying: "Five hundred is what I need. Who offered that?"

"I!" came the shout, and there were six voices in it.

She shook her head, bewildered.

"Who offered it?" she asked.

"I offered it," said Jud Carter, pushing his gaunt form through the crowd.

"Then Peter is yours!"

There was a shout of protest from the others.

"He was up for the highest bidder, lady! You got to sell him that way."

"But five hundred," she argued, "is all that I need—poor Peter! Good boy!"

A wave of grief called her attention from the men to the horse beside her, and the demands of the higher bidders were as suddenly forgotten.

"And here," said Jud Carter, climbing to her side, "is the coin. Lucky I had it handy with me!"

He removed his hat with a flourish, very conscious that he was making a picture which would be long remembered, and not at all aware that it would be remembered mostly because it was ridiculous in the contrast of the slender girl, graceful as music, with his bony, work-twisted body, as he leaned above her.

She took the money, rewarded poor Jud with a trembling smile, and then threw her arms around Peter. A gaping crowd saw the tears tumble out of her eyes, saw her lift his head and press her cheek against his muzzle, and then she was gone, while Peter turned and trotted after her, raising a cloud of dust from the veranda flooring.

Jud Carter by a burst of sprinting, captured the horse and led him down to the ground, and there he was surrounded by a clamorous crowd, laughing, roaring out a hundred comments.

But Joan had hurried straight down the street with a step as free and athletic as the stride of a boy. And so she came to the courthouse and the city hall, combined in one wide, low-fronted building. From the old pensioner at the door she asked the way to Judge Conley's office, and the ancient unkinked his back and strode grinning beside her until he had brought her to the sanctum of the judge himself.

"They are all kind," thought Joan as she entered the office of the judge. "All these men are so gentle, I wonder why my mother wanted to keep me away from them? Why could it be?"

So she stood in front of Judge Conley who, as he turned in his swivel chair, was encountered by the eloquent wink of the old man who was just closing the door. Therefore, the judge, to cover a responsive grin, had to frown and clear his throat, a proceeding which made Joan back a step away.

He seated her in another moment, however. And when all the wrinkles were out of his forehead, it seemed to Joan that he was like all the rest of his kind—overflowing with good-nature and eagerness to help her. And as he drew the chair out of

the shaft of sunshine and waved her into it, he remained leaning over it with one hand rested on the arm.

It brought him so close to Joan that she had to lean farther back in the chair to smile up at him. But smile she did, although there was a wild riot of fear and hope and grief—for Peter—in her heart. For she was beginning to find that smiles worked wonderfully well with men. A smile struck a light into their eyes, made them alert, suppled the very joints of their limbs.

So it was with the judge now. He beamed down upon her, a veritable rain of good will.

"And what's the trouble now?" he asked. "What's the trouble, since nothing but trouble brings people to me? Let's start right in with your name and then we'll go through with the rest of the story."

"Joan Daniels," she answered.

The judge recoiled, struck the back of his knees against the edge of his swivel chair, and sat down heavily within it. The force jogged the spectacles low on his chin, and the knowledge that he had appeared ungraceful made him scowl to recover his lost ground.

"Ah," said he, "then you're the one that I've heard of—that lives all by herself with a silent man for a father? Well, well! I've heard a good deal about you!"

She shook her head, saying that she did not know who could have talked about her, because she knew no one, but she had heard that he was the man to whom one came when one whished to pay a bail.

"A bail!" exclaimed the judge, starting in his chair, and then rocking far back in it until his short legs swung clear of the

floor. "Bail? Who the devil—I mean, what bail do you want to pay?"

His violence drove some of the color out of Joan's cheeks, and as she stared at him, he sat forward again and managed to reach out and pat her hand.

"There, there," he said. "I didn't mean to frighten you. Whose bail do you want to pay?"

She swallowed.

"There is a man who was arrested last night. I think he's called Sandy Williams—"

She saw the face of the judge darken.

"My dear—Miss Daniels," said the judge, "what interested you in him?"

"I can't tell you that," she admitted. "But here I have the money to pay—the whole five hundred, you see!"

And she leaned forward, her eyes bright with delight. The judge, however, paid not the slightest heed to the money. Instead, he picked up a yellow telegraph slip from the desk beside him and extended it toward her.

"I don't know what you know about the man who calls himself Sandy Williams. But no matter whatever else you know about him, I imagine that you don't know this—and you ought to!"

She looked down to the slip of paper and saw typewritten across it in capitals:

HOLD SANDY WILLIAMS UNTIL MY ARRIVAL. HIS REAL NAME, HARRY GLOSTER, WANTED HERE FOR MURDER OF HAL SPRINGER AND RUDY NICHOLS LAST WEEK. TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD WILL BE PAID TO—

The brief remainder danced into a smudge of black.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



A RAINBOW

A RAINBOW is a bow that's bent so far
I almost fear that it will break apart;
And when I wonder where the arrows are,
I feel one strike my heart.

Mary Carolyn Davies.



Valor's Grandchildren

By **BERTHA LOWRY GWYNNE**

STUART FORREST LEE DUNBAR, owner of the Bar D cattle company, rode straight into the north wind which was sweeping over the high reaches of the New Mexico cow country, freezing the light, falling rain into icy flecks of snow. He bore a blanket wrapped bundle in the crook of his left arm. His face, set in resolute lines, softened into whimsical tenderness as he often and anxiously peered down into a fold in the blanket from which two unblinking baby eyes looked up at him steadily.

"Don't weaken, son!" he admonished gravely, and urged his tired horse on.

Stuart Dunbar had been named for three great battle chieftains by his grandfather—as gallant an old gentleman as had ever damned the Yankees. And at his birth his fairy godmother, who perhaps cherished in her heart a fancy for his fiery grandfather, had bestowed upon Stuart the three gifts which that old warrior had most wished for him. They were honor, courage—and

the Dunbar nose. But with a gesture of sardonic humor she had added to these the Dunbar temper—which was an attribute that the devil himself would have envied—and a gift for finding trouble which had been unsurpassed in the flying annals of the A. E. F.

Stuart shifted the bundle to the other arm. The baby shrieked suddenly, piercingly. He almost dropped it. This was the first sound from it since they had started from the ranch house three hours before. Now one scream followed another in acute urgency. Stuart, sharply startled, held the baby tight. It was tying itself into knots. Its face was apoplectic.

Hastily dismounting he threw the bridle over his horse's head and carried the squirming, shrieking infant to a dip in the plain sheltered from the wind. Here on its blanket he laid it down, and kneeling, with steady fingers, started to unstrip it. Although outwardly unmoved he was in reality deeply alarmed and agitated. All

the first aid measures for every crisis he had ever faced crowded into his brain.

"Damn that chink!" he muttered furiously. "He's sewed him up!"

The baby was screaming unbelievably.

Stuart turned its voluminous petticoats over its head, revealing a long, cruel scratch above one little fat knee. He found an opened safety pin. And if Hop Ling had been there at that minute the sufferer would have been instantly and amply avenged.

The baby stopped crying as suddenly as it had started. It crowded one fist into its mouth and looked up placidly into the other's face.

An unwilling smile crept to Stuart's lips, taking off the edge of his anger at Hop Ling.

He wrapped the baby up again quickly. It was biting cold.

"No wonder you cried! It's enough to make any little feller cry—having a weapon like that projectin' around!" he commiserated. "And now, son, I think we'd better eat."

He took two bottles out of the pockets of his heavy fleece lined coat. From a thermos bottle he filled the other with warm milk. Holding the baby with awkward tenderness he placed the nursing bottle in its waving, clutching hands.

"Drink hearty, mate!" he said.

As the milk decreased in the bottle the baby's eyelids began to droop. Each time it raised them with a mighty effort and looked into Stuart's eyes, as man to man. Stuart watched this, proud and fascinated. And then the baby, no longer able to keep awake, let its hand slip from the bottle and waver for a moment in the air. The tiny fingers grasped Stuart's. The baby was asleep.

Stuart sat holding it for a long time—afraid to stir. Looking down into the sleeping face his own lean, grave and a little stern for his twenty-six years, softened curiously. He wanted a cigarette, but nothing could have made him take his finger away from that tight, convulsive grasp.

Cautiously he drew the blanket up so that it covered the baby hand. He knew that they ought to be on their way if they were to get to Sanderson's ranch before

night. But still he sat there. Finally the little friendly clasp relaxed. His finger was free.

He rose stiffly and carried the baby over to the patiently waiting horse. And as he mounted, the child began to cry. It was wide awake again.

"You can't scare me again, son," said Stuart—and began to sing to him. It was a song that his grandfather had often sung to Stuart when he was little—a mournful thing called "A Dirge for Ashby."

With fine melancholy Stuart chanted the words:

"Heard ye that thrilling word—
Accents of dread?
Ashby our bravest one,
Ashby is dead!"

The baby relaxed. It gave a deep, quivering sigh.

"Bold as the lion heart,
Dauntless and brave—"

The baby smiled up into the man's eyes. He brought it closer to him in an involuntary gesture of endearment. Then he mourned on:

"Dulce et decus' be
Fittest refrain.
Ashby our Paladin,
Ashby is slain!"

The baby settled into sleep in a series of broken intakes of breath.

Stuart was deeply moved. The casual pity he had bestowed upon the infant heretofore had now deepened into something personal and sharply poignant. It may have been the baby's gratified acceptance of this old Southern war song that he himself had loved. Stuart did not know. He only knew that from now on, in some mysterious fashion, his own destiny was to be indissolubly bound up in that of the baby.

The wind was blowing colder now. The rain had changed into swiftly falling snow. Cattle stood in dejected groups, their backs to the wind. The baby sneezed in its sleep, and Stuart drew the blanket more closely around it.

He raised his head in the face of the wind and gave a swift look into the trail ahead. His gray eyes, trained to long dis-

tances, widened incredulously at sight of a tall yucca tree crowned with scarlet blossoms. His astonishment was natural. The yucca blooms in summer—this was December—and carries on its tall spike hundreds of white blossoms. As he drew nearer the mass of red bloom changed into a red flag flying from the tree. And as he spurred his horse and galloped alongside, it became a red flannel petticoat fastened to the dead spike of the yucca by two slender gold hatpins!

A note was pinned to the hem of the petticoat.

Even before he unpinned it the heavy gray note paper, the round boarding school handwriting awoke in him a sudden impelling anger. He remembered where he had seen it before. And the face of Boone Kitts came back to sadden him.

The note said:

Please ride straight east until you come to the gap in the rim rock. You will see my house. I need help.

B. F. GREER.

The girl at the Cedar Brakes! The girl who had been Boone's girl. He must answer the summons for Boone's sake. But as for her—a wave of anger nauseated him. She could choke for all of him. He was glad she was in trouble!

He unpinned the petticoat from the yucca tree and viewed it distastefully. It was, of course, red flannel, made by hand with long, uneven stitches. The waistband had been cut from an old flour sack, the lettering of which had not been erased. Stuart stuffed it into his pocket. He turned his horse's head to the east.

II.

THE smoothly stretching plain stopped dizzily at the edge of a deep bowl in the earth—a bowl about a mile in circumference and so perfectly rounded that it was easy to believe the Indian legend of its magic origin. It was lined thickly with gnarled scrub cedar trees. There was only one gap in the encircling rim of rock through which it was possible to descend. Here a rude barbed wire gate had been stretched between two

cedar poles, and the wagon trail led steeply down to the adobe ranch house at the bottom. There was smoke emerging from two of its chimneys. The windmill was revolving industriously, a pony whinnied in the corral.

Stuart rode down the steep, slippery trail thinking of B. F. Greer. He couldn't remember her first name—although Boone Kitts must surely have mentioned it. Her appeal for aid brought with it none of the glowing stimulation that approaching trouble always awakened in Stuart Dunbar.

"Probably wants somebody to wind the clock for her or open a can of peaches," he thought contemptuously. And then Boone Kitts's words flashed into his mind. "She's a mighty plucky kid, Stuart. Her father died last week. She's going to stay on at the Cedar Brakes. I'm trying to talk her into taking me on as husband-foreman—"

Boone's letters written to Stuart in South America had been models of brevity: "An old bird from Boston has bought the Cedar Brakes. The boys say he has t. b.—also a peachy daughter." And then later: "Miss Greer is nice." That was high praise from the conservative Boone.

Boone Kitts! Stuart forgot the girl. His somber eyes were looking straight ahead and seeing nothing. He was back in youngster days with Boone.

Before Stuart got to the veranda the front door opened and the girl came flying out. She stood on the top step, her hair blowing in the wind—a heavy sweater over her shoulders. She seemed too little—too young—to freckled across the bridge of her nose—to fit into the character he had given her.

He took off his hat and looked at her gravely, making no motion to dismount.

"Are you Miss Greer?" he asked. "I'm Stuart Dunbar. Your note said you were in trouble—"

Her face lightened at mention of his name as if it carried for her a pleasant memory.

"Oh, I am glad you came!"

She was looking at the bundle in the crook of his arm. She ran down the steps and stood by the horse's side.

"It's not," she began in incredulous consternation, "it's not a *baby*?"

"Do you need help?" he asked her brusquely, disregarding her question.

"Of course I do! I've had a frightful time! You'll have to stay and help me till somebody comes—the Sandersons send over once a week to see about me—is it a *baby*?"

His face softened involuntarily.

"This is little Son Johnson," he said. And added, to his own astonishment, in a normally friendly voice: "A *good baby*!"

She reached up her arms for it. Stuart looked down into her face, hostilely appraising it. There were deep circles of fatigue around her clear gray eyes. Her hair was done hastily into a knot on the nape of her neck. But there *was* something dauntless about her—a sweet resoluteness—he admitted that.

He placed the sleeping baby in her arms. She waited for him to dismount.

"Oh, I am glad you came!" she said again.

He took the baby and followed her into the square adobe house. A wide hall ran down the middle, and to the right an open door led into the living room. Huge cedar logs were blazing in a cheerful flame and a grateful warmth in the open fireplace.

Stuart laid the baby down on a wide couch, and she knelt down beside it, unfastening its wrappings. It was still sleeping soundly.

"I am glad you came—" She looked over her shoulder at Stuart, who was standing with his back to the blaze watching her. The firelight brought out the hollows in her cheeks. "I've had a perfectly frightful time."

The baby now lay free from its swathings, attired in a bright pink chambray frock, around the hem of which trailed a wreath of crudely embroidered blue forget-me-nots.

The man waited for her to go on. There was something in the steady gaze of his eyes, the cut of his lean jaw that inspired confidence.

"Old Juan and Maria, who run this little place for me, are ill with flu. I think Juan is going to die. I haven't slept any for three nights."

"The baby's father and mother died with the flu last week," Stuart told her. "There's not a doctor to be got. All my

men are either down with it or just getting up."

"I know. It's ghastly! To-day—this morning—old Juan went out of his head. Oh, we had a time! I was trying to get him back into bed when he picked me up with one hand. He was going to dash me into the fire—"

"Gosh!" Stuart whispered.

"Maria—Maria had a flannel petticoat pinned round her head. She snatched it off—and quicker than I can tell you, Mr. Dunbar, she had wrapped it around a cedar stick. She crept up and hit him over the eye with it—"

She laughed a little hysterically. But Stuart, staring at her, was visualizing the scene; and then his eyes fell on her wrists. They were black and blue. A great bruise showed under her middy collar.

"Lord, but you had courage!" he admitted ungrudgingly. "What a battle—"

She smiled up at him a little tremulously and tried to summon back her expression of intrepidity.

"I wasn't afraid—very much," she said. "I think I take after my grandfather. My grandfather had a great deal of courage. One time—one time during the Civil War my grandfather captured twelve rebels, single handed—"

The young man lifted his head like a war horse scenting battle. The nostrils of the Dunbar nose dilated—and then he laughed!

He looked quizzically around, discovering more evidence of her heroic grandfather. An oil painting of an important personage in blue uniform hung over the mantel. A steel engraving of General Grant hung opposite. The room itself bore a New England atmosphere with its old mahogany furniture and braided rugs. It was unlike the other ranch houses that Stuart knew—most of which had been furnished lavishly from the last sixty-five pages of the Sears-Roe-buck catalogue.

The girl was going on with her story, oblivious of the young man's singular reactions to it:

"We got him into bed—and then Maria collapsed. But she's better now. Old Juan hasn't spoken yet—but he's breathing natu-

rally. And then, Mr. Dunbar, when I saw the red flannel petticoat at the end of the stick it gave me the idea for getting help—”

“I'll go and take a look at them—”

“They're across the hall. I brought them in from their cabin. And while you're putting your horse in the corral, I'll get some supper.”

He stopped outside the door and looked back at her. Why, she was too young to hate! She was standing before the baby, her lips parted, a tentative finger touching the baby's soft cheek.

III.

STUART heard the baby crying before he got into the house. He stood in the kitchen door. A round table was drawn up beside the kitchen stove, set for two. On it were biscuits, smoking hot, fried ham and canned corn and canned tomatoes and stewed dried apricots.

His hostess sat beside the coffee urn, her head on the table in front of her—and she was fast asleep. A strand of soft, brown hair lay across her cheek. Her bruised arm lay outstretched. She looked so little—so helpless—so forlorn—asleep there, that Stuart caught himself in the same wave of protective tenderness that he had felt for the baby.

He came to a swift decision: Until they were out of this jam he would be friendly to her! He would declare a truce in his bitter thoughts of her. Ever since he had entered her house he had had the feeling that he couldn't endure staying there. But now—well, it was up to him to see her through this. Old Juan would probably die that night. Afterward, he told himself grimly, he would tell her in plain words just what he thought of her.

He tiptoed past her out into the hall and into the living room. The baby lay screaming and kicking. He made it comfortable again, and picked it up in his arms. He felt unaccountably flattered that it had stopped crying.

As he came into the kitchen with it the girl roused, looked up at him in deep bewilderment and then smiled.

“I had a glorious nap—it's a wonder I ever woke up! But I'm afraid your supper is cold.”

She poured his coffee and then reached for the baby. It came to her with outstretched arms and little cooings, flushed and bright eyed from its nap.

“How are they?” the girl asked.

“Well, battin' old Juan over the head didn't improve his influenza,” Stuart answered dryly. “He has a whale of a temperature.”

“Do you think—do you think he will die?”

“Certainly not,” Stuart answered with more assurance than he felt. “And Maria's not dangerous—but she's too ambitious. We must keep her in bed.”

“Oh, I *am* glad you came,” she said again.

“You're beginning to sound like the litany,” he told her.

“God sent you—to deliver us,” she told him soberly, feeding the baby apricot juice from a spoon.

“Look here—what are you doing?” Stuart spoke in consternation. “The baby doesn't take anything but milk—”

She fed the eager infant another spoonful. “We'll give him a change,” she said.

“Of course—if you think it won't kill him—”

She drew the baby to her breast in a soft, lovely gesture.

“This baby isn't going to die. Listen to the man croak, honey!”

The baby blew a deep bubble between his lips and looked at them each in turn for approbation. They laughed delightedly.

“If it really bothers you,” the girl said, “for me to feed him this—why, of course, I won't—”

“Well, it does,” he declared frankly. “You've no idea of the weight of responsibility I've been bearing. It does seem such damnable fortune for the little feller to lose his father and mother, too. And he *is* a good sport! Of course I don't know a deuce of a lot about babies, but even Hop Ling says he's extraordinary—and he doesn't cry at all.” Stuart went on earnestly, “except when somebody leaves a pin sticking in him—or he gets hungry—or—or—sort of lone-

some. He never cries out of cussedness like lots of babies."

"He's a darling," the girl warmly agreed. "And you must show me how to fix the condensed milk—and get his nightgown for me. I'll undress him and put him to bed."

They sat in the living room—in the firelight—sorting out baby clothes and hanging them up to air before the cedar blaze. The girl, shaking out the little rumpled garments, visualized the gnarled fingers of the foreman's wife—a middle aged mother, who had embroidered these impossible flowers on the coarse material of her first born's dresses. It was infinitely touching.

"But isn't it odd," the girl commented, "that they had never named him? You would have thought—wouldn't you—that they'd have taken such pleasure in picking out names—before he was born even?"

"It's the only thing they ever disagreed about," said Stuart. "Old Keno Johnson, the baby's father, stood out for Samuel Henry. Mrs. Johnson wanted a romantic name—something that rimed, preferably. When I came up from South America about a month ago—I'd been down there ever since I got back from France—the controversy was raging. Even Hop Ling had taken a hand in it. Every puncher in the outfit backed a different name. It almost started a fued. It ended by calling him Son."

"Let's you and I name him," said the girl.

"But would that be fair to Mrs. Sanderson? You know she's going to adopt him." The softly brooding look in the girl's eyes as it rested on the clutching, crowing baby, held a hint of envy.

"Mrs. Sanderson? Why—why—she already has seven—"

Stuart caught the look and it stirred him to deep trembling—that she should feel for the baby the urge for possession that he'd been fighting all afternoon.

Startled, they looked deep into each other's eyes—and B. F. Greer flushed to the bruise on her thin collarbone.

IV.

THE girl had put the baby to bed. Stuart had ministered to the patients across

the hall. They sat now in the firelight, talking. In some subtle fashion the atmosphere had changed. They seemed to be warmly alive to each other. Every look—every gesture—their low, intimate voices—were charged with dynamic significance. Something inexpressibly sweet and poignant stirred them, as beautiful, swiftly tender as the baby's own smiles and tears. After a while Stuart said:

"What does the B. F. stand for? All the B. F.'s I've ever known have been old codgers with long whiskers named Benjamin Franklin."

The girl leaned over and poked the fire. Her gray eyes were dark and brilliant in the cedar blaze. She smiled into the fire without looking up at him.

"My name," she spoke absently, "is Barbara Frietchie."

Barbara Frietchie Greer! He remembered it now. The red, angry memory burned like an old wound, rudely opened—the memory of a return address in the corner of a little package, wrapped in gray note paper and addressed in round, boarding school handwriting.

"Barbara Frietchie Greer!"

His silence was so prolonged that she looked hastily up into his face.

"I remember your name now." He looked at her with furiously accusing eyes. He hated himself for his softness, his weakness of a few minutes before. "I saw it on a box that you sent Boone Kitts. You killed him, you know."

She put her hand to her throat.

"I killed him?" she whispered.

"Would you like for me to tell you about it? Because I saw him die—"

He sat looking into the fire. His face was dark with brooding and heavy with unhappiness. He talked in snatches, as if to himself.

The girl stared, white, fascinated—terror in her eyes.

"Boone Kitts and I were like brothers. His father and mother were 'lungers' from Kentucky, living down on the Pecos. They were old friends of my mother. They died almost at the same time—and they gave Boone to us. I dare say he told you all that?"

His hostile eyes rested on hers for a moment, then looked back into the fire.

"I was thirteen then, and Boone was twelve. We grew up together and went away to school together. We were never separated until I went down to South America, where we had cattle." He flecked her another glance. "You came here about that time. Boone wrote me about you. He wrote me that he loved you.

"I raced back when we got into the war, but Boone had beaten me to it. He had joined the engineers and was gone. I only heard from him occasionally. He hated writing letters. And we were both busy. Just before the armistice I went to the base hospital at Toul to see a Bar D puncher who was wounded, and he told me that Boone was there, all battered up, but covered with glory—and that he was going to get well."

Stuart's somber eyes looked straight ahead of him. He sat silent for a while.

"He was surely tickled to see me. Well, I've thanked God a thousand times that I was there. He was white—he was thin. God, he was thin! He had been through a man's sized portion of plain hell. While I was sitting there talking to him the nurse came in with a package for him that had just come in the mail.

"It was wrapped in gray paper. Your name was written in the corner. The nurse cut the strings for him, and he opened the little box, we watching him. There were three things in it: there was a watch with a long, thin gold chain; there was a little ivory shuttle that girls make tatting with; and there was a diamond ring.

"He didn't say anything—not a word. The nurse and I sat there, watching him. His face was already as white as a dead man's. He hung the watch up before him by the end of the chain. He put it back in the box. He took out the little ivory shuttle. He put it back in the box. And then he took out the ring. He laid it in the palm of his hand. He looked at it a long time. He looked up at the nurse. He looked up at me. *And he was dead.*"

Barbara's eyes were anguished.

"He was dead," Stuart repeated, "that quick."

Tears rolled down the girl's cheeks.

"Oh, poor Boone," she whispered.

"I'll say 'poor Boone!'" the other retorted furiously, the floodgates of his anger breaking. "Even if you found you did not love him, how in God's name you could send his presents—his *ring*—back to him—"

Barbara paid no heed to this.

"Oh, poor Boone—oh, poor Boone," she was saying drearily, sobbingly, over and over again.

A loud scream from the baby interrupted them. It was shrill and piercing beyond belief. They both started to their feet. The girl hesitated with a listening look on her face. It came again—a cry to freeze the strongest heart.

Stuart spoke coolly.

"*It's the rebel yell,*" he said. "I taught it to him.

He looked arrogantly around the room, and his eyes rested for a moment on the picture above the mantel.

"It was by yelling like that and fighting like hell that the Southern army was able to kill more Yankees in one battle than they had men in the whole war."

The baby screamed again.

"It's colic," said the girl.

"I told you not to give him apricot juice."

They looked at each other with hate in their eyes.

Barbara spoke slowly, contemptuously. "When there are no real men around for me to kill," she said, "why, I murder babies!"

He was struggling for repartee when the doorknob rattled. Startled, they watched the door slowly open.

Old Juan stood on the threshold, incongruously clad in pale blue pyjamas that had belonged to Barbara's father. The bandage had been torn from the wound on his forehead. His distraught eyes, brilliant with delirium, darted around the room, seeking the source of the piercing shrieks.

"*Valgame Dios! Diablo ya ven agarrame!* God help me!" he was screaming crazily. "Already the devil comes to fetch me!"

Behind him, tugging at his coat tail, her

head once more wrapped in the red flannel petticoat, was Maria.

"*Tonto! Tonto! Fool! Fool!*" she was expostulating. "It's only a baby crying."

V.

THE Cedar Brakes lay buried in deep snow, the trail to the rim lost in heavy drifts.

For three days Barbara Greer and Stuart Dunbar, possessed by bitter hostility, had worked together silently and swiftly for the saving of two humble lives. Maria had suffered a relapse. Juan was still crazed. He was still tortured by the baby's crying.

Stuart saw very little of the baby now. Juan occupied his time. Occasionally he caught fugitive glimpses—pictures lovely and appealing that he was to carry with him to the end of life: Barbara rocking in a little rush bottom chair in front of the fire, singing the baby to sleep, her young voice hushed:

"Oh, go to sleep, little baby!
And when you wake you'll have some cake
And ride on a little white horsey!"

Once he had opened the door and found them both asleep on the wide couch in the living room. Her arm was flung across the baby in instinctive protection. A tiny, groping hand found her breast and rested there.

Stuart turned his head away, choked up with intolerable pity. There were tears on his cheeks.

He thought of nothing but Barbara. Sometimes he saw her on this lonely ranch, fighting for her father's life—young, intrepid, so inexpressibly dear that it was all he could do to keep his anger burning. But he had only to conjure up the face of Boone Kitts—

And now it was his feeling toward the memory of Boone that tortured him. It filled him with hot, shamed wonder—for he had come to know that he was jealous of Boone.

He found himself thinking up excuses for Barbara, and these carried with them implied reproaches for Boone. He was

troubled; he was uncertain. And uncertainty had never before confronted Stuart Dunbar. All his life he had been quick thinking and straight thinking. His conclusions, right or wrong, had never troubled him. Now he hated himself. He hated Barbara. And he was curiously oppressed by the dread that he might come to hate the memory of Boone.

Stuart opened the living room door and stood for a moment on the threshold, unseen by the girl rocking in the little rush bottom chair before the fire.

She looked utterly weary. It was dusk, and the lamps were lit. The wind blew a sudden whirl of smoke down the chimney, filling the room with thin, blue haze. The pungent odor of burning cedar wood carried him sharply back to his childhood—and his young mother. She had sat in front of a cedar wood fire; she had worn just such a soft, dull blue frock.

Barbara turned and saw him.

"How's Juan?" she asked.

It seemed to the man that there was a change in the quality of her voice—a hint of friendliness.

"Better, I think." Stuart tried to speak casually. "I've a feeling he'll be in his right mind when he wakes—unless his temperature goes up again."

"Son's the darlingest baby—" she was beginning. There was a friendly note in her voice. "To-night he—"

But Stuart's self-possession had left him. He stood before her, white faced, trembling.

"Barbara," he began, "what did Boone do? I love you—I love you so very much. You must have had a reason—" He broke off in a tone of furious self-reproach. "I'm as crazy as old Juan! I'm even beginning to think up things against Boone." His eyes were tortured. "But I love you—I love you so very much."

After the first startled moment Barbara looked back into the fire. Her eyes had darkened until they were almost black. Her color rose.

She crossed the room to the tall secretary. She brought back a letter and handed it to Stuart. It bore a foreign post-mark. And as he moved under the lamp-

light Boone's small, distinctive handwriting stared up at him.

Then he read:

DEAR BARBARA:

When you told me that I'd come to love another girl it seemed most improbable. But I have. I do. And you must love her, too, Barbara. She reminds me of you. She is little. She is brave. There's the same quality of sweetness and fortitude about her that used to make me cry inside when I stood by and couldn't help you. Her name is Louise Dordant. Her mother died when she was fifteen. And now she has no one at all. She has lost her father and three brothers in the war.

I have written to Stuart, but I haven't heard from him. I know he will be glad. It's been dreary at the Bar D since his mother died. Lord, I'll be glad to get back!

Won't you send me, please, the little box I left with you? It has my mother's engagement ring in it. And send me your blessing, too. My dear, my dear—God keep you—God love you!

Boone.

Stuart's first thought was now of his friend.

"I didn't get the letter," he said in a tone of misery. And then: "Why, I must find that girl—It was *you* he loved—until the end of life." He looked at Barbara. "His letter shows that."

She made no denial of this. She was still looking up at him, expectant and a little breathless.

Stuart handed the letter back to Barbara.

"I'm a fool," he said. "I'll never be anything but a hotheaded fool as long as I live."

"You might at least have heard my side before—before you denounced me as—as—a—a—mur-murderess," she began quaveringly.

"Any other man would have," he admitted in a low voice, "but not me! Trust me for doing the wrong thing. Of course I know you'll never forgive me." His voice held no hope. "That's the punishment I'll carry all the days of my life. It's what I deserve for being disloyal to Boone in my thoughts."

She was looking at him with curiously puzzled eyes.

The baby started crying. Through the closed door they caught the sustained wails, and each moment they were grow-

ing in angry volume. For once they were disregarded.

Stuart held her glance, looking straight into her eyes.

"But—tell me—now be honest—you did love me that first night? *I know you did!* You did think, didn't you, that maybe we'd marry—and that we'd keep Son—"

She turned a painful red.

"I didn't think anything like that," she answered hotly. "I didn't think anything like that, *at all*. I wouldn't marry you—I wouldn't marry you under *any* consideration," she ended tamely. "You accused me of something terrible—and—and base. You insulted the memory of my grandfather—"

"I did nothing of the kind."

"Yes, you did. You spoke contemptuously of my grandfather's bravery."

"Barbara, I didn't. And I ask your pardon if I implied it. But my grandfather was brave, too. Your family isn't the only one that's proud of its valor."

"My family has other things to be proud of in addition to its valor. Faith and trust are two of them."

As she looked up at him, so little, so dauntless, he suddenly swept her into his arms with a single swift gesture.

"You are mine," he said unsteadily—"my very own!" His black head came down closer—closer. He kissed her. "And no man—nor the ghost of a man—stands between us."

The baby cried on. The cedar smoke drifted out into the room again—sweet, suffocating.

She was trembling so that she could hardly stand. He felt the racing of her heart beats. She half turned in his arms. Her eyes blazed into his.

"You are a coward," she whispered. "Because you're big—and strong—you can kiss me. I'll hate you until I die."

He laughed a little wildly. He drew her back to him.

"And I'll keep on loving you, Barbara." His black head came down, closer and closer—

"Señorita! Señorita! Come queek! Come queek!"

Stuart raised a startled head.

Maria's shrill voice was terror stricken. "It's Juan—*muchá loco*—he seeks to keel the baby!"

They burst into the dimly lit hall.

Old Juan, standing at the door of the room where the baby lay, turned toward them a tormented and fear ridden face.

They caught the glint of steel.

"*Drop that knife!*" Although Stuart had not raised his voice, there was so deadly a menace in the tone of it that for a moment the hunting knife wavered in the Mexican's hand. And in that moment Stuart was upon him.

They fought up and down the long hall for possession of the knife. Stuart, young and lithe and muscular, was battling against tremendous odds that delirium had given Juan. Stuart's breath at last came in sharp whistlings.

Barbara darted into the bedchamber and came running past them with the baby. At sight of it Juan stiffened. He wrenched his arm from Stuart's grasp. He stood for a second, poised, and Stuart with a swift turn of his body intercepted the hurtling knife. He reached for Juan's throat, and, groaning, choking, the crazed man sank to the floor.

For a moment Stuart rocked unsteadily on his feet. He looked at Barbara standing in arrested terror, the baby flattened to her breast. Stuart smiled uncertainly at the little wiggling pink toes. He drew out the knife, buried in his shoulder—then darkness enveloped him.

VI.

As light as a disembodied spirit Stuart Dunbar floated back to earth on a pink cloud. For a while he lay in this soft languor, content, unthinking. Gradually his mind cleared. He looked curiously around. Yes, this was the room he had been occupying. There was the same sissy-looking pistol that he had grinned at every night since he had been there, on the table by his bed. There was "Kidnaped," opened at the page he had left off reading.

And then it began to come back to him. Juan—the baby—Barbara. He raised himself excitedly in bed, only to sink back in a

cold sweat. There was a stabbing pain in his shoulder. He saw that his shirt had been cut away in hasty scallopings of scissors. He was clumsily bandaged. The bed was soaked with blood.

But Juan—the baby—Barbara. He must get up!

The doorknob turned.

By a tremendous effort of will he reached for the little pistol. If that maniac was still loose—

The door was slowly opening. He tried to point the gun. It wabbled in his hand. A face appeared in the doorway. To Stuart it was only a blur. He aimed the gun. A voice that he loved came to him from far away, half laughing, half crying:

"Shoot, if you must, this old gray head—"

"Barbara Frietchie!"

She came over to him on light running feet. She knelt by his bedside and drew him to her breast.

"Is it all right?" he whispered weakly, and tears started to his eyes. "Is it all right, honey?"

"I loved you," she said, "from the very first minute."

"Old Juan—is he—"

"He's safe in bed. You choked him into his right mind." She shook her head with the little dauntless gesture that he loved. "Oh, we've had a *time*—"

"Honey, you're the brave one! You've got all the courage."

"I take after my grandfather," she began. "Once *he*—" And then she laid her cheek against Stuart's strong, sunburned throat. "Stuart, we'll keep Son, won't we?"

"Dearest, of course! And we'll name him—we'll name him—Robert Ulysses!"

Barbara hesitated.

"I don't think Ulysses is a very pretty name," she said at last. "We'll call him Robert Lee." And then in a flash of sweet generosity she added: "Robert E. Lee."

But Stuart, even now, deep in his love and happiness, remembered. And with swiftly tender prescience she caught his thought.

"We'll name him Boone," they said together.



Cheero, Inc.

By JACK BECHDOLT

Author of "South of Fifty-Three," "The One Way Street," etc.

CHAPTER XI.

"I'M A FOOL TO DO IT."

THE three whom Farnsworth left behind reviewed the events of the last few minutes in silent amazement. Each realized in a different way that they were not yet done with John Farnsworth. Each had the premonition that Farnsworth would play a big part in shaping the future.

Trench sat down weakly. He was rather breathless—tired out by his anger. He folded his hands again and began to stare gloomily at the opposite wall.

Trench had gone through an amazing half hour. Nothing in all his life had been like this. He was surprised and shaken by the intensity of his own feelings. Now that the crisis had passed, there came the gloomy conviction that Farnsworth would keep his word in spite of anything he could do against him. Farnsworth could make him trouble—and he would.

"He won't quit now," Trench said dully.

"He promised to make trouble, and he will. I can feel it coming. That man's going to wreck my business!"

"How can he?" There was a hearty scorn in Kate's exclamation. "That's silly talk."

"He can make trouble," Trench repeated. "You don't think so? I do. Why, do you know what he told me I had to do? Do you know what he had the colossal nerve to come in here and tell me? Told me I was crooked. Told me he'd found all about my business—and by Heaven he had, too! Told me either I'd change all my plans to meet his ideas of honesty or he would ruin me, disgrace me, drive me out. Nobody ever heard of such a thing before—nobody! What's his game? Perhaps he's mad as a March hare, I don't know. I do know he's out to make trouble!"

"Yes, sir! I tell you that Farnsworth's a dangerous man. He's a bad one, no mistake. Lucky I was in time!"

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for June 23.

Trench and Kate turned in surprise on Randall. They had forgotten Randall. The informer had sat quiet, listening eagerly. If his vanity, desirous of applause, had not betrayed him he might have heard other things to his advantage.

"Here." Trench beckoned him with a look of dislike. "Here's fifty dollars for you. More than you deserve. You can go now. And keep your mouth shut, you understand?"

"All right, Mr. Trench. You can count on me all right. Hope I can help you out again some time. Good morning—good morning, miss."

"Get out," said Trench grimly.

"What did Farnsworth want of you?" Kate pressed when Randall had gone.

"Just what I tell you. Came to tell me he'd been spying and nosing around and knew all about my business. Said I was a crook, and if I didn't do what he told me he was going to expose me. He threatened to go out and tell the world that Cheer-O is a swindle unless I wound up the business and stood all the losses myself. Threatened to brand me as a swindler!"

"He can't do that! You're not a swindler. Cheer-O's not a swindle."

Trench met her brown eyes with a curious stare. Then he looked back at the wall.

"It's not a swindle—is it?" Kate prodded at his silence.

"You know what Cheer-O is. You ought to."

"Of course I do!"

"You think it's all right?"

"Why, yes—I suppose so. Don't you?"

"I know this," Trench said bitterly. "If Farnsworth should happen to scare Carfax about the business he could put me in a tight hole. It's Carfax's money has kept us going. And—well, I intend to sell out the whole thing to Carfax. Just as soon as his notes fall due and he takes that stock over. That's my chance to sell out. I can make him buy—provided Farnsworth doesn't scare him off—"

"You really want to sell?"

"Of course I do! Haven't got the money to swing Cheer-O, anyhow. You know that. I'm promoting it. I want my

promoter's profit. Let Carfax worry then—he can afford to. And now—now when everything's running smooth, comes this white-haired weasel, this rat—this dirty jailbird!"

Trench sprang to his feet and began to walk the rug. His face worked with anger. "Damn him," he repeated again and again. "The crook, the sneak. A reformer! Him! The white-haired old hypocrite!"

Kate watched him uneasily.

She had never seen Trench like this. Not so long ago she herself had tried to goad Trench to show fight. Now he displayed an anger that startled her—and roused a fearful wonder.

Finally Trench turned to her, his rage abating, something of his usual self in his appeal.

"Kate, he'll do what he said. He'll hunt up Carfax. Kate, what are we going to do?"

Kate considered soberly. Her face brightened. "Do! Why, that's easy. We'll beat Farnsworth to it—"

"What!"

"Yes, beat him to it. We'll tell Carfax first. Steal Farnsworth's own thunder—that's the thing to do. Tell Carfax that Farnsworth is coming; tell him just what Farnsworth will say, that's the very thing to do."

"Are you—feeling—quite all right? Here, I mean?" Trench tapped his forehead.

"Listen," Kate urged, laughing excitedly. "We want to save Cheer-O. We need Carfax's money—and his confidence? You want to sell to Carfax? Yes! Well, then, we'll let Carfax believe that there is a good reason for scaring him out of the investment. We must find a reason—a plausible reason—"

"Yes." Trench's eyes began to glisten. "Here's your reason. Carfax must think we've perfected the process. That Cheer-O is ready to go big. That I'm trying to hog it all. Carfax must think we are trying to get that stock back!"

"Exactly what I mean," Kate echoed. "Then, when Farnsworth tells him his story—you see? Carfax will think you sent Farnsworth to scare him out."

"And who's going to tell Carfax all this?"

"I am, of course. The telephone, please."

Trench listened, marveling, while his secretary, in her most honeyed and confidential tones, made an appointment to take lunch with Walter Carfax. Admiration for Kate's shrewdness was dimmed somewhat by his jealousy of Carfax, but it was reassuring to think that Kate was playing the part to help him—not Carfax.

"You wonder!" he glowed when Kate finished with the telephone.

"I am," she admitted. "Sometimes it almost scares me to find how clever I am. You needn't worry any more about Farnsworth. After this he can talk himself black in the face."

"I wish I was as sure of that as you are!"

Trench's face fell into its gloomy cast again. She left him staring darkly at the inoffensive wall.

Randall continued to think about Farnsworth all the rest of that day. The forger was not badly pleased with his work. He considered he had dealt Farnsworth a very neat and stunning blow. He had exposed him and enjoyed the pleasure of seeing Farnsworth put out of a position of trust. That helped in a way to pay off his grudge against his former companion.

But Randall still had cause to think and wonder. He wondered what was Farnsworth's game with Trench? From the things he had overheard that game seemed mad beyond all belief. Why should Farnsworth be preaching to his employer about the business? What did Farnsworth care?

And, above all, what was it between these two men, facing each other across that table, white with anger, that so held his thoughts? Randall had shrewd eyes. They had discovered something which as yet his thoughts could not name—something between Farnsworth and Trench. Self-interest whispered to him that the answer to this puzzle might be turned to account.

Randall knew that Farnsworth had money. Through gossip of his kind he had

pieced together much of Farnsworth's history. He knew how Farnsworth's wife, out of her means, had repaid much of the loss Farnsworth's defalcation caused. He had heard, too, that the wife had divorced Farnsworth and taken their son to some new home. He also had followed Farnsworth to the lawyer's after his release from prison, and guessed that he had come into possession of money. But up to the present his dealings with Farnsworth had brought small financial return. He meant to make them pay him.

The more he thought about it, the stranger Farnsworth's course appeared. He came directly to Seattle after the visit to his lawyer. He attached himself, in a minor capacity, to John Trench's business. Apparently his sole purpose had been to find out about that business in order to provoke the scene with Trench.

And the theme of that quarrel was Trench's conduct. Why did Farnsworth care what Trench did with his affairs? Randall knew Farnsworth was not mad. There was a reason behind these strange actions.

And surely, between Farnsworth and young Trench, who owned a prosperous business, there was a chance for a clever man like himself to make a financial killing.

The restaurant where Kate lunched with Carfax had a balcony given over to little tables, each just big enough for a couple. It was a discreet little balcony, and the tables were not too close together. It was also far enough from the orchestra that a man and woman could talk without effort.

Walter Carfax had lighted a thin, brown cigar and leaned back, watching its drifting smoke through narrowed eyes; then he turned those eyes back to Kate, busy with a greedy spoon to catch the last of her ice. Kate gave him a distinct sense of pleasure when he looked at her. Gradually he forgot the cigar altogether.

John Trench's secretary dressed with better taste and more effectively than any woman Carfax knew—and he knew a great many women of all sorts and conditions. He liked her radiant look and her clear,

young, brown eyes that always held a quizzical smile for him. He liked her hands, which were very white and had a shapely strength and capable flexibility. Carfax liked Kate's brisk conversation and her habit of making a joke of things. It showed pluck. She was an all round good sport, this Kate Singleton, and he sighed at the recollection their luncheon was almost ended.

"Mighty decent of you to phone me, Kate. You're a wonderful tonic for a lonely fat man. Been most a week since we've met, eh?"

"We've been so busy—so frightfully busy!" Kate adopted a notable sincerity, at variance with her usual manner. "The whole shop's been in an uproar these last few days. Exciting, but, my dear, I'm glad to run away for a minute."

"Busy, eh?" Carfax betrayed a little keener interest. "What's up with Cheer-O? Trench get caught putting booze in it?"

"No-o. Though you'd think it had *something*, the way it sells. No, you see Amos Wormser's big find—oh, I don't mean that!"

"Don't mean what? What did Wormster find?"

"Why—why nothing. That is—perhaps I shouldn't have mentioned it."

"Why, that's all right, between you and me, anyhow. You know I've got a sort of interest with John Trench. Let's hear the news?"

"Well—" Kate seemed to consider seriously. Then she looked up at Carfax, the joy of a happy discovery in her eyes. "Why, I suppose it is all right, to tell you. You—are one of us—aren't you?"

"Sure, Kate."

"We're all so happy about it I'm just tickled pink to tell somebody. You see, Mr. Wormser perfected a new process that makes Cheer-O ever so much cheaper to manufacture. Mr. Trench says he can make a killing now. But it kept us all excited and pretty hard at work for awhile—a lot of details to be changed—and something about the financing, I believe."

"Financing?" Walter Carfax pounced upon the word. His blue eyes brightened perceptibly.

"Why, yes." Kate hesitated, watching his interest grow warmer. "But then, of course you understand all about that, don't you?"

"I'm supposed to," Carfax admitted, breathing a little heavily. "Anything new—new arrangements, I mean?"

"No—no, I suppose not. Except—Trench is funny, isn't he?"

"Is he, Kate?"

"Some of his ideas, I mean. I don't quite make them out. Yesterday he said something about what a lot of money he would make out of Cheer-O with this new process, and then he added that, of course, to handle it right, he'd have to spread a pretty general report the whole business was a flivver. I wanted to ask him what he meant, but I hate to bother him. It's not really my affair. Only I wondered. What do you think he meant?"

Carfax did not answer for a moment. His eyes were filmed, curtaining his thoughts. "I wonder," he grunted at last, and Kate noted with secret pleasure that his pudgy hands contracted slightly. Then she knew Carfax had taken her bait, hook, line, and sinker. In view of what she let him think there was nothing for Trench to fear from John Farnsworth's revelations.

She sighed with real relief. The dissemination of this propaganda was ticklish work.

Carfax remained silent. After several minutes Kate picked up her gloves. "Back to the mines for you, Kate Singleton," she declared dramatically.

Her companion started. "Oh, wait. Just a minute." His manner altered now. Carfax seemed to hesitate with a bashfulness that was new. He spoke again, softly and almost pleadingly. "Kate, sit down a moment, please. I had something to say to you—intended to say it this noon. Will you listen to me?"

That little catch in a man's voice, that tone—Kate knew what it meant. Was this the bill Carfax had promised to send her? She stirred uneasily, and a slight, almost imperceptible change came over her face, a stiffening of her expression. Better to hear him now, in this place, she argued quickly. At least she was not at disadvantage.

vantage as on the night before, with Trench. She nodded a silent assent to Carfax's question.

"Well, it was just this." His voice was deprecating. "I'm no young Adonis like young Trench and the other boys you play with, Kate; but you've been pretty nice to a chap who's fat and past forty and getting bald, too. You've been nice to me, and I want to say I appreciate it. I've enjoyed a good deal of your time recently. You've been generous—"

"You mean you have been generous!" Kate found herself answering with unusual honesty. "The things you've given me—and the good times—"

"Oh, those!" Carfax waved his pudgy hand, brushing aside trifles. "Any fool with money can give you those things. I—was just wondering—about you, Kate? Do you mind if I ask questions?"

She shook her head, knowing not what to expect.

"About your folks, I mean, about your home? I suppose you have a home?"

"Had—once." Kate summoned one of her ready smiles. "Want to hear it? It's short."

"If you please."

"I was a minister's daughter," Kate grinned. "Folks always expect a minister's son to be a caution—I suppose my folks thought I was as much trouble as a son. Nasty little town in the Middle West. Narrow. Ignorant. Prejudiced. I hated it. Ran off to make my own way. Studied business. Got a job. Here I am!"

"Happy?"

"Why—yes, I am."

"Like to know lots of nice young fellows; have a heap of good times; get a lot of nice presents, making bets and paying in smiles?"

Kate felt her cheeks reddening. She raised her chin haughtily, started to rise.

"Wait." Carfax raised his hand gently. "Don't be sore at my frankness. I meant well. I just wondered, Kate—that's all."

Kate hesitating, found herself smiling. "I don't know whether you're making love to me—or lecturing me on my terrible life," she confessed. "But I don't mind. Shoot!"

"Well," Carfax murmured, "that's about all, I guess."

"All!" Her eyes were round and big.

"Yes—except, well, just this. Kate, my dear girl, you know all about me. My past isn't much to brag about; my future probably won't be very brilliant. About all I've got is money—and fat. But I wondered if some time—oh, not now necessarily, but any time—supposing you got tired of your little game, working and playing so darned hard—or if you wanted somebody to pay the bills and try to make you happy—try as damned hard as a man could try—well, Kate, I wondered if you would consider me. I mean, would you marry me?"

"Carfax—" Kate got no further. Her voice choked. There were burning tears on her cheeks and she had to bend down her head to hide them.

Carfax reached across the table with his pudgy hand and touched her hand lightly.

"I suppose I ought to have had sense enough to know your answer," he said slowly. "It's all right if you don't want me. But if ever you *need* me, Kate—well, I'm always around where you can put your hand on me."

Carfax brushed an imaginary crumb from his vest. He picked up his own gloves, cleared his throat and hesitated. He pushed back his chair. "Well?" he suggested in his matter of fact voice. "Shall we beat it back to our slavery?"

"Wait!" Kate's eyes were still moist. She rose and came toward him and Carfax rose to meet her. "I don't know just how to answer you—" she whispered uncertainly.

"Don't have to!"

"You—paid me a pretty—big compliment, Carfax. It—it's kind of got me—"

"S'all right."

"A lot—of men—have made love to me. You know? A lot of 'em consider that necessary. There never was a—damned—one, in the whole lot came closer to making a fool of me—than you did, just now, Carfax. I—"

Her sudden, erratic smile returned, a smile with mischief and adventure in it. Kate snatched a quick look about the quiet

spot. Then without any warning she kissed Carfax on the cheek.

There was a lightning swiftness in the salute. In a second she was demurely buttoning her gloves, eyes downcast.

After one stunned moment Carfax raised his fingers slowly to the spot where her velvet lips had touched. He looked both frightened and pleased. That look lingered until Kate had moved away. Then, with a heavy sigh, he lumbered after her.

Dutifully, Kate returned to Trench and reported the result of her luncheon with Carfax, so far as the business concerned Cheer-O. Trench showered her with questions which she answered rather listlessly. During their long talk she continually guarded against a foolish inclination to burst into tears.

Life was suddenly getting very tearful.

Memory of Carfax's patient, unassuming love brought tears. It reminded her also, that her own meteoric career of hard work and enjoyments bought with ever-ready smiles had its perils. She felt a little sorry about herself and a little worried about her future.

And she decided she had a wretched headache and was tired of excitement.

When the report was done finally, Trench beamed.

"Bully for you, Kate, Kate my dear, you've saved my life! That fixes it. That spires Farnsworth's guns. Let him rave. The more he talks the better. Kate, you are a wonder—a gem—a—"

"Yes, I know. I suppose I am—all of that." Kate disengaged her hands from Trench's grip and rose, looking rather sober. "I'm—just a little tired—of the whole business," she explained. "It's done—we're safe—now, if you don't mind—"

"Mind? Do whatever you please. Take the day off. Take a week off. Get a good rest. If you want money—any amount—"

"I don't. Not a cent." Her refusal was instant and sharp. "And I don't want any day off. I've got work to do. Just let me alone, please." She left Trench puzzled.

Kate was puzzled too. She had become suddenly ashamed of her own cleverness,

and very much surprised at the emotion. Sensibly she applied herself to her work and tried to forget the luncheon with Carfax.

Kate worked overtime to catch up with neglected correspondence. When she reached her comfortable little bachelor apartment she found awaiting her a huge florist's box filled with the longest stemmed and most expensive of hot house roses. Among the roses was Walter Carfax's card and, penciled beneath, his name, "First installment on a debt. You don't know yet how much I owe you."

Warm color flooded over her face and neck. Her lips compressed and her brown eyes regarded the gift with a strange hostility. Never before had she been ashamed to accept a gift. Now shame was succeeded by hot resentment.

Her first impulse was to throw the flowers from the window. Yet they were lovely, and she hesitated. Then came a notion that pleased her better. She called a messenger and readressed the flowers to Primula Feltman. She made sure there were no identifying marks on the package and sent them off with a trace of her usual mischievous smile.

"That'll give the old girl something to talk about for a month," she thought with satisfaction.

"Oh, Miss Singleton, two 'phone calls for you," the switchboard girl announced. "Mr. Carfax and Mr. Trench, both called. Both gen'man said they'd phone you up again."

"Tell them I'm out," she answered with sudden decision. "Tell them I'm out for the evening."

"Oh! Why, all right, Miss Singleton—"

"Be sure. Get that straight. I'm out. I don't want to see anybody." She repeated the instructions sternly.

She didn't want to see anybody, certainly not Carfax. Without exactly understanding why, she was ashamed of her luncheon with Carfax. For Trench's sake she had deceived Carfax. Suppose Carfax lost heavily because of her deception? Of course, it was only business—a business trick, but—

And Trench she would not see. Not now. She needed time to think things out—to think Trench out particularly.

She wanted to see nobody, yet she finished the evening by paying a call!

For this attention she chose the man she hated; who openly despised her. She could not forget John Farnsworth. Out of the day's many impressions Farnsworth's quiet, tragic face haunted her most. She hated him and yet he attracted her. It was a ridiculous notion, but she could not shake off the impression that Farnsworth needed help.

"I'm a fool to do it," she argued. "I'll get sworn at for my trouble. I'm a fool—yet I've got to do it. I started this thing. I'm responsible for his losing his job. If he does need a lift—oh, Lord, what a fool I am!"

CHAPTER XII.

FARNSWORTH FAILS AGAIN.

JOHN FARNSWORTH walked from his son's office in a murderous rage. His white mask-like face had set in an expression of curious intensity and the strange, insane glare of his black eyes attracted many startled second glances from those he passed.

Before Trench he had shown no sign of flinching at the humiliation of his exposure and dismissal, but the burden of black shame went with him. It accorded with his own gloomy conception of a poetic justice that his past wrong-doing had come between him and what he considered an act of atonement. His son's savage scorn, heaping humiliations higher, had cut him raw. He writhed at the recollection.

But stronger than the humiliation was the strength of his resolve to win over Trench—to turn Trench from his course—to drive Trench to honesty, or kill him in the driving. That had been the purpose of many bitter years. It was a purpose that long reflection and brooding over his own past had fixed as the guiding principle of life. Trench's resentment, his scornful rebellion against him, only hardened Farnsworth's resolution.

"He'll go straight. I'll make him go straight."

Farnsworth had vowed that often enough. He meant to keep the vow. Trench had beaten him. But he was not defeated. His course was plain. Since Trench would not heed his advice, Trench and his business must be smashed. He would go at once to Carfax.

It was late in the afternoon that Carfax consented to see his strange visitor. Farnsworth recited his warning.

"The business is a swindle," he concluded. "It is designed particularly to swindle you out of your money. I know what I say from my own investigation. I come to warn you entirely from a sense of duty. Don't let Trench deceive you. Protect yourself!"

Carfax, entrenched behind a great mahogany desk, heard him out in silence. His pudgy hands were folded in his lap. He kept a cold, blue eye on Farnsworth and finally smiled cynically.

"Very kind of you, Mr.—ah—Farnsworth. That's all you wish to say?"

"I have told you the truth. That's enough."

"Oh, yes—yes, indeed."

"Be careful, then. Save yourself. Pull out while there's time!"

Carfax merely smiled.

"Surely you believe me? You—at least you'll investigate?"

Carfax's smile broadened. "Farnsworth," he chuckled, "you're good. I'll say you're good. I'd made up my mind to let you play your hand out, but you're too much for me! I had to laugh. Well—you go back to John Trench with my compliments. Thank him for giving me a good laugh. Tell him I enjoyed it—and it was a good trick—a damn clever trick. Tell him I said that, a damn clever trick, but he picked the wrong fellow to play it on—"

"What?" Farnsworth was staggered. "You—you don't believe?"

"My dear fellow! I'm no infant. I'm wise—wise to you and to young Trench's game! Come—"

"Wait." Farnsworth's expression was grim. "If Trench had told you of my—my reputation—my past—"

Carfax stared coldly. "Your past? Oh, here, this is going too far. I don't know anything about your past—and I don't care to. Why keep up this pretense? You're wasting my time and your boss's. Good day, Mr. Farnsworth—"

"You shall listen! I say you must listen. Carfax—"

"Good day," Carfax repeated coldly. His finger had touched a button beneath the desk and a secretary was in the room.

"A swindle!" Farnsworth shouted. "You hear? A swindle. I warn you—I warn you, Carfax!"

"All right," said Carfax bluntly. "That will do. No need to get rough about it. Show Mr. Farnsworth out, Dobbs."

The secretary's hand was on Farnsworth's arm. He was propelled firmly toward the door.

"Be careful," he cried desperately, fighting to the last. "I warn you! I warn you it's true. You must believe! You shall believe!"

The strange, low-keyed voice cracked harshly as it reached that last, high note. The door was closed between him and Carfax, and his last glimpse was of Carfax's cynical smile—a smile that plainly branded him liar.

Farnsworth was at his hotel when Kate Singleton called. He had been in his room for hours, without any notion of the passage of time and no recollection of coming there. And all that time he had sat quite still, his nervous hands gripped tightly before him, staring at nothing.

The first effect of his failure was complete bewilderment. The rock on which his feet were planted had crumbled; the light of his world was gone; all its elements had betrayed him and cast him adrift.

Always he had been certain of his power to do the thing he planned. The man really believed that God had kept him living to watch that son of his and rule the path he should go. His egotism was sublime. Nothing short of such an assurance of the pact between himself and God could have got him even that brief hearing men had granted to his message.

When the mists of his bewilderment

cleared an anguish of shame and humiliation came after. There was a pride in John Farnsworth that was stronger than any other thing in life. All his years of imprisonment had not bent it. It was that pride made a scourge for his punishment so that the memory of prison sentence never lost its sting.

That pride made him writhe this night. His son had cast him out; called him "jailbird." Carfax had sneered and branded him liar. There was not one man or woman left in the world—or so it seemed—whose hand was not against him, who did not mock and spit upon him.

But the wretched man's egotism always saved him from madness. Egotism whispered its own bitter consolation, a consolation that salved his outraged pride. Egotism told him that a just and wrathful God had visited this punishment because of his one wrong-doing. Egotism counselled him to bear his lot; armed his resolution to keep on his way alone; fired him again to carry out his grim purpose of driving John Trench as he would have him go—of driving him or ending him forever.

Then Kate's name was announced.

Farnsworth found her waiting in the hotel's dreary little "Ladies Parlor," a room filled with plush furniture, every piece worthy of the Spanish inquisition; with a horrible, large figured carpet and some dreary so-called etchings against its large figured wall paper. The room was entirely at their disposal at this hour.

Kate's resolution, which was wabbling badly, died entirely when she saw Farnsworth. She knew, instinctively, there was no good in talking to this man. She knew her kindly intention would never reach behind his armor. But she was there, and he was there—there was no escaping.

Outwardly Farnsworth showed no effects of his utter defeat except that the lines of his white face were drawn a little sharper so that his features were as fixed and lifeless as a cast in plaster-of-Paris. He had no answer for Kate's greeting, and she was obliged to rise to meet him at an equal advantage.

"I suppose it was silly of me to stop in here," she began, already irritated by his

manner. "I was just wondering if—well, I just wanted to know—that is, to ask—about your plans."

"My plans?"

"Yes. About the future, I mean—if you were looking for employment, you know. I thought maybe, if you wanted a job—" She stopped, and Farnsworth said nothing. The silence was awkward—more than awkward; it was highly irritating to her. Finally, she said: "Yes, you're quite right. It's none of my business!"

The sarcasm was lost on Farnsworth. "You seem to have made it your business," he said in his usual, dull voice. "Since you have, suppose you explain exactly what you mean."

"Oh, I don't mean anything." Kate turned away suddenly petulant. "I was a fool to come here—I told myself that before I came. Good night."

"Wait."

Farnsworth's word was a command.

"Tell me what you meant to say," he added sternly.

"I will." Kate was defiant now, bound to go through with it. "I'll tell you—though you're about as easy to talk to as a stone wall. I came here because I thought perhaps you needed a little help. I felt—sorry, in a way, about your losing your job. I don't know why I felt sorry—but I did. I had an idea I might help you to get something to do."

"Did John Trench send you?" Into Farnsworth's dead eyes came a flash of hope, a plain look of eagerness. Thinking about it afterward, Kate could not recall having ever seen anything in his expression so close to a human emotion. For that little time Farnsworth was almost pathetic.

"No," she said honestly. "Trench did not send me. My own idea, entirely." The hope died from Farnsworth's face. "I just had a silly idea maybe I—could do—something—to help you. Sorry I felt that way, now."

She turned again as if to go, and again he stopped her.

"Is that true?" He put the question sternly.

Kate flared up and her lips opened to pay him in equal rudeness. Yet there was

something honest in his manner that halted her. "Yes," she said quietly, "it is true."

"You want to help? You'd like to do a service?"

"Silly of me, wasn't it!"

"Why don't you help John Trench?" He asked the question with an emphasis that was startling in its bitterness. When she stared, he repeated, "Why don't you help John Trench? You love him. You have wronged him. If you feel that way—if you have any sincerity in your feelings—if you are an honest woman as you say, pay your debt!"

Kate looked at him blankly.

"Pay your debt!" Farnsworth whispered bitterly. "Prove you are honest—as you claim to be."

At last she found voice to ask, "What debt?"

"The debt you owe to Trench. The debt you owe to God. How can you shake your head at me! You know—your guilty soul must tell you. You say you are honest yet you shake you head with a lie in your heart. You persist? I'll tell you that debt."

All this time Farnsworth's voice held to his monotone and so it went on, trembling sometimes as he shook with anger, but never exploding in the harsh diatribe that always threatened.

"You—you made Trench what he is. You made him. Dishonest! A swindler! Lover of loose ways, lustng after stolen money. You made him that. You are making him a thief. Don't you think I know? Don't you think I have eyes to watch you? You're the rotten spot in a decent life. Your light ways; your silly extravagance; your indecent dress and painted smile that makes fools of men, those are the things that have pulled him down, turned him from the path, tempted him into crookedness—"

"You say I did that!"

"You know that is true. You've turned his head, made a fool of him. He is mad after you. *Can a man take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?* The guilt is yours—and the shame. Repent!"

Kate heard him out in a stupid astonishment. The force and weight of his bitterness for the moment beat her down. He stunned her. But she had a fighting spirit of her own that would not down for long.

She said, harshly, "I was right, about being a fool to come here. A straitjacket is the only cure for you, Farnsworth. A fine nerve you have talking of debts and honesty—you, and ex-convict, an embezzler!"

"You'll not do it. I should have known that," Farnsworth's head drooped. His hands clasped in a strange despair.

"You're raving," Kate answered. "Every word you say is a slander against an honest man. Trench is honest. In all the world you're the only fool who doesn't see that. You dare call him a swindler and a thief—you!"

"She'll not help," Farnsworth repeated dully. "Why expect it?"

Kate spoke again more gently. Her sympathy was touched, in spite of herself, by Farnsworth's dejection. Almost she was sorry for Farnsworth. Mad or sane he suffered.

"Farnsworth, listen to me. You've been working too hard, that's what ails you. You're a nervous wreck. You're beginning to see things that ain't. You've gone and fussed yourself into taking over Trench's worries. I should think you'd have enough of your own. And you're all wrong about him—way off the truth. I guess I am a little sorry for you, after all. Take some advice from me: Forget Trench. Forget that job with Cheer-O. Forget the whole thing. Take a brace—and a good, long rest. Then, when you feel human again and want a job, let me know. Be sure to let me know."

Obedient still to her kindly impulse she touched Farnsworth's sleeve gently and smiled into his face in token of good-night. He answered the touch and the smile with a strong shudder of repulsion.

"All right," said Kate grimly. "Have your own way about it!"

She bit her lips with vexation as she left him, but at the door she glanced back and saw him standing motionless, head sunk on his breast, dull eyes staring at the car-

pet, hands limply open at his sides—a man without fire in his heart or strength in his knees—a failure.

Home and clad in the thinnest, silkiest and most shining of frivolous negligee she huddled in the midst of her bed trying to find some sane purpose in that most bewildering day devoted to the troubles of Farnsworth and Trench. There was little consolation in the attempt.

"Forget Farnsworth" was her final decision. "I got exactly what was coming to any fool who goes around peddling sympathy. Who asked me to feel sorry for him? Nobody. All right, then, don't"

But for many days thereafter, while she worked and played with all her old time enthusiasm, Kate remembered Farnsworth as she last saw him. The harsh things he had said she could put aside, crediting them to his madness. But the utter despair of his slack figure would not leave her memory.

CHAPTER XIII.

RANDALL SELLS A SECRET.

JOHN TRENCH came to accept Kate's explanation of Farnsworth. "He's worked too hard and now the squirrels are paging him. It's what anybody deserves for hard work."

"You ought to know," he said by way of tribute to her own industry.

"You needn't worry about me, John. I'm watching my step. The first time I get the notion that Cheer-O's a bunk I'm going to ask for a good, long vacation."

They were back again on the familiar, pleasant relations of a friendship skillfully guided by Kate. She was in Trench's company as much as ever, but seldom alone. Carfax and others made up their parties.

Carfax had met Trench several days after Farnsworth's interview and he greeted him with a grin.

"Your man give you my message?" he asked.

"What man—what message?"

"Farnsworth, I mean. Pretty clever, boy! Not such a bad trick, if you had picked another man to try it on."

"Oh." Trench understood now what Carfax meant. "So you don't feel any worry about Cheer-O?"

"Not so's you'd notice. I guess that stock of yours is good enough security for my money. If you need any more—"

"Oh, no, no! I'll worry along," Trench assured him, inwardly delighted.

"Ought to expand, boy. The stuff seems to be popular. Can you keep up with the demand?"

"Will, when Wormser finishes some experiments he's making to help the process," Trench lied easily.

"Oh, yes—Wormser's process!" Carfax favored him with a knowing wink. "Wormser's some chemist, so I hear. We'll make a barrel of money out of Wormser yet."

"Will we?" Trench thought when he left Carfax. "Anyway, I know somebody who's going to make a barrel of money!"

The same day Kate remarked: "It does beat the mischief how Cheer-O sells. We're getting swamped with orders, now that the weather's warm. Why in the world you ever consider selling out, I can't see!"

"Money," Trench explained briefly.

"Why, there's a fortune in owning it!"

"Yes, I know. Sure there's a fortune in it, but—I'm not crazy about settling down to this steady grind. You know that."

"It's a darn shame!" Kate declared, studying her employer seriously. "What ails you, anyhow? When everything is coming your way and you're so lucky that a dollar will run a mile to jump in your pocket, you want to make a change. Why don't you settle down?"

"With you, Kate?"

"Settle down first—and see."

"Kate! Would you—"

Kate gathered up her notes and rose. At the door she answered him. "You'll have to show me—first!"

Trench stared at the door she closed and drew a long, slow breath. "By God," he whispered, "I wonder!"

He slipped open the table drawer and spread out his confidential reports on Cheer-O. For more than an hour he was busy with calculations. There was little reassurance in his figuring. Finally he sent for Amos Wormser.

When the little chemist was alone with him Trench said: "Look here. You've been messing in that laboratory for pretty nearly twelve months. How about it?"

"I'm doing my utmost, Mr. Trench. Up to the present time I have nothing else to report. There is a cheaper process, sir. There must be. But to find it takes time—and patience. Patience, Mr. Trench. We must wait, and work—"

"Wormser, I give you credit for being on the level. You really are trying to beat this kelp game, aren't you?"

"Sir, you know my ambition," Wormser growled eagerly. He leaned forward in his chair, his eyes shining. "If you will only give me time! If you'll only be content to wait. Perhaps even in a few months—"

"But there's nothing in sight? No real, tangible hope?"

"There's always hope," Wormser replied. "But nothing—definite."

"If we could even reduce the cost a little," Trench urged impatiently. "If I could make enough profit to live on!"

"Cheaper substitutes?" Wormser suggested.

Trench shook his head, frowning. "Then the sales will fall off. No, you've got to find another way. And your time's getting mighty short, I warn you!"

"Oh, Mr. Trench!" The dusty little chemist laid a pleading hand on Trench's sleeve. "Give me a little more time—just a little. I'm on the level about it. I mean it, Mr. Trench. There is a formula I'm trying now—it may be the right one. I have hopes. Think, if I find it—a fortune for each of us, millions. Give me time."

Trench was not much impressed with this talk. Wormser was always on the brink of great discoveries which had a way of dissolving into thin air as he reached them. He had about concluded that Cheer-O as a paying proposition was a problem as abstract as the fourth dimension. But what Kate had hinted had started Trench's mind on a new tack. He wished with more fervor than ever before that the business was honest. So he answered Wormser sternly:

"I'll tell you just how much time you can have. One month—"

Wormser's face ceased to glow. He shook his head.

"No use shaking your head," Trench warned him. "That's my limit. But I'll add this: if you find a process in that time—something that will guarantee me a reasonable profit—I'll double the bonus mentioned in our contract. Yes, and I'll add another five per cent to your royalties. I mean it, Amos. I—have sort of a notion—I'd like to keep this business. To settle down with it, maybe. If you think it can be done—"

"It can be done, but—three weeks—a month! You know better."

"I know this: in a month I've got Carfax's notes falling due; in a month I must know where I stand, whether to go ahead or unload. I've kept Cheer-O a double barreled proposition for a year. I can jump either way. But time's up, Amos, time's about up. Now it's up to you."

Wormser only sighed and shook his head portentously.

Trench looked at his watch. When he spoke again his manner was indifferent. Plainly he lost hope of the chemist. "I'm going East to-morrow. Be back about the end of the month. When I get back, either you've got it, or—whoof! No Cheer-O in my family. Carfax can have it."

After Wormser had gone Trench remained sprawled deep in his big chair. His hand caressed his cheek, twisted his mouth into strange shapes, and pulled at the lobe of his ear. His eyes were sober with thinking.

"I wonder," he thought, "if Cheer-O was on the level, if I did settle down—would she have me? I think she would. And if it doesn't make a go? If I have to sting Carfax and get out? What'll she say then? I wonder!"

His fingers continued to pull and mold his face. Finally he chuckled.

"On the knees of the gods—and Amos Wormser! That solemn eyed shrimp! Anybody with an ounce of sense would get ready for trouble."

Amos, leaving Trench's office, stole one frightened glance at Primula Feltman's desk and was relieved to note the terrible woman was absent. He sidled rapidly through the

general office and into the public corridor. There he was ambushed.

Primula pounced upon him. She blocked his path and her hand caught his sleeve. There was no escaping her. Wormser blinked rapidly as she loosed the torrents of conversation.

"Amos, you dear! Yes, you are! You're not going to slip away, either, till I tell you *all* I think of you. I know who sent me those lovely roses! There, don't you dare deny it!"

With Primula's finger shaken roguishly in his face, his back to the wall, utterly bewildered and at her mercy, the dusty little chemist could only roll his terrified eyes and gasp.

"I tried to write you, Amos, to thank you. But I just had to say it to your face. I tore up my note. I waited to say it. Why didn't you answer my telephone calls, you naughty—"

"I dunno, Miss Feltman—I—"

"Don't you dare say you were busy—don't you!" Primula performed a playful calisthenic wriggle. She was a little like a kitten with a mouse—a superannuated kitten, slightly troubled with, say, rheumatism.

The mouse fidgeted uneasily. His lips opened, but he could not speak. He wished he had the strength of will to push her aside, but a strange numbness stole over him. Primula's face swam mistily before him, her glasses and teeth gleaming horribly. Being entirely innocent of Kate Singleton's hasty generosity, he had not the slightest notion what roses she was talking about. All he knew was that he had fallen victim of a horrible conspiracy.

"I have saved them all—every precious petal," Primula sighed. "The most beautiful and sweetest bloom of all I have pressed in my copy of Tennyson. Amos, you shall see it some day."

"Yes—yes, Miss Feltman," Amos stammered. "Y—yes, delighted. I—I—"

"And you'll not neglect your old friends so long again. Now, you must promise! I'm waiting for you to call on me, Amos Wormser!"

A wild, giddy intoxication was stealing over Amos. He could not fight it off. There

was a thrill in his blood. His heart beat faster and his pulses hammered in his ears. The vampire's spell was working. He knew it was working, and a voice within him tried to cry a warning. But Amos was lost to warnings now.

"I—am coming to see you," he roared with sudden, new boldness. "Yes'm, I'm coming—old time's sake—we've got to be better friends, Miss Feltman."

"Why, Amos! You do say such things! Mind you, then, I'll call you up some evening."

"No, I'll call you up. Sure. I'll call you up. Got to see—more of you—you know. Now—now, I guess I'll have to run along, Prim—Prim—Miss Feltman. Got to hurry. Awful busy."

Primula relinquished him with a long, quivering sigh.

"Don't you dare forget," she admonished in parting. Then she was gone with one final, flashing, gleaming smile and a pounce.

Amos moved on slowly, in a daze. He was sweating and weak. The inner voice was crying out in despair. It was horrible. He was committed. He had promised. He knew he could not escape. The victim of some horrible blunder. She thought he had sent her roses!

He scuttled back to his laboratory in the factory on the tide flats and slammed and locked the door on the world. His nervous state was such he could only sit huddled in a chair for hours after, victim of the horrible woman's wiles. And the terrifying thing was that, frightened as he was, he liked it!

When Trench started his trip East he left Kate in charge of Cheer-O. Ostensibly Trench went to arrange for a national market for his product. In reality he was glad of an excuse to get away. He wanted some diversion that would end his time of waiting on the outcome of the double-barreled business venture. Suspense was wearing on him. He knew that Kate was capable of managing affairs in his absence—fully as capable as himself.

Kate was delighted. She liked to manage things. Her devotion to business set a shining example for her small office force,

and won the applause of Carfax, who kept a fatherly eye on the little venture in which he had invested money.

Carfax made it his business, also, to be sure that Kate was not dull during Trench's absence. Almost every evening he engineered some amusement. His yacht was at her disposal for week-end cruises on the sound. He made up a party of motor tourists to Mount Rainier. His guests were prominent in the various resorts. Kate Singleton, in all her career of pleasure, remembered no time livelier than these happy weeks—weeks of driving work by day and play by night. She was living up to the top notch of her tremendous capacity for diversion. All worries seemed forgotten. There was neither past nor future.

And her host asked nothing. Carfax remained quietly in the background of all the gay scenes he staged. The man appeared entirely content in Kate's happiness. Often she remembered him with sudden compunction and a thrill of gratitude for his kindness.

On one such night—a night of a splendid moon, when the yacht was purring across water of the midnight silk, through a curtain of dusky velvet, bound south from Vancouver—she kissed Carfax again. The salute was as sudden and unexpected as her former gift to him.

"I—couldn't help it," she laughed softly. They were alone on deck. "You're so darn good—and a dear, besides!"

"Thanks," Carfax acknowledged briefly. "You don't mind?"

"Huh!"

"I believe you do!" She smiled teasingly, leaning toward him.

Carfax considered before he answered. "You know I don't. I—kind of understand—what you mean by it. I—thanks, a lot." He added soberly: "Don't worry too much about John Trench. He's all right. I'll bet on him!"

His remark kept Kate thinking until early morning. She had scarcely realized that Trench was in her thoughts; certainly she had no idea she was worrying about him. Yet Carfax was right. She had worried about Trench. During his absence Trench was very much in her thoughts.

She wished she knew all that Trench was doing—and planning.

"How do I know what he's up to?" she sighed. "Maybe he's sold the business—or traded it in for cigar certificates. Maybe some other girl's vamped him! Maybe he's forgetting his rubbers when it rains! That man sure needs a mother's tender care." She yawned and added her whimsical invocation, "Gawd pity the poor working goil."

On a day shortly before Trench's expected return, Lester Harper, the bijou office boy, came to Kate. Lester now wore white flannel trousers; a blue serge coat, belted; salmon pink shirt, and purple tie to honor summer's brief warmth.

"That guy's back again, Miss Singleton," Lester reported. "Shall I call a cop?"

"Who's back again?" Kate frowned up from Trench's own desk where she worked during his absence.

"Why, this Randall. Asking for Mr. Trench again. That makes the fourth time."

"Didn't you tell him Mr. Trench is away?"

"Yeah! But he won't believe me. Seems to think everybody's a liar."

"Send him to me. I'll see Randall," Kate directed, her lips compressing.

When Randall had edged in the door he gave a sharp look about the room, very much as if he expected Trench to be in hiding.

"Well?" Kate challenged him.

"I want to see Mr. Trench. That's all. I'm getting tired of being stalled off, too."

"Mr. Trench is in the East. The boy told you that."

Randall began to whine. "How was I to know? Everybody tries to pass the buck when I come around. You say he's in the East, how—"

"Perhaps you think I'm a liar, Randall?"

"No. No, I don't mean anything like that! But I got to see Trench pretty quick, that's all. Pretty—damn—quick."

"Suppose you see me, instead? I'm his private secretary. Also I'm in charge just now."

"Nope." Randall shook his head with a look of deep mystery. "No, sir, lady! This is Trench's business—his own private affairs. He'll be damn anxious to see me, I can tell you that. But he'd better hurry home or I—well, he'd better hurry back if he's a wise guy. Say, you might telegraph that to him, eh Just wire him Randall says he'd better hurry home and have a little talk!"

Kate studied the ex-convict shrewdly. Randall had added a new boldness since his last visit. There was a certain excitement that showed in his womanish brown eyes. He was both bold and uneasy. She disliked Randall heartily. His sallow, long face, with the small, weak mouth, and his curly hair, were repulsive to her. She had a lively curiosity to know Randall's business with Trench.

"I guess you can wait," Kate answered. "A week more won't hurt you."

"A week. Another week? Say, miss, is that straight?"

She nodded serenely.

Randall showed uneasiness. "Now look here," he began in a more ingratiating manner, "I—I'm kind of up against it. I got to have some money, y' see? Well—I'll tell you, I've been to a lot of expense finding out some things for Trench, and I got to have a little stake sooner than a week. I got to have something right off. I guess now, you could advance me a few dollars till the boss is home. How about it?"

"I guess not!"

"Now, miss, don't you be so quick." Randall lifted a forefinger in warning. "Don't you be so damn quick. This stuff I've been finding out for Mr. Trench—well, he'd be mighty glad to know you slipped me a few iron men. Y' see, it might keep me from spilling the beans!"

"Is that a threat or a promise, Randall?"

Randall wagged his head solemnly. "Take it either way," he said. "Take it either way!"

"What work have you done?"

"That's all right now, that's all right! Trench is going to be interested, all right."

"Did Trench hire you? Of course not! He left no word."

"Never mind who hired me. Maybe

I'm working for Randall, when you come down to cases. But I got hold of something worth money to Trench and I'm giving you a straight tip, you better come through with a little jack if you don't want the boss good and sore."

Kate considered the visitor for several moments. "I'll tell you what I think," she announced. "You've got hold of some dirty little secret you think you can sell to John Trench."

Randall's eyes flickered aside from her direct glance and the pupils dilated. She knew she had come close to truth. "Well, I'll tell you something, Trench isn't in the market for your kind of filth. You're in the wrong shop with that stuff, Randall."

"Am I? Hah!" The sallow man seemed to swell with rage and importance.

"You are. Now, you can go—"

"Look here, you'd better watch your step!" Randall's voice rose angrily. "I'm telling you, you hear? I'm telling you!"

The outer door was opened by Lester, answering Kate's signal with the buzzer.

"Call the police," Kate directed quietly.

Randall's face went red and white. He raised a clenched fist and his lips began to work with a jerky excitement.

"Call a cop!" he shouted angrily. "Yes, go on, call one. Maybe your fine gentleman friend Trench will thank you for that when the whole town knows who his father is—who he is. Go ahead, call a cop!"

Kate was out of her chair with a white face and had the door open. "Lester," she directed, "never mind that call." Then she turned back to Randall. "Now," she commanded, "suppose you tell me just what you mean by that?"

"That's Trench's affair," Randall growled.

"It's my affair right now. Come on, spill it, or—" Her finger went again to the call button.

Randall sulked, rolling his cloth cap between his fists. He glared at the floor. He turned his back on her.

"All right," said Kate. "The police then—"

She pressed her fingers upon the button, careful not to press enough to sound it.

Randall whirled on her. "If you do,"

he threatened, "I'll tell the town. I'll tell the world. A fine chance of doing business young Trench will have after that. A fat chance. Him! Son of a convict—son of a crook—a damn, dirty, stiff necked, white faced, embezzling crook that robbed widows and orphans! I'll put him and his business on the rocks, you hear me? On—the—rocks."

"That's just a plain lie, Randall. A cheap, nasty lie." Kate's brown eyes challenged him.

"Oh, it is!"

"Yes, it is."

"Then how about this! Eh, how about this? Proofs, that's what I've got. Proofs. Copy of birth record, copy of divorce decree, listen here: '*Alice Trench Farnsworth versus John Farnsworth*—custody of the minor child John is vested in the plaintiff—permission given plaintiff to resume her maiden name of Alice Trench—' Copies of commitment papers of John Farnsworth, sentenced for crime of embezzlement. How about all this, eh? It's a lie, is it? I suppose that's a lie!"

Kate heard and understood, grasping the import of Randall's boasting revelation with swift clarity, though her own heart seemed to have stopped and the world about her had vanished into a whirling chaos. She found herself stretching out a steady hand to take the papers Randall flourished; found herself glancing over those papers, attested copies of legal record, as Randall claimed.

Randall had done his work thoroughly. The proof was there, in black and white and without doubt of its authenticity. The ex-convict's inquiries and speculations had put him on the right track. There was no denying him.

And what he showed her dovetailed beyond any suspicion with the mystery of John Farnsworth's strange speech and strange acts. It cleared all that had been dark.

But it was only some instinctive intelligence within her, some detached self that grasped these things then. Her own identity, Kate Singleton, was overwhelmed, beaten down and lost to conscious thought by the amazing and terrible revelation.

Yet it was that same, extra human intelligence, acting in her place, quietly and sanely that dealt with Randall, advancing the man enough money to keep him quiet; dismissing him from the offices of Cheer-O; dispatching the remainder of the day's business.

Only when all that was done, when the day's routine was cleared away did she desert her responsibility to get home some way, to close her own door against the world and try, as she never had tried before, to discover the course that was right and just toward John Trench and John Farnsworth.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I—DON'T BELIEVE YOU!"

AT about seven o'clock that evening Kate Singleton reached a decision. She began to act by carefully washing her face and hands, dusting on powder, dressing her hair and even buffing her nails. Then she selected the plainest, simplest frock she owned and donned it. Thus revived and fortified she hunted up the telephone directory.

Farnsworth was still at the little hotel where she had interviewed him almost a month before. When he was on the wire she told him her name and address and added: "I've got to see you. It's about your son. You may call at once."

There followed so long a pause she thought he had disconnected. She began to shake the telephone hook when his quiet voice cut in: "I'll be right over, Miss Singleton."

She turned from the telephone in something like a panic. The die was cast. As she put it rather shakily: "We-e-ell, you've gone and did it this time! You've spilled the beans, Kate—"

She sighed tremulously, looking thoroughly frightened. "Nobody asked you to stick your monkey wrench in the machinery," she reflected. "Nobody asked you to jazz up the affairs of old John Farnsworth and young John Trench. I guess that's right about fools butting in where angels beat it—but, oh Lord, what's going to come of it?" After a little the frightened

look faded from her eyes and her chin went up bravely.

"Carry on, Kate," she murmured. "Carry on! And meantime shake a leg and get this place looking decent. A fine joint to ask old Farnsworth into. Looks like the setting for a bedroom farce!"

Though she was glad to forget her fears in the business of tidying the little apartment, Kate felt she had done right. First of all, she must learn Farnsworth's side of the story. From that she might judge how much Trench should know, for she was perfectly willing to take on her own shoulders the responsibility of the secret, if she thought that wisest.

She had some very definite ideas of John Trench's character, not altogether untrue. Trench was impressionable; apt to do the wrong thing if the suggestion was strong enough. If his father should prove to be a handicap and a disgrace to him, better Trench should not know that father—at least not now. And it was up to her to judge the father and judge Trench and engineer both of them as seemed best. No small undertaking and growing more perplexing the more she thought of it.

John Farnsworth was announced; entered.

Even his repressed personality was not shockproof. There were signs of excitement plain upon him. Kate waved him to a seat and watched his quick glance surveying her home, and disapproving of it.

After a somewhat awkward period of hesitation, Kate addressed her visitor.

"Farnsworth, you don't like me. And I'm not in love with you. It's about fifty-fifty between us, that way. But maybe both of us like John Trench. I'm willing to say I do."

She paused, hopeful Farnsworth would give some sign of acquiescence. There was no sign from him. She went on:

"Attending to Trench's affairs to-day, I happened to uncover the relationship between you two. I'm sorry, but that can't be helped now. It's true, you are his father?"

The white haired man bowed his head.

"He must never know it," he whispered.

"I'm not making any promise at all. Suppose I tell you first what I know; then you can tell me the rest. This little rat, Randall—"

"Randall! I see." Farnsworth's black eyes showed the red wrath that was in his heart. "I should have killed Randall." he admitted quietly.

"Yes," Kate agreed, "I don't know but I wish you had. However, it's too late now."

She told Farnsworth all that had passed between her and the forger. When she had finished he sat very still, his hands clenched on his knees, a stiff, strained posture that seemed to hurt.

"John Trench is my son," Farnsworth said abruptly. As though the revelation had broken his self-control, he was on his feet quickly. The frivolous, shaded lamps of Kate's little reception room illuminated his face and drew the cavernous hollows of his sunken eyes in sharp relief. He continued to speak from his feet, head thrown back, his thin hands intertwined before him.

"I meant no living soul should know that. Trench must not know, you hear? He must not! So far as our relations are concerned, I am dead. The boy was brought up to believe me dead. My wife carried out my wish in that. For his sake I cut myself off from both of them. For a long time I thought it would be better for the boy if I had died.

"You know what I am. You heard Randall tell it. True, every word. I stole money, and the innocent suffered because of my crime. Men, women and children have suffered for what I did.

"Nothing I have done or that my wife did for me can heal all that harm—nor condone my wrong. Better that I had died, perhaps—but my son was alive; and it came to me, while I was in that ugly prison on the river, that I had something left to do. I let my son live. Was it right the boy should live?"

A horror made Kate's lips dry, so that she tried twice to speak and failed. Finally: "You devil! You—would kill—your own son?"

"I'd tear out my own heart," Farnsworth cried, his strange voice ringing. "I'd

trample on my own heart to atone. Kill him? Yes, if he lived to carry on my evil!"

There was a blackness before Kate's eyes and a numbing coldness in her veins. Farnsworth's voice, patient, low, monotonously controlled again, came to her from a great distance.

"That is why I continued to live. That is why I looked forward to my freedom. I went on, and on, through more ages than God has numbered, to find this boy of mine again—to judge his heart."

Farnsworth studied Kate's pale face, reading her horror and fear and loathing of him. He began to move about the little room and the muscles of his hard face twitched while his hands rose in jerky, uncontrollable gestures.

"I know what you think," he cried, and there was something like pathos in voice and manner as if the human desire to justify himself had conquered his resolution. "You think I'm a beast. You think I'm mad. A hard, harsh, unjust father—something evil and fearful. Let me tell you, I have decent affection. I love this son of mine."

The very thought seemed revolting to Kate. Her face showed it.

"I gave up all I had for him," Farnsworth croaked. "I gave it all up—my wife, freedom, a home. They told me I might escape punishment; that my wife's money, what we had between us, would satisfy the law. I wouldn't have it. I sought what I deserved—punishment—and because I would keep away from this boy; because I hoped he would be a better man than I was. That was not easy. I was proud. I loved them."

"I had a right to be proud," Farnsworth went on bitterly. "I was honest until that time. My father before me had been honest, and his father—men of integrity, men known for their honor. And I was young, already succeeding far beyond what many men of my age were doing, trusted because of my honest name. I was proud of that; proud of my lovely wife; proud of my son. When I did wrong I was too proud to lie. I know right from evil. It was right that I be punished, and I didn't try to evade.

"Yes, and more, I'm a proud man still. I'm not shirking my duty. Not by one minute fraction will I evade the punishment a God of wrath has laid upon me. You hear!" He flung back his head proudly, fists clenched, posture rigid.

In that momentary posture, that look that challenged the world and God in His heaven, Kate Singleton's shrewd eyes saw the real John Farnsworth, and in a glimpse understood the man. For all her dislike of him, she was stirred to admire.

"Perhaps you think my way has been easy," Farnsworth resumed, dull again. "It has not. It has been a black way, a thorny way, a bitter, hard way to go. Is it easy, do you think, to skulk as I have skulked—to pry, to lie, to watch in the dark? Is it pleasant to be branded jailbird—pleasant that my own son should spit on me and cast me off? But that is my punishment. I accept it. It shan't turn me from my duty.

"For John Trench is my son. I must answer to God for him. I'll not forget it. That's why I watch him; why I'm near him. The taint began with me. Of those honest Farnsworths I'm the first to soil the name. If that taint of my blood has gone on to my son—if John Trench is a thief, that's the question I'm going to answer. I'm here to judge."

"Well, you've seen him. You've judged him." Kate's words sounded brokenly, her whisper ragged and harsh. "You know—you know John Trench is fit to live!"

Farnsworth began to shake his head slowly and she felt she must scream her terror. Yet there was indecision in his lined face, and that made her hope.

He said: "I don't know. I'm not sure. I think—"

"Yes? You think, Farnsworth?"

"The boy's more fool than knave," Farnsworth's voice quivered with scorn. "He must be driven, driven into doing right; beaten into honesty—"

"He's honest. He's honest, and you—you who say he's not—you lie."

Farnsworth answered her vehement defense with his bitter, shadowy contortion of the lips that passed for a smile.

"The boy's in bad hands; the victim of loose companions and an evil woman—"

"Oh, leave me out of it!"

"Take yourself out of it!" The command was stern. "Take yourself from his life—and we may see! It is you—you who—"

"Now look here, my friend, we'll never get anywhere on that argument. You hate me. All right. Put that aside for the time—"

"Put *that* aside! Forget you!" Again the bitter smile.

"All right." Kate moved toward the door. "No use our talking any more. But let me tell you this again, Trench is honest. I know him. I know his business. Both are good, you hear? They're square, decent, on the level. I'll swear to that."

The perfect sincerity with which this woman defended Trench halted Farnsworth. Looking in her eyes he could not doubt her. He considered her patiently and said at last:

"Then you're a fool—a bigger fool than Trench. And I thought you shrewd! If you're playing a part; if you think for a minute you can trick me—why, I know! I've seen the proof! This stuff Trench makes—this Cheer-O—what, you mean to say you don't know!"

"I know this, Trench is honest."

"You think so! Why—I can't believe it. You! And I thought you knew business! Look at his cost sheets. Look at them. Study them. I'll tell you what it is—a swindle. He can't make that stuff at a profit—he never expects to. He's kept the business solely as a pretense. For one reason—one reason only—to swindle Carfax."

"You're ridiculous!" Kate tried to laugh, but the laugh was rather a failure.

"Am I? Look in Trench's desk—the private cost report. Ask Wormser, he can tell you. The plot was made a year ago. His only plan is to force a sale on Carfax who thinks it is a money maker—to unload on him—to dump the business, and take Carfax's money and run away. A common swindle!"

"I don't believe you."

"I don't ask you to believe. Look for yourself. The report is filed in his desk—or was. Accuse him. He'll probably admit it himself. But it shan't happen, I'll prom-

ise that. I'll stop it—some way I'll stop that crooked thing! I went to him—gave him his chance to turn back. He mocked me. Then Randall came—and beat me, the rat! I have tried to tell Carfax. Somebody has lied to him, or bewitched him. He laughs in my face and his laugh calls me a liar. Never mind. Never mind, I say! I've waited a long time to do this thing. I'm going to do it. I'll not fail—God won't let me fail."

Farnsworth checked himself. He favored Kate with one more of those contortions of his stiff lips, a black, sour smile.

"You," he said, "are either criminal—or fool. I—well, I shan't try to judge. But if you believe this nonsense—if you do—look for yourself. The proof is there. A child could find it—even the simpleton you may be, could find it."

In Kate's steady glance there was defiance, but defiance somewhat shaken. "I—don't—believe—you," she whispered again.

"One thing, then. You'll not tell this." He did not ask; he commanded.

Kate shook her head. "I'll let you know if I do."

"You'll never tell."

With that grim threat Farnsworth was gone.

The woman he left was greatly shaken. Kate Singleton's views of life of recent years had been steadfastly of one sort. Memory of an unhappy childhood, of revolt against a Puritan constraint and a philosophy both warped and wrong, she had put behind her. No thinking person is without a religion—or a philosophy that serves as well. Hers, realized only vaguely, had been a determined belief in the doctrine of live and let live; judge not lest ye be judged. She

clung resolutely to pleasure and diversion and blinded herself to whatever interfered.

But to-night she had seen the other side. She had a glimpse of the poor, tortured thing that was Farnsworth—all his hurts exposed to her. She could not help but be moved.

And in his tragedy Trench was involved. She began to realize now how much she cared for Trench. It was, most of all, his need for her, his dependence, that cried out and she wanted to give Trench the best she had to give. She wanted to do for him all that the wisest and most loving woman could do.

She said she would not believe his dishonesty. Yet she was afraid for him. She was bitterly afraid. She shrank from confirming Farnsworth's charge and at the same time fortified herself to do that very thing.

Kate realized now the burden she had undertaken. Trench and Farnsworth—father and son—both were in her hands, hers to right or wreck forever. The realization drove her to do a most unusual thing. She had to ask help and there was only one place to ask it.

"God," she began slowly, staring at the carpet, "if you're Farnsworth's choice of a God there's no use my taking up your time. But if there is something up there that makes the wheels go round—and fishes monkey wrenches out of the machinery—Well, I don't amount to much, and you know that; and I'm a good many kinds of a fool and probably not properly respectful. And I do think too much about clothes and good times. And I paint a little. But if there's something that finds time to look after fools like me, give me a lift just this once! Show me the right thing to do because—I'm darned if I know!"

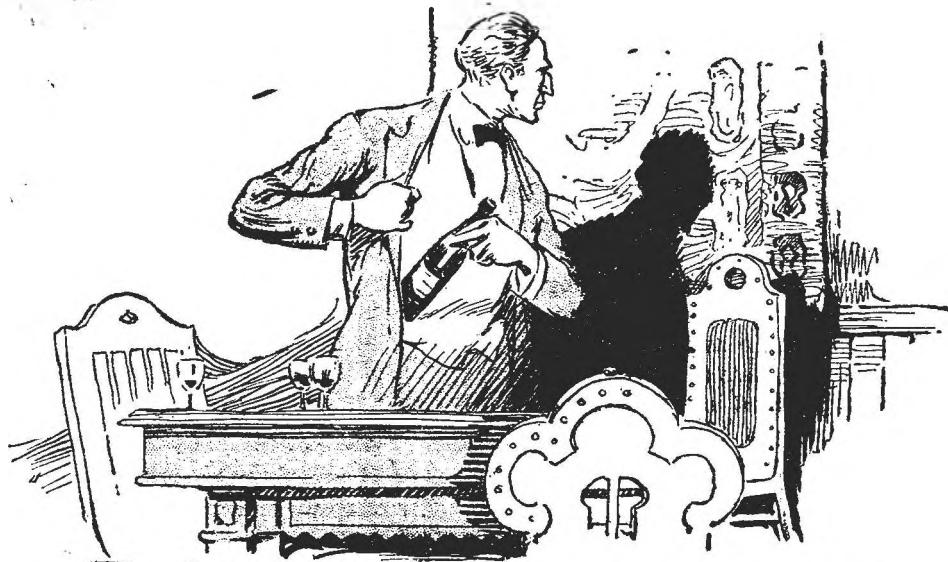
TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK



THE MIRACLE

ACROSS the meadow, dead and sear,
I saw the Rain Prince gently pass;
And at his touch each withered spear
Up sprang as living grass.

Edwin L. Sabin.



The Acumen of Martin MacVeagh

By J. U. GIESY

GEORGI GORZAS was an immigrant of many years past, from the little town of Poti on the east shore of the Black Sea. And he kept a small shop for the sale of rugs and Oriental bric-a-brac in a part of the city given over to others like himself of foreign birth.

Short and heavy set he was with a round poll, pink under a white stubble of close-cropped hair, scraggy eyebrows and a huge mustache he was always brushing aside when he ate or drank the light wines one could get, when first I knew him, and in which he was wont to indulge.

It was a rug that brought us together the first time. I saw it in his window and went inside to inspect it. Later we became friends.

Georgi got the rug out of the window,

and we looked it over. I told him something of myself, and he reciprocated in kind. It was a matter of mutual interest. Physician though I am, rugs and rug lore are a hobby of mine, and Georgi saw it at once, of course. In the end I bought the one we had been discussing, and later formed the habit of dropping into the shop to examine his stock from time to time.

It was so I met Kuba, his daughter. Georgi told me she was like her mother. If so, his dead wife must have been a beautiful woman, indeed. Kuba was blond, with hair the color of amber honey, and a slender, lithesome figure, and lips like the flame of the hibiscus petal, in the warm whiteness of her face. And she was the apple of Georgi's eye.

Her father spoke broken English, but

Kuba was American in all but birth, her parents having brought her to the land of their adoption as a child of five.

After such an introduction and the following association, there was nothing unusual, therefore, in Kuba's calling me on the telephone one afternoon and inviting me over to inspect a new and rare specimen of the weaver's art.

I called at the shop that evening and found a third party unexpectedly in their group—a young man as dark as Kuba was fair, with a great mass of nearly black hair that covered his head in a bushy shock.

Georgi introduced him as Kars Gorzas, the son of his brother. "From Tiflis he iss, toctor, und hees papa und mamma iss dead. So I wrote heem to come und lif wid hees oncle und hees cousin. Und see v'at he wrought. Ged id, Kuba."

Kars grinned with a flash of strong white teeth, and Kuba, entering the shop back of which they lived, returned with a rug at sight of which I gasped. It was old, faded, mellowed like wine by age. But—it was an Eighur if I knew anything of such matters. And Georgi confirmed my judgment as Kuba unrolled it on the floor.

"See, toctor—a Tree of Heafen! Priceless—ab-so-lutely priceless!" His keen old eyes gleamed beneath their scraggy brows.

A Tree of Heaven it was, with the spreading branches, the varicolored cartouches, each with its contained cuneiform symbols on either side—a Tree of Heaven, and only Heaven knew where Georgi's nephew might have picked it up, or how he had brought it through the customs, or anything—except that there it was, with the stocky little old rug dealer gloating above it, and pointing to the first cartouche of faded pink.

"See, toctor—can you read id?"

I shook my head. I was no student of cuneiform. "Can you?" I returned.

He nodded.

"Man is a thistle blowing,
Woman a falling rose."

My interest quickened. The thing was Omaresque. It caught the fancy. Even the sound of its translation hinted at the origin of the rug—its age. Man a thistle.

The comparison was not inapt even in modern days. Human nature did not change—or not much. Woman a rose—in a garden—of Babylonia—a Babylonian maiden, hundreds and hundreds of years ago, perhaps. One thought of the hands that had woven the suggestion into the fading threads. Those hands were dust—but here was their handiwork. I glanced at Kuba. She, too, was a budded rose of womanhood. Her blue eyes met mine, and she colored faintly as though she understood.

Georgi shifted to the second cartouche, which was red.

"Who knows where the thistle blows
Death in the heart of the rose?"

His daughter caught her breath. "That's not a bit nice," she said.

Georgi smiled. "Bud id iss life, leetle Kuba," he told her softly. "Der rose dies—alvays. Only der perfume lifs—der soul. Id iss der vay of der world. Bud see, toctor." He pointed to the last cartouche of all, which was black, but not an even black—a thing of mottled effect as though some of the threads had turned rusty with the years. "Dis I cannod yed translate. Iss dese lines symbols or nod? V'at do you t'ink?"

I bent over the thing, but I could not be certain. I shook my head again, balking the question, and glanced at Kars. "Where did you get it?" I asked.

He smiled, but made no other answer, and Georgi explained: "He don' spik English mooch. Bud—id comes from a reech man's house, he tells me. One can ged sooch t'ings cheap in Georgia, seence id vent Bolshevik. Und he knows I like sooch t'ings, so—ven I write heem to come life wid me und Kuba, he prings id. Und—I s'all not sell id. I am interest in dis plack cartouche."

I didn't blame him. He was pretty well fixed, and could afford to keep the Eighur, which was a thing to quicken a connoisseur's heart. So, after possibly some half hour of further discussion of the rug, I expressed my pleasure in having been asked to view it, and left.

And though in the press of work I did not see either Georgi or his daughter for

some considerable time after that, I did not forget either them or the rug.

I thought of it instantly on the afternoon Kuba walked into my office during my consultation hours and took the patient's seat at the end of my desk. "Woman a falling rose—death in the heart of the rose." She was like that—her mouth a crimson petal, and death in her as in all of us, of course, but at that moment—glorious life as well.

Then, as we exchanged a mutual greeting, I noted a little lurking expression of what I thought anxiety in her eyes. And her first following words assured me I was right.

"Doctor, I wish you would drive over to see father, if you will."

"He's not well?" I questioned.

"He's not—exactly himself." She appeared to hesitate in the form of her answer. "I—I'm afraid it's his mind, and so is Kars. It's principally—that Eighur rug."

"The black cartouche?" I said, my interest mounting.

She nodded. "Yes. He's puzzled over it ever since Kars brought it—trying to make it out. But two weeks ago he hung it up on the wall and sat down in a chair in front of it, and he's—been there pretty much ever since. Kars and I have to coax him to bed and to his meals."

"He sleeps, though?" I questioned.

"Very little."

"And eats?"

"Hardly anything. He drinks a little wine. You know he has been accustomed to it all his life, and Mr. Sergovitch, a friend of Kars and a steward on an ocean liner, got a little for him."

I frowned. I didn't like what she said in the least. Fixed ideas, set determinations upon some object or subject are bad things at best, and especially so in men of Georgi's age. And then I looked Kuba full in the face.

"Just what did you mean by saying it was *principally* the Eighur?" I inquired.

Unexpectedly she colored and dropped her eyes. "I suppose I may as well tell you everything, doctor. Father doesn't like Serge. Kars brought him to the house shortly after you were there last, and—he

came frequently after that. About a month ago—he—asked me to become—Mrs. Sergovitch." She broke off with a little self conscious laugh.

"He is a man of your own people?" I queried, taking advantage of the Slavic sound of the name to cover my surprise, at the information her somewhat stumbling explanation gave.

"Yes, doctor." She nodded without looking up.

"And your father does not approve?"

"No, doctor. I hardly know why, either. Serge had been very nice in every way he possibly could."

"And you—does he mean much to you?" I asked with the privilege of the physician, since oftentimes the doctor comes more closely into contact with the intimate details of his patients' lives than any one save the priest. "Do you love him, Kuba?"

"I don't know." She lifted her eyes frankly. "Honestly, doctor—I don't know. I like him well enough. He's really handsome, but—I guess I've never thought very much about marriage."

Once more she laughed in a catching fashion.

I smiled. If the girl herself was uncertain I judged that any impression Sergovitch may have made was not very deep.

"Well," I said, "when your time comes you won't think so much about it either. You'll think mainly of the man. Don't marry till you feel that way, little girl."

"Anyway, father absolutely forbade it," she returned and rose. "He became very much excited. That is why I felt I had best tell you about it. I told Serge I could not give him an answer then, and of course now—I wouldn't think of such a thing. You'll come over this afternoon?"

"In a little over an hour," I promised.

And I kept my word. I drove across to Georgi's shop, and Kars led me instantly into the living room where Georgi sat brooding over the rug.

He was in a chair before it as Kuba had described him, and he paid no least attention to our entrance until she spoke.

"Father, here is Dr. Payson."

"Huh?" He grunted then and turned

his head slightly, peering at me from beneath his scraggy brows.

His appearance shocked me in spite of what Kuba had told me. There was more than a hint of failing mentality in the stare he bent upon me, and he seemed doubly aged since I had seen him, no more than a husk of his former self. Also there was an actually childish heat in the way he flared out:

"Inderruptions! My Gott, alvays inderuptions! Vell, Pay-son, vat do you vant?"

"Why," I said as casually as might be, "I just dropped in to see you. Miss Kuba thought you were not as well as you should be?"

"Vell?" he grumbled. "I'd pe vell enough eef I could read der plack cartouche. Somedimes id iss ledgers, und somedimes nod."

I drew up a chair and sat down.

"Georgi," I said, "you're overdoing. You're tiring yourself out. If you'd take it easy—give yourself a little rest—"

"Rest?" he interrupted with a frown. "I can't rest, Pay-son. My head iss too full of ledgers."

"Exactly. That's just it," I agreed; took out my thermometer and got it under his tongue.

He took it after a moment of hesitation, and held it, staring again at the rug. Abruptly he cried out, "Hah!" and bent forward, only to lean back, mumbling: "Nod yed—nod yed."

I caught the bit of glass and mercury as it fell from his lips.

"Georgi," I said sharply. He actually seemed to have forgotten my presence.

"Huh?" He glanced at me. "Oh, yes, Pay-son—yes, yes."

I made the best examination of him I could. He complained fretfully the whole time, but submitted. And I found little for my pains. His heart was a trifle quickened, the pulse too tense, and he was getting old.

In the end I prescribed a sleeping powder to be administered that night, and advised that while Georgi slept the rug should be removed. After that everything was to be done to divert Georgi's mind from it. The reading of the black cartouche would

seem to have grown to a monomania with him. I could see no other explanation of his conduct, and I told Kuba what I thought.

She shuddered.

"I—hate the sight of the thing," she declared with an emphasis that mirrored her feeling as clearly as the words.

Kars was standing by the street door of the shop as I made my way out, apparently waiting for me.

"He iss mooch seeck?" he inquired, having apparently picked up a little English since I had met him first.

"Yes," I said. "I'm afraid he is."

"Eet ees hees head?"

"His mind—yes," I assented, and walked past him.

That night Georgi slept.

But the next day Kuba telephoned to say that he had grown well-nigh violent upon waking to find that the rug had been taken away, and that Kars and she had been unable to pacify him until they had put it back.

"Doctor, what are we to do?" she asked with a pitiful little quiver in her voice. "He's in there now, staring at that horrible black cartouche."

I said I would come over. And to my surprise, Georgi seemed to know me at once.

"Ha, Pay-son!" he exclaimed. "I'll tell you someding. Id iss in dere eef I could ged id out—eef id vould keep quiet. Id viggles—comes oop und goes pack. But yun dime I fooled id. I pretended to pe asleep, und id stayed oop so long I read der first wort. Listen, Pay-son, dot first wort iss—Death."

"Oh, my God," I heard Kuba whisper under her breath, and even so there was tragedy in the sound of it, the jangling of overstressed nerves.

"See here, Georgi," I said, "what does it matter? How did you rest last night?"

"Hey?" He eyed me. "Vat does anyding matter, Pay-son? Death in der rose—death in eferyding vat iss alive."

He chuckled as though at some grizzly joke.

"Well, yes—of course," I assented.

He put a hand on my arm. "I'll tell

you someding more, Pay-son. Id iss alife. Id knows. But—I'll fool id. I'll vatch."

There was no longer any question but that the man was mildly mad.

"But," I said, "if that's the case, and you have to fool it, why not rest a little—go lie down, and catch it off its guard?"

He frowned at that, appeared to consider. "Trouble iss, I can't rest, Pay-son: My head iss—funny. I'd like to—rest—eef I could," he actually whimpered at last.

I gave it up, and Kuba followed me into the shop. And there I turned to her without waiting for her to speak.

"It's utterly hopeless unless we can get his mind off the rug or he should actually manage to read it, or fancy he had."

Kars began speaking rapidly in his own tongue the instant I paused.

And Kuba translated: "He thinks possibly—we should have him taken to—some institution. But—I can't bear to think—of it except as a last resort. Do you think—"

"I don't know," I told her. "Suppose you give him another powder to-night, and try to get him to eat. In the meantime I'll have a talk with a friend of mine and see what he can suggest."

"If you will, please, doctor," she agreed.

And that evening I drove over to Martin MacVeagh's for the purpose of keeping my word. I was actually distressed over Georgi and confess I wanted help.

MacVeagh was my friend, and, like myself, a physician, though one not engaged in practice in any general sense. Tall, slender, but well formed, with mobile features, spare fleshed, capable hands, hair of the color once denominated brick dust, and gray eyes, he was by no means handsome. But he was possessed of one of the most remarkably analytical minds I have ever known, a magnetic personality, and an at times almost feminine fineness of understanding that ever should the need arise quite overrode the calm deliberation and unswerving fidelity to purpose commonly attributed to the Scot.

Possessed also of independent means, he had taken a house shortly after leaving college, and fixed it up to suit himself, with living rooms on the ground floor and a series of laboratories above. There he devoted

himself to what he chose to call "trail blazing"—the scientific investigation of medical theories and problems—some of them those of others, many of them self-evolved.

In his whimsical denomination of his activities Martin literally told the truth. He spent his days, and sometimes his nights, in blazing trail for the everyday workers like myself to follow to better and more complete results. Few men not of scientific interest ever entered his doors. But I had the run of the place when I desired; and many were the hours I had spent there in listening to his discussions of theory and experimental demonstration, of which I never tired.

So when I found myself faced by Georgi's distressing condition I could think of no one better qualified to discuss the matter with me than my trail blazing friend. And I drove over after dinner, having first telephoned to make sure I would find him alone.

Jukkins, his man—Martin was unmarried—showed me into a huge room with a fireplace and a massive flat topped desk beside which my host was seated.

"Hello, Henry," he greeted my appearance. "What's on your mind?"

I told him the whole thing, and he lighted a cigarette and sat knocking the ashes onto a little tray from time to time.

"The man's off his head, of course. The human mind is a peculiar thing. Not unnaturally, though, his monomania has turned on a lifelong hobby," he said when I was done."

"I know," I said; "but what shocked me, Martin, was that when I saw him last he was interested in the rug, but as mentally right as we are."

"Assuming that we are," he returned, favoring me with a peculiar sardonic grin in which he at times indulged. "Is there anything in it—the black cartouche, I mean?"

"I don't know," I told him. "There are faded lines, as I've said. Georgi says they're alive—that they wiggle. But that is all bosh."

"Or eye strain," said Martin, discarding his cigarette. "But if there are cuneiform

symbols in the other cartouches, we may assume that there are in the last, I think. I'd like to see it, and your patient."

"Now?" I suggested. It was more than I had hoped for.

"Well—there's no time like the present, is there?" He smiled and glanced at his watch.

As I recall, he spoke only twice after that on the drive over to Georgi's.

"Give him anything but that sleeping powder, Henry?"

I said I had not.

"Introduce me as a physician to his daughter."

I replied that I would, and followed his advice.

We went into the shop and found Kars, Kuba and a second man, whom she made known as Sergovitch as soon as I had presented Martin. I recognized the name and sized the fellow up. He was dark, well appearing, with a somewhat dapper air about him accentuated by a small Continental mustache.

"It was good of you to bring Dr. MacVeagh," he said as we shook hands. "We were just speaking of our poor friend here and"—he smiled in a deprecating fashion—"I was asking if there should not be a—how do you say?"

"Consultation?" I supplied, rather surprised at his lack of the word since his English, even if accented a trifle, appeared excellent indeed.

"Yes," he accepted, nodding. "Nothing personal, doctor, I hope you'll understand. Kuba felt that you understood the situation. I presume there is nothing strange in her father's trouble taking the turn it has. He has been handling rugs for years."

"Nothing," said Martin shortly, joining the conversation for the first time. "Now if we might see the patient and—discuss him later."

"Of course, sir." Sergovitch stepped back with a slight twitching of the lips that showed he had not missed the almost painful abruptness of MacVeagh's words.

Kuba, too, glanced quickly at Martin as she turned to lead the way to where Georgi still sought to plumb the meaning of the black cartouche.

"Father," she said, and laid a hand on his shoulder, "here is Dr. Payson again with Dr. MacVeagh, his friend, he has brought to help you."

There was a veiled hope—a clutching at straws as it seemed to me in her voice. But Georgi chose to translate her announcement to the measure of his own desires.

"Hah, Pay-son! Now I haf almost god id. I told you id vas alife, didn't I, Pay-son? Und now I tell you someding else. Dere iss a soul in id—a leetle los' soul, died indo der warp und der woof. Und id's dryin' to ged oud. Id's peen dryin' for years und years. Ven I can read der meanin', dot vill sed id loose. Und der first vort is death—"

It was rather startling, rather weird—that thought of a lost soul caught, bound up, imprisoned in the fading threads—erie, uncanny, what you like. I saw Kuba shudder. Her blue eyes turned again to Martin, tacitly asking his aid for another soul as I thought.

And then Martin was speaking. "Just so, Mr. Gorzas. It was recognized long ago that lost souls entered just such rugs—especially those that were very much faded, was it not?"

"Heh!" Georgi's gaze leaped to him. His old eyes flashed. "So—you know someding—you! Now you will helup me to helup dot leetle lost soul ged loose!" His fingers twitched in excitement. "Dis rug iss an Eighur—from Ninevah—Babylon—who knows? Kuba—a cless wine for Pay-son und his friend und me. Quick, Kuba. Hah!"

Ninevah, Babylon! And this was the twentieth century world. I heard the slender blond girl catch her breath in a gasp. She was palpably startled by Martin's words even if I was not. I knew the superstition he mentioned, and I knew, too, that he was possessed of the most amazing store of heterogeneous information from which he was always digging something up. But save for her sibilant inhalation she gave no sign as she left the room to return after a few moments with a bottle and three glasses on a tray.

But Martin, as he took his, looked into her eyes and smiled. "Thank you, Miss

Gorzas. A soul is a wonderful thing. We should help it in any way we can, should we not?" he remarked.

"Yes—oh, yes, indeed," she faltered with an oddly searching expression, as though she were striving to read his full meaning. Then she turned to me with the tray.

Georgi, however, noticed nothing. He drained his wine at a gulp. I watched him. His hand shook and his head kept nodding like that of a senile paretic. He looked a man worn out, verging upon collapse.

Martin meanwhile sipped at his glass, appeared to roll its amber contents on his tongue. "A very wonderful wine, Mr. Gorzas," he declared. "May one ask where you obtained it?"

"Serge god id," Georgi said gruffly. "He iss in lof wid leetle Kuba, so—he prings her papa vine." His lips quivered, for an instant it was as though in a flash of sanity he smiled.

I glanced at Kuba and met her troubled blue eyes.

Then Martin set his glass aside and went closer to the Eighur as though to inspect it. And while he stood there, Sergovitch tapped on the door and called through that he was leaving.

Kuba stepped into the shop, and Martin turned to Georgi. "We haven't shaken hands yet, Mr. Gorzas," he said.

"Hey? No-o." Georgi put out a shaking wrist.

The two men gripped, and I saw Martin's sensitive finger creep up and find the radical pulse.

"And now about the translation," he veered back to the rug. "Man is a thistle blowing, woman a falling rose."

"So—dot iss right. Dot iss der first cartouche." I saw Georgi thought Martin had read it. I fancied likewise I saw MacVeagh's purpose and sat waiting—marking his every word and move.

"You have read them all?" he asked.

"All bud der last. Der first vort of det iss—"

"They are all about the rose and the thistle?"

"Yes." Georgi frowned, twitching his scraggy brows.

"Then may we not assume that the rose

and the thistle are memtioned in the black cartouche also?"

"And der first vort—" Georgi began again.

"Quite so," Martin once more cut him short, and glanced again at the Eighur. "The first word is death." He paused and then without warning intoned slowly:

"Death to the thistle and to the rose."

"Hah!" Georgi sprang to his feet as he cried out: "Hold on! Vait! Dot's id—dot's id. Death to der thistle und to der rose. Bud—ten thousand, thousand like dem oud of der dust in vich dey find—repose. Gott! See—I haf read id! At last I haf read id! Der soul is—loose!" He swayed drunkenly, sagged, sank together like an empty sack. Martin caught him before he touched the floor.

"Get Miss Gorzas," he prompted.

But Kuba had heard that breaking shriek of triumph. As I turned to comply with Martin's bidding, she ran in pale faced and wide eyed, with Kars at her heels.

"His bed, Miss Kuba." Martin spoke across the burden in his arms.

"In here." She kept her control and opened a door before him.

He bore Georgi through it.

"Undress him," he directed Kars. "Get a nurse, Henry."

I nodded and went into the shop to use the telephone. Sergovitch had disappeared and there was nobody about.

I got hold of a woman I frequently employed and gained her promise to come up at once.

Martin was sitting in the living room, staring at the rug, when I went back. He turned his glance toward me.

"Immediately," I said, and he rose and followed me into the bedroom.

Kars and Kuba had Georgi in bed. The girl's eyes questioned us as we entered.

"What happened?" she asked. "I heard him scream just before I ran in and—"

"He read the last cartouche," said Martin slowly. "Death to the thistle and to the rose. But—ten thousand, thousand like them out of the dust, in which they find repose."

"Ten thousand, thousand like them—out of the dust," she repeated, and glanced

at the face of her father. "And now, Dr. MacVeagh?"

Martin surprised me. He went close to her, reached down and took both of her hands in his. "Miss Kuba," he said very gently, "would you wish him to—go on—if he is to be—as a little child?"

For a moment she made no answer, simply stood breathing deeply. Small doubt but that she understood. And then her mouth quivered. "Oh—no—no—I think not," she faltered. "Not if he should be—like that."

Martin's gray eyes lighted at the almost Spartan choice. "Then," he said, "I will tell you that in my estimation he will not live long or suffer much."

Silence, then, which Kars Gorzas broke, speaking swiftly with his eyes on his cousin's face.

She smiled wanly when he was done, and drew her hands from Martin's grasp. "He says—he will—take care of me—but, oh—if he only had never brought that dreadful rug to him!" She turned away to the bed and sank down on her knees beside it, and drew her father's hand to her lips with a sob.

Martin moved toward the door. I asked Kars to go into the shop and wait for my nurse, and followed him out.

When the woman came we gave her what instructions seemed best and left shortly after.

"Well?" I said when we were in my machine, "just what do you think?"

"I think," said Martin dryly, "that I overshot the mark. It was my intention to suggest a possible reading of that cartouche, let down the strain on the man's mind if I could. But—by a bit of infernal luck I hit too close to the truth, and he took the words off my lips. His excitement did the rest. The reaction was too great and—he broke."

"He'll die, of course?" I pressed for an opinion.

"Of course. You can't rebuild brain cells, Henry, and the man is nothing but skin and bones—burned out."

"And," I said, "you think he really read it there at the last?"

"I think so," Martin assented. "His

translation matched the rest. And when he read it, he knew it. It was his last conscious flash and it was—too much. He collapsed."

"Naturally," I agreed. "He's been eating next to nothing—keeping up on sheer determination and a little of that wine."

Martin made no immediate answer, and then: "The girl is the main reason for the latter, as one may suppose from what you tell me..."

"Quite possibly," I said.

He chuckled, actually chuckled. He had a bizzare sort of humor at times. "And Georgi wasn't so muddled but he saw the point of Kuba's suitor currying favor by catering to her father's appetite, which being a steward, he could without much trouble. I suppose you consider that natural also, my friend?"

"I don't see anything unnatural about it at least," I declared. "These Europeans don't agree with us on prohibition. It would be natural enough for him to get it for Kuba's father under the conditions, I should think."

"Exactly," Martin gave me another of his diabolical grins. "That's the point."

"What is?" I demanded. Frankly I couldn't see any sense in the discussion of what Seregovitch had done.

"It's naturalness," he returned.

"See here," I exploded. Georgi had been my friend and all at once MacVeagh's manner piqued me, "do you or don't you know what you're talking about?"

"Not certainly," he said slowly. "It's hard to be certain of some things even when they're right under your nose. Do you know I sometimes think a great many things are missed, just because of the fact that their very naturalness, their triviality, causes them to be overlooked."

"What things?" I questioned, feeling my interest quicken in spite of myself.

"Oh, the solutions of problems—the deeper meaning of things we meet," he answered as though half to himself. "I suppose this will leave Gorzas's daughter pretty much alone in the world. She's a beautiful woman. Henry. She has personality—a mind. And still waters run deep. She feels this keenly, no matter how well she

maintains her control. She's that sort; the sort a man would do well to win—and keep."

His words amazed me. Although women liked him he was in no sense a ladies' man. Now I found myself wondering if he were taking a personal interest in Kuba. She was beautiful enough to warrant it and I recalled how, when she had asked for his opinion, he had taken and held her hands. The thought shaped my answer.

"Still, she has Kars and Sergovitch, even if they are not actually engaged. Georgi's death will probably bring that about."

"Eh? Sergovitch?" he rejoined with another chuckle. "Oh, yes—the steward. mustn't forget Sergovitch or—ten thousand thousand like him, Henry. I see your point. Wonder if they'd sell that rug?" he broke off abruptly.

Actually I winced. Sometimes for all that I admired him immensely, MacVeagh both puzzled my understanding and got sadly on my nerves. One moment he had been discussing Kuba and the grief that had come upon her and the next he was casually voicing a cold blooded speculation on a point of barter and trade.

"I don't know," I said rather shortly as I stopped the car in front of his house. "But you might ask Kars."

"Thanks. Not a bad suggestion." He got out and grinned at me again. "Good-night."

"Good-night," I grunted and drove off.

And this was the last I saw of him until two days after Georgi died. Then on the day of the funeral which I attended, Martin gave me another surprise. Unexpectedly he also was present and tacked onto me during the services both at the chapel and the grave, so that he was with me when Kuba came over with Sergovitch and thanked us with a wistful smile despite her tears.

Martin stood there until she had finished and then addressed the man at her side. "Lucky you could be here. You've obtained leave?"

Sergovitch twiced his brows, and shrugged. "I've given up my berth, sir. Miss Gorzas needs me right now, and we

expect to be married shortly. I can always get another place."

"Doubtless. And I must be getting back to mine." Martin lifted his hat and walked off.

Kuba watched him with a puzzled expression in her eyes before she turned back to me. "Serge felt it would be best—since I have no one else—now," she reverted to the subject of her marriage, speaking slowly. "It will be just ourselves, and you, doctor if—you will come."

"I will," I said bridging over the situation as best I could. "I was your father's friend, and I would like to feel myself yours."

Then I went to where my machine was parked and found that MacVeagh had already driven away in his. I hardly knew why, but as I ran home I was conscious of a renewed feeling of annoyance with him rather hard to express in words.

Consequently, when he called me up the afternoon of the third day and asked me to come over that evening, I was glad. I had found there was generally some definite reason back of his at times peculiar actions, and to say the least his questioning of Sergovitch the day of the funeral had smacked to me of bad taste.

So I went over after dinner and found him seated beside his desk with a bottle of amber colored fluid and a pile of crisp new bank notes before him, along with several test tubes in a rack.

"Hello," he said, shoving over a box of cigars. "Sit down and light up. When Kars gets here our party will be complete."

"Kars?" I repeated as I struck a match.

"Yes." He lighted a cigarette. "I took your advice about that Eighur.

"You're going to buy it?"

"Well," Martin blew out a stream of smoke. "That remains to be seen. Hello, there's the bell. He's punctual it seems."

Jukkins padded along the hall, and I made no response. Once more I was feeling a trifle piqued that Martin should have asked me over merely to witness his purchase of that infernal rug rather than for any other reason. Possibly two minutes passed and then Jukkins ushered Kars Gorzas in.

"Good evening," Martin said without rising. "Have a cigar, Mr. Gorzas, and sit down. You've decided to sell me that Eighur?"

"Yes. I t'ink so." Kars helped himself to a smoke. I saw his eyes dart to the pile of paper money "T'anks." He stepped back to a seat.

"And the price?" Martin lifted the currency from the desk and rifled it like a pack of cards.

"Vat you t'ink?"

It struck me Kars was feeling his way, forcing his customer to an offer.

Martin tossed the notes aside. His manner subtly altered. "I don't mind answering that since you ask me," he said, and suddenly he laughed. "You told your uncle it came from a rich man's house, and —what I think is—that you stole it. You stole it, didn't you, Kars? You're bolshevik at heart and it was part of the loot when Georgia was—sovietized?"

For a moment Gorzas stiffened. Then as Martin paused and sat regarding him with one of those devilish grins of his distorting his face, his lips parted slowly, and he smiled. On the instant it was as though the two of them understood each other and were sharing a joke between them. "Vell —vat of eet?" he returned.

Martin's grin faded. "Why, simply that there doesn't seem to be much chance of the original owner's showing up to claim it," he said slowly.

"He won't," Kars agreed grimly, so that I realized with a shock of disgust that the two of them were bargaining for a dead man's rug.

"Just so," Martin nodded. "But, before we go any further, suppose that I tell you a story—about a young man who lived in Georgia, and had an uncle who was a dealer in rugs in the United States. When the young man's father died, this uncle wrote him to come and make his home with him and his cousin, who was a very beautiful girl. And he came, and brought his uncle an Eighur rug as a present. Are you interested, Kars?"

I stiffened. Once more Martin's manner had changed. To me it seemed that an actual note of menace had crept into his

quiet voice. And Gorzas seemed to sense it, too, because his brows contracted, and he fidgeted in his chair before he said, somewhat gruffly: "Vat about eet?"

"I'm coming to that." Martin leaned back in his chair and dropped his hands into the pockets of his coat. "This young man's uncle was well to do—he had money. He had worked and saved. And the young man was bolshevik at heart. So, after a time he formed a plan to steal his uncle's money as he had stolen the rug he— Sit still! I can't miss you at this distance—Kars."

There was a phantasmagorialike element about it all—a continual bizarre shifting and change. One moment Gorzas was a self-admitted, unabashed thief, bargaining for the sale of his plunder—the next he was starting from his chair, snarling, with lips rolled back from his teeth. Then—then he was sinking back into it, crouching down before the flat, black weapon in MacVeagh's hand, shaken, gone sickly pale, with the furtive eyes of a cornered rat. And suddenly the atmosphere of the room had grown electric—charged with a threat as ominous as that of a rising storm.

Martin's voice came again like the murmur of its thunder as he went on: "He chose a peculiar means to effect his purpose. In the region of Trebizond, in Asia Minor, there grows a certain grape, and from that grape is made a wine. And that wine has a most devilish effect, in that while a glass or two may not hurt one, its continued use destroys the mind of the one who drinks it, so that in the end he becomes hopelessly insane."

I saw the whole diabolical thing at last, and I think I must have unknowingly uttered a sound, for Martin's eyes turned to me briefly and jerked back to the man in the chair beyond him—gripping its arms with tightly crooked fingers. Then he resumed:

"So this young man gave his uncle that wine. But, he had to get it first, and he did so through a steward on an ocean liner—one of his own people, and a man of like mind. And that man brought it to the young man's uncle as a friend. And the uncle, who had always been used to his

wine before prohibition, was glad to get it, not knowing his nephew's intent. That went on until the uncle was practically mad, and his daughter called Dr. Payson to see him, and he in turn called me in. Then, because it is my business to know many things, and because after I arrived at Georgi Gorzas's house, he himself offered me a drink of this selfsame wine, I also stole something before I left. After he had become unconscious, and you and your cousin Kuba were undressing him, Kars, and Dr. Payson was telephoning for a nurse, I went back to the living room where it sat on a tray with three glasses, and stole that bottle of wine. And I brought it here to my house and analyzed it. And then I was sure, and everything else was plain. Here"—he gestured suddenly to the flask of amber fluid on the desk—"is the stuff with which, Kars, you murdered the man who had given you a home. And in these tubes—"

I leaped to my feet as Gorzas sprang. In a sweep of his arm he had hurled bottle and test tubes into a splintering wreck across the room and stood glaring at his accuser as he panted: "Proof eet? Proof eet, now, eef you can—you fool!"

"Sit down!" Martin's tone was deadly, and the mouth of the automatic was as black as a period to life itself. "I can prove it without any trouble. That bottle was only colored water—the stuff in the test tubes the same. Did you think I was fool enough really to place them where you could destroy them. The wine of Trebizond is safe where you cannot reach it, as well as the deadly brain destroying alkaloid which it contains."

The wine of Trebizond! Sinking back into my chair, I watched while Gorzas crept step by step backward to his own. He was cowed, now—had been tricked and he knew it. I saw a tremor shake him. He licked his lips with his tongue.

"And if that isn't enough," said Martin, "Serge Sergovitch was arrested this evening for smuggling wine into the country. Well, Kars?"

Gorzas shuddered. He clenched his hands. "He vas reech," he stammered thickly, and broke off, gasping. A little

dew of perspiration came out and glistened in the light at the roots of his bushy black hair.

"And you told Kuba you would attend to everything," Martin went on. "Of course you meant to—you and Serge Sergovitch. It was the principal part of your plan. She was the price of his help, wasn't she, Kars?"

"He wanted her. Ve didn't mean to keel heem—only mak heem crazy," Gorzas mumbled.

Martin reached out with his automatic and struck a single blow with its muzzle upon the bell of a little bronze Chinese gong.

The door of the room was flung wide, and an inspector of police stepped through it.

MacVeagh gestured to the cringing thing in the chair. "Here is your man, inspector," he said. "He has practically confessed to the murder of his uncle, Georgi Gorzas. The charge against Sergovitch should be changed to accessory before the crime."

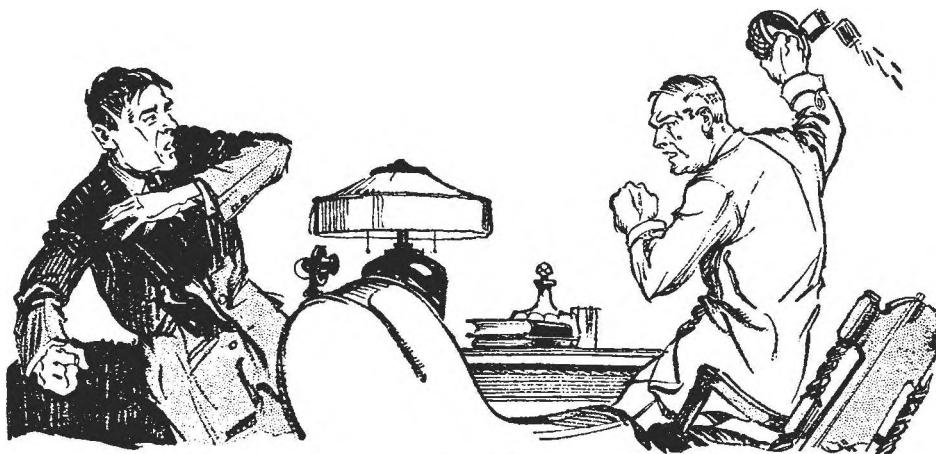
"You suspected it from the first," I said, after Kars had been led stumblingly from the room.

Martin nodded. "Yes. The man's condition suggested some drug, and I was certain after I had analyzed the wine. But I waited until after the funeral, because God knows that little girl had enough to stand up to, and then I struck. They deserved it, of course, and I wasn't going to let her fall into their hands."

Well, it was like him—like the Martin MacVeagh—sensitive as a woman in his finer feelings, inflexible to duty, I had always known. And of course it made everything he had done quite plain.

"And you were right all the way through," I said, "even to Georgi's death leaving her all alone in the world."

MacVeagh's expression softened. He flung the little black gun on the desk and harked back to the Eighur in his answer: "Yes—poor little Georgia rose. But at least she is saved from that death in the heart she would have come to understand so well if their scheme had worked out as they planned."



A Gentleman in Pajamas.

By **CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK**

Author of "The Battle Cry," "When Bearcat Went Dry," etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

"KILL ME NOW!"

FOR a moment or two Barrows found himself deflected from his own urgency of interests by this young woman, whose composure commanded his passing tribute. But he was not to be long distracted from singleness of purpose.

"Next, Miss Page," he answered thoughtfully, "should be the disposal of some little correspondence. If you'll get your dictation book—"

"I brought it with me," she responded briefly. "I imagined there might be letters."

"Letters!" P. B. Pettigrew, who had been sitting in a dour silence, spat out the word as he straightened a bit in his chair. "I didn't say anything about letters."

"You didn't mention them just now, P. B.," responded Barrows mildly, "but Miss Page and I hope we shan't have to be constantly reminded of your wishes. When we begin the dictation, I think you'll recognize the purport—or would it be more restful if we did the work elsewhere?"

The caged and hobbled old captive glared with an impassioned yearning to lash out and go berserk. Only a temperamental cowardice and object lessons as yet unforgettably restrained him. Beating the bars would only make rawer the battered wings that were helpless for flight, so he slumped writhingly in his chair and scowled in futile truculence. As his companion sat awaiting his reply with an outward perfection of deference, yet with a subtle lurking of irony in his pupils, Pettigrew growled shortly:

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for June 16.

"No; stay here. I may be interested in learning what I have to say."

"I think you may," P. B.—though my purpose is to stand between you and needless fatigue. That shouldn't be forgotten."

The younger man spoke with a meditative deliberation, and Edith Page stood waiting, until at his nod of decision she drew a chair to the table and laid out her shorthand tablet and her small collection of neatly sharpened pencils.

Barrows half closed his eyes and clasped his hands behind his head, in the pose of one absorbed in composition.

"This first letter," he began quietly, "is addressed to John P. Morton, at his office, Broad and Wall Streets."

Pettigrew flinched as from the burn of hot iron and bit back an ugly oath, while Miss Page, the self-contained, let her eyebrows lift in a little flicker of momentary surprise. She had the agreeable sensation of playing a small and anonymous part in affairs of consequence, for writing to John Morton was not unlike writing to royalty. His was a kingship based on astounding dimensions of wealth, and second only to his fame as a money potentate was his repute as a prince of art lovers and collectors.

"Sir," went on Barrows, with a bland evenness of tone, "'you will perhaps be surprised to learn that I am letting go the small but carefully gathered collection of pictures, tapestries, and porcelains, as to which your representatives have from time to time approached me. In making this announcement I feel that in order to escape the charge of inconsistency I should explain my motives.' Period and paragraph."

Pettigrew gasped. His face had become ghost pale. The gray old mortal was on the rack of torture. Impulse, surging against the resistances of compulsion and fear, wrung an incoherent sound from the lips that smacked of agony. Not only was he being sold out, but he was being sold out to the baronial enemy whom he hated as a little prince may hate a powerful and arrogant overlord. The secretary feared for a moment that he stood on the verge of some dangerous stroke.

But Barrows arose calmly from his chair

and nodded to her reassuringly as he passed into his own room, to return at once with two liquor flasks.

"P. B.," he suggested soothingly, "you need a bit of a bracer. Which of these flasks will you have it from?"

The eyes of the men met, and as he stood with his back to the girl something flashed in those of Barrows which registered their warning to those of his rat gray companion. It was something merciless and sardonically malicious.

"Which is which?" stammered Pettigrew faintly. Between the insurgent soreness of his heart and the will to stand and fight flashed a memory of last night, and in its train came scourgings of fear. In one of those two apparently identical flasks was the death dealing agency which he had himself put there. "Which is which?" he queried desperately.

"This one," responded Barrows dryly, "is that from which I poured a drink last night. You may remember that I found it excellent."

Edith Page sat waiting with her unfinished letter while the solicitous friend poured and proffered the other a stimulant. Here, she thought, was a kindly and patient man with a flair for quieting and soothing the cantankerous. Then she saw him seat himself again, saying as he did so:

"There, you'll be all right now. But you must be careful, old man. You're approaching seventy, you know, and you'll have to take care of yourself if you expect to go to par."

Again Barrows seemed to be thinking only of the selection of his words, and after a pause he resumed his dictation.

"Your representatives have, as I have mentioned, come to me in the past, urgently pressing me to sell to you certain of these things which I had no wish to part with. Your attitude seemed to be that your earnest desire to acquire them was reason enough for my relinquishing them, however dearly I cherished them or however reluctant I might be to see them go. It was as though I had succeeded in securing a few altar pieces that were too good to rest in any lesser sanctuary than the great cathedral of your own collection. In this

idea I did not see eye to eye with you—and your emissaries learned that, with one man in New York, a no meant no. Such was the pertinacity of your spokesmen that at last my tone became necessarily sharp, and this, I understand, was a thing which you resented."

Barrows paused and smiled inwardly. He was doing the job rather convincingly and well, he thought. If one could imagine old Pro Bono writing such a letter, it would be in this exact strain that he would compose it—in the surly fashion of a dog who relinquishes his bone only from snarling lips.

"Now the unexpected has happened," continued the dictation, "and if I approach you, it is because in me artist love is greater than personal prejudice. My physicians assure me that I am spending too much of myself in my devotion to my collection. They insist that I have become a slave to my enthusiasm, and that unless I break that servitude I can hope for no permanent and complete recovery of health. This is a tyranny to which I must bow—though with a heavy heart. I appear to have suffered from the effects of over-intensity of interest, and I am a collector who could find no pleasure in turning over the care of his treasury to paid curators. With me it is a personal thing.

"If I am not to be permitted to guard and keep, myself, these things which I have given much of my life to gathering together, I must at least see them pass into hands that will hold them with appropriate reverence. For them, sir, I have such feeling as might animate the keeper of a shrine for the sacred relics over which he stands guard. If I can no longer maintain that vigil in person—if the ardor and joy of possession are too strong an emotion for a weak nervous system—then I wish to see them pass to one who also knows that feeling of almost devout appreciativeness. Attaining that end, I can even bring myself to count as unimportant the fact that the sacristan who comes after me is one between whom and myself little personal admiration stands and little love is lost."

Once more Barrows paused, puckering his lips and obviously pleased with his fluency of authorship. Pettigrew was re-

flecting in desperation that only squeamishness had made him shrink and falter last night when he thought this man to be dying. Next time he would not shrink and he would not fail! He was mentally consigning Barrows's soul to the nethermost pits of Hades, yet when Barrows glanced inquiringly his way, he only growled low in his throat. If it is true that the deepest blackness comes just ahead of dawn, then dawn could not be far off.

"We will go on, Miss Page," prompted Barrows. "New paragraph.

"This necessity which confronts me, sir, is a thing I approach as one might approach the operating table. I hope it will, as the physicians predict, benefit me and I wish the surgical blade to cut cleanly and quickly—but until the ordeal is over I can hardly hope to find in the attendant suspense anything conducive to my peace of mind. It must be done, swiftly if at all."

"Period and paragraph, please, Miss Page.

"If you care, sir, to send your representatives to me again, I shall at last receive them. Or, since that, too, is a part of the medical manifesto, my friend, Mr. Prescott Barrows, will be authorized to act for me with full authority and sanction. I am, sir, faithfully yours—"

The younger of the two men swung about in his seat to present a smiling face to the older. He had the appearance of expecting praise for his performance.

Pettigrew was moistening his lips with the tip of his tongue. When he had done so he drew them together in a thin, tight line, and then he opened them to inquire bitingly.

"Am I to understand that that absurd screed purports to go from me to that arch-pirate, John P. Morton? Because if it does, Miss Sheet, you may spare yourself the pains of transcribing it. You may tear it up."

The young woman glanced at the wrath-distorted features and her eyes went inquiringly to the face of Prescott Barrows, to find it tranquilly smiling. She had evidently not been deceived when she was told that employment here would be about as serene as work in a madhouse.

"It's Miss Page, not Miss Sheet," corrected the younger man composedly.

"Miss Whatever-it-is, then. She can tear it up by any name she likes."

"Now my dear P. B.," placated Barrows smoothly, "you must really avoid these constant back-fires of irritation. They're bad for you, and unless I can save you from them, all my effort in your behalf goes for nothing." He turned again to the young woman.

"At all events, Miss Page," he directed vaguely, "don't tear up our little effort just yet. Write it out and if, on reflection, our chief still disapproves, we can destroy it later. In that event we will have to try again. Now, however, I want you to take another dictation, though this one will be brief."

"Another?" rasped Pettigrew and Barrows nodded.

"Have you forgotten," he inquired, "that at the same time you directed the Morton letter, you spoke of one to the Commissioner of Police?"

"The Commissioner of Police?" This time the exclamation was one of high and quaking trepidation. "What about?"

"Let the record speak for itself," suggested the other. "Miss Page, will you address this to the Hon. Jason Poynton, Police Commissioner?"

"Dear Sir: I find myself so indisposed that it is impossible for me to call at your office, yet there is a matter which I feel should be laid before your department without delay. If you cannot come to my house in person, at your earliest convenience, will you be good enough to send such a deputy as may be trusted to receive information of a highly confidential and important nature? Faithfully yours—"

"Listen, Barrows," Pettigrew seemed to be groping for his voice in recesses where it eluded him, and from which it emerged weak and faltering. "Listen, Barrows, that letter—" There he broke off and, as if the metal of his spirit had been liquefied in the blast furnace of wretchedness, his mind processes stopped. This is the stage in fusing when iron may begin to turn to steel.

"What! Did I foozle that one, too?"

demanded Barrows contritely. "We will discuss it then—but we needn't detain Miss Page. You can transcribe both of those if you will, Miss Page, and then bring them back. I don't believe your effort will be wholly wasted. I still think that, on reflection, our chief will decide that at least one of them should be mailed—substantially as dictated."

When the door had closed behind the secretary, Barrows turned and in the face of the seated figure he read danger. In the eyes of the old man tears of chagrin were glistening, and Prescott Barrows knew that an emotion which could make one of such toughened heart-fiber weep, might make him do any desperate thing—even to pushing apart the temple pillars. Possibly he had subjected his human ingot to too fiercely cruel a reduction in the crucible after all. Possibly the molten stuff might cool into a new and harder formation.

But that was a contingency to be faced. Any weakening on his part would mean surrender and disaster, and so with a calculated brutality the younger man stood before the other smiling with a cold and ironical malice. Yet more than once he had seen how dangerous that type of man can be, who cries as he fights.

Pettigrew rose up and clenched his two thin fists. His features were twisting, and with an unbridled rage of a maniac he seized up and flung at his companion a cut glass ash tray from the table. Barrows side-stepped with as pretty an agility as that with which the matador eludes the lunge of the bull that sees red. His wary eyes had been quick enough to foretell the attack and the missile struck the bossed and scutcheoned stone of the Italian mantel and splintered there, without casualty.

Then with quiet effrontery Barrows walked over and thrust the trembling old man back into his chair and as he looked down into the eyes that were crazed with transports of fury, he said:

"I don't seem to have supplied myself with enough paraphernalia, P. B. I thought handcuffs would be sufficient, but I seem to need a strait-jacket as well."

But Pettigrew's physical demonstration

was over. He made no effort to rise again, but sat with his features working to the twitchings of his rage and frustration.

"There are some things in life that I care for," he broke out suddenly and now he was talking with rapid fervor of fanatic frenzy. "I've submitted to man-handling and mauling and degradation. I've endured all that—but there are some things I won't endure! Those pictures and tapestries are, to me, what a woman's love and children's voices are to other men."

"That would seem to prove," came the calm and merciless rejoinder, "that your mental ration needs balancing."

Pettigrew groaned as a man may groan who, under torture, is too weak to do anything but suffer—or be transmuted into another being.

"That Corot!" he almost sobbed. "In all the world there's no canvas to replace it. The achievements of genius have no duplicates—of each there is only one. I had that one and I treasured it as you treasure your right arm—Corot is dead—never again will his brush caress a canvas and bring to it the magic of those willows by the water—those subtle, misty half-lights and shadows! Out of that frame spoke sheer genius and you—a devilish house-breaker with no soul beyond greed, brought a damned young popinjay in here and sold the thing to him under my nose."

"Rave on, P. B., commended Barrows graciously. "Your verbal eruptions are good for you. It's like burning out a sooty chimney."

"You can steal a man's motor car, or his steam yacht," wailed Pettigrew desperately, "and, if there's money enough left in bank, he can have others like them built; but even John P. Morton didn't have money enough to get that Corot away from me—until you betrayed me."

"And now what are you going to do about it?"

Pettigrew laughed unpleasantly. Somehow that laugh seemed to proclaim his emancipation from fear—his conversion to warfare.

"Now, I am going to call your bluff. I would rather rot in jail than be picked to the bone like carrion in my own house, by

a human buzzard. If I go to prison for the rest of my days, I'll at least know that I took you with me. I'm old, and the chances are death will soon release me. I have no children to disgrace. I can die with some comfort, even in the penitentiary, for knowing that when my troubles are over, yours will still be going on."

The voice rose high and shrill like a banshee's. "You're gambling on the assumption that I haven't got the cold nerve to defy you. Until you goaded me into desperation you were right. Now you're wrong. You will give back that confession and all those papers and walk out of this house empty handed within five minutes, or else I'll call the police, and we'll both take what's coming to us."

Barrows stood unmoving, and there was no change in his expression, but under his ironic smile the fear assailed him, suddenly and for the first time, that perhaps he would not, after all, ride this mount to his destination. He had seen a boy on the threshold of life lash himself into a mood of heroic resistance, and perhaps he was now seeing an old man at the close of his existence choosing the same plunging route.

"In that event," he said quietly, "I might as well kill you before I walk out."

"Kill me now!" shot back Pettigrew wildly. "What's one death compared to a dozen a day? I don't know what happens to the spirit after death, but if mine has any choice it will be hovering about the electric chair when they throw the switch for you. Go on and kill me if you like, but you'll never bully me again!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE CORNERED RAT.

BARROWS drew his case from his pocket and lighted a cigarette. If his spirit was shaken, at least his fingers remained steady, and his features held to their impassive irony.

"Well, it seems that I was mistaken, Pro Bono," he commented after a brief pause, while his companion sat glaring and panting up at him. "I placed a lower estimate on your physical courage than it

seems to deserve. I had counted too far on the quailing instinct of the weasel spirit, and last night seemed to vindicate that judgment."

"Yes; you thought, after the fashion of all egotists, that you, and you alone, dared to face facts. You defied me to pull down the temple, and now I'm going to do it."

"So it would appear."

"And in the ruins I won't be the only mangled thing."

Barrows smiled.

"My dear Pro Bono, are you trying to frighten me? Surely you credit me with having counted the consequences in advance, and with readiness to accept them if need be. This thing you are threatening to do is not your invention, born of sudden inspiration. I've been consistently inviting you to take that precise course. I have never yet issued a command without also submitting an alternative."

"That," sneered Pettigrew, "was a part of the bluff. You felt so cocksure I wouldn't dare accept it. The strange thing is that up to now you were right. I weakened when the notary came. I weakened a few minutes ago when you wrote to the police; but I'm done with weakening now."

"What has wrought this sudden transformation? It's an intriguing point of psychology."

"Work that out for yourself if you're so keen on psychology. I think many men run away one day who would fight a pack of wolves on another occasion. A timid man's first impulse is fear; but there may be one minute of revelation that shows it up for a fool impulse, and after that he doesn't give a thought to death or prisons or any other thing except smearing his enemy to a thin pulp. That's me—and that's what I'm going to do."

Barrows nodded with that seeming of grave interest with which a doctor attends a recital of symptoms.

"Well, there's my letter to the police already dictated," he observed philosophically. "But perhaps the sending of a letter is too slow for your present impulsive frenzy. Shall I telephone to headquarters for you, now?"

"Yes." Pettigrew barked out the word

savagely, but he followed it up quickly with an amendment. "However, before you do that, I have a few things more to say. You've monopolized the conversation up to date, and now it pleases me to listen to my own voice."

Barrows, whose hand had already gone out and grasped the telephone receiver, set it down and nodded. "Of course," he offered a reminder, "we would still have some interval for talk while we were waiting for the officers to arrive."

"Not enough," snarled the other. "We'll both have long silences hereafter. Let's take our time now."

Again Barrows bowed.

"You've been issuing ultimatums to me every few minutes for some time past," declared Pettigrew frostily. "Now I mean to issue just one to you."

"But I thought you'd already done so, my dear fellow. I thought it was all over but the clanging of the gong on the police patrol."

"I mean to give you one last chance." The old man sought to speak with the confidence of a victor's magnanimity, but one felt that already his clear blaze of suicidal courage was clouding to a smokier quality, as is the way of frenzies. "I mean to offer you a half-and-half split of all I have, on the condition of your leaving at once, never to return. Either that or I call the police and we both take the consequences."

Barrows laughed.

"But my dear P. B., aren't you forgetting that we've already flailed that out until the subject is wearisome? I came with the slogan 'No compromises' and with my Jolly Roger nailed to the mast head. Hadn't I better ring headquarters and get the job done with?"

"What did you mean," demanded Pettigrew with sudden irrelevancy, "when you said that you thought last night vindicated your judgment of me?"

"Last night," answered the younger man equably, "you attempted to murder me. I have no doubt you would have repeated the attempt soon again, had you not decided on the better alternative of making a clean breast to the police. Last night you failed, but we all do that at times."

"How did all that vindicate your judgment?"

"I placed the instruments for that attempt within your reach. I paved the way, anticipating that you would act as you did. I didn't proceed in idle curiosity. It was my purpose to watch you under circumstances that would strip your soul and reveal it to me nakedly. When a man can be observed in the act of committing his first murder—when at the same time he believes himself unobserved—that man shows himself inside out. He leaves nothing to surmise. Last night I was looking deep into you, Pro Bono, and what I saw there confirmed my preconceived estimate."

"Which was?"

"Which was hardly consonant with the admirably bold stand you have just taken. The view you afforded me hardly showed you as the man who could fling himself on his own sword. You see, Pro Bono, though it may not be a nice thing to say, the soul that you turned inside out last evening was a dirty and a ragged soul. It was a thing of ugly shreds and tatters; of murder lust, of craven shrinkings and quailings, and it was stitched together with the rotten thread of meanness and cowardice."

The speaker paused, and his companion interposed with a truculent sneer. "You're a fine evangelist to call a man dirty souled because he attempts a technical crime."

"I wasn't referring to the attempt on my life," Barrows corrected him. "I don't go so far as to say that homicide is inherently ignoble. I can even grant that it may sometimes be creditable; but no man who suffers brainstorms of childish terror while he strives to poison another measures up to a decent standard of criminal spirit."

"So last night you thought me a coward?"

"I have always thought you a coward. Last night I merely saw the thing demonstrated. If it hadn't been for last night I might believe now that you mean what you say. As it is, I know you don't. I know that you've merely flared up in the brief effulgence of a rocket to come streaking down like the stick. You are still the weasel, Pro Bono—and there's the phone, which you won't bring yourself to use."

"You doubt my resolution even now?"

"I believe you were yourself deceived by the magnificence of your gesture. I think you had even convinced yourself, for an artificial moment, but you failed to convince me. I require a tougher texture of proof. You won't speak out. You were never in any actual danger of speaking out—though for a minute or two you beguiled yourself. If I misjudge you—there is the telephone. Vindicate yourself by using it."

Slowly Pettigrew thrust out his hand and closed it about the shaft of the desk instrument. He drew the thing to him as if it were heavy with the weight of the world, and his hands were tired with the weariness of the ages. He sat holding it and staring fixedly ahead of him.

Across his features, as across a shell-blasted terrain, the issues of battling emotions swept back and forth in charge and counter charge. Then, after a long period he thrust it violently away and covered his face despairingly with his palms.

"I can't do it," he muttered in broken self-confession.

"Call back your silly flapper," he said, "and let me sign the letter to this high-binder Morton."

Barrows was halfway to the door when the other halted him with the single word, "Wait." He turned inquiringly.

"And if I submit to every unspeakable demand you make of me, what do I gain thereby? When I'm wrung dry in my old age—what then?"

"There is no 'if' about it, Pro Bono," responded the other tartly. "The word you want is 'when.' When—not if—you have fully submitted, you will find me unchanged. I shall be utterly inflexible in my purpose, and my purpose is to strip you to the last smooth cent. By submissive obedience, however, you may save yourself some rowelling. You may escape having the quirt raise so many welts along your hide. Then, after that, when I've finished with you—"

"Yes"—Pettigrew's lips trembled palpably on the question, though he sought to speak sarcastically—"when you've finished with me—what then?"

"Then—" Barrows's tone took on a faint geniality. "Then, when the debt is liquidated—like a good and faithful old horse, worn out in honest service to his kind master, you shall be pensioned. I shall not let you starve, and when you die I shall not suffer you to lie in the potter's field. I shall feed you and clothe you, Pro Bono, decently if not extravagantly."

"I won't submit to it," declared Pettigrew, with a last expiring flare of defiance, and Barrows waved to the table.

"There's always the telephone," he said.

"Call the hussy in," groaned the elder, "with her cursed letter."

"In a moment, Pro Bono. Something has just occurred to me. I am in your house as an ostensible friend rallying to your assistance in ill health—a friend implicitly trusted—a comrade leaned upon. There have been times when your manner has failed to make that fully clear. Even with allowances for a valetudinarian's whimsies, you seem less than ardent in your affection for me."

"What do you want me to do? Kiss you?"

"Scarcely that, perhaps. You needn't be exactly Gallic, but I should like occasional glimpses of your mellower and more gracious moods. I should wish guests and employees to observe the warmth that should characterize the relations of an Orestes and Pylades. Indeed, I'm afraid I must insist on something of the sort."

Pettigrew did not answer, and after a moment Barrows came a step nearer.

"The idea enlarges with reflection," he suggested. "You ought even to make some public gesture, declaring the esteem in which you hold me. I think a dinner in my honor might serve the purpose. Rising from the head of the table, you could make a brief but feeling speech about me."

"I can't make speeches," demurred Pettigrew shortly. "I never could."

"I'll write it for you," volunteered the other. "It won't be difficult."

"Who do you want invited?" This time the householder succeeded in putting into his tone the caustic bite of scorn. "The Manhattan locals of the porch climbers' union and the exalted order of yeggs?"

Barrows shook his head.

"I suppose you intend a subtle implication that such are my natural associates and friends. However, I need no encomium addressed to my friends. It is your friends who are to be impressed, Pro Bono. Whoever are your nearest and dearest will do for me—the holy rollers and the pundits and the would-be witch burners. We must arrange the entertainment soon."

A few minutes later Miss Page entered the room, and to her Barrows said: "We want the Morton letter, Miss Page—for our chief's signature."

With that same air of quiet capability that characterized her attitude throughout this new relationship of employment, the young woman brought in the letter and laid it on the table.

This impersonal calm, reflected Barrows, was no more the woman's self than was the dark serge frock she wore, but he admired that complete captaincy of one's self which made possible so natural a wearing of an assumed garment.

Pettigrew had subsided into a torpid quiet which was the sequel of exhausting emotions. He took the letter and reread it with a perfunctory show of care before scrawling his signature across the bottom of the page. Morosely he watched the young woman withdraw and then let his eyes stray despondently about the room.

This spaciously proportioned chamber at the front of the house took on, to his eye, a new and sorrowful interest, and with a fascinated fixedness his glance went to the Gobelin arras over the Italian mantel.

Barrows had strolled to the window that looked out on the square, leaving the elder man to his own unpleasant thoughts. The new and melancholy interest with which the room invested itself for Pettigrew was natural enough. It was a shrine about to be stripped and looted—a treasure place on the verge of spoliation.

"That tapestry," he moaned, "is a thing beyond price. Morton will smack his greedy lips when he gets it away from me."

He broke off, and his eyes changed from brooding anger to poignant distress, then he turned his face toward the erect figure

by the window and barked out: "And to you, I suppose, that celestial piece of art means about as much as a department store hearth rug!"

Barrows turned indolently and lifted his brows.

"You wrong me, Pro Bono," he protested. "I know a bit more than you give me credit for. I know that old Jehan Gobelin discovered a scarlet die in the fifteenth century and established a business which was known as '*la folie Gobelin*.' I know that the establishment became a royally controlled enterprise in the reign of Louis XIV. I can even place that particular arras as one done from a cartoon by Lebrun himself. I know that it is perhaps as fine an example from that loom as any in a private collection, and I know that you lied when you told me what you paid for it. It cost much more than you admitted."

"I don't doubt you know the commercial end," sneered Pettigrew. "So do the salesmen in the department stores. But of the traditions, the rich historic elements, you know nothing—care nothing."

"One should think of the cheerful side," suggested Barrows. "You are losing your Gobelin—but saving your life. You speak of the traditions. Do you remember that Mary Queen of Scots once removed the tapestries that hung in Darnley's suite and replaced them with others less valued? She did that just before the unfortunate Darnley was done to a death which it was apprehended might prove bloody."

Outside on the pavement a hurdy-gurdy began grinding out an asthmatic tune, and suddenly Barrows wheeled toward the interior of the room.

"There's a fine amber sunlight flooding the square, Pro Bono," he said. "It's a square that novelists and poets have celebrated in prose and verse. Just now in the forenoon lights, its old south side lies under a wash of cobalt mist that would have enchanted Jean Baptiste Camille Corot himself. You know how ineffably he loved the delicacy of changing light effects? Come over here, Pro Bono, and have a look out of your window."

Pettigrew growled deep in his throat, but Barrows swung an easy chair into a position

commanding the view, and when he took the arm of the other and vouchsafed him guiding assistance the elder man moved inertly and sat glowering with eyes that sought escape from the now haunted interior.

Limousines and trucks went gliding or thundering by outside. In the brisk cold, fur wrapped women hurried along and, in the square itself, a few inadequately clad loafers sat huddled on the sunnier benches. A few days ago, Pettigrew reflected, he himself moved as freely in this current of life as any of these others. A few days ago he would have said that a man who found himself assailed by robbers need only call the police.

Barrows stood beside him, also looking out, and his shadow fell on the seated figure. That shadow had changed everything.

Across the street from the square came slowly a young man who was dressed poorly, yet not without thought for neatness. He had no overcoat and his hands were stuffed into his coat pockets. He wore a black cotton shirt with no necktie, and he needed a shave.

Pettigrew noted his deliberate approach with a tepid interest of disapproval. This was obviously a specimen of that troublesome human group designated as "the unemployed," which constitutes an endless problem for society. Individual aid given to such characters encouraged faking and idleness. Pettigrew subscribed only to organized charities, and even in that he observed an extreme moderation.

The young man walked dejectedly and with downcast eyes. He was shivering slightly, but as he crossed the street his glance struck upward and perhaps he saw the two prosperous looking gentlemen in the window of the dignified house. If he did so note their presence there he made no sign, but when he had reached a point from which they must look down on him he halted and stood indecisive. Illness and wretchedness showed plainly on his face.

For a long enough time to be noticeable he stood so, and one hand came from his pocket and went tremulously to his lips. Then he raised his face, and one could see there was a fleck of foam about his mouth.

Suddenly he collapsed on the sidewalk, where he lay writhing.

Pettigrew started. If his impulses of kindness were rudimentary, his personal distaste for gruesome or unpleasant sights was abnormally developed. Moreover, this seizure of a man by his window reminded him disturbingly of another scene which had enacted itself in the room itself last night.

"The fellow's having a fit," he broke out in startled amazement. "Why doesn't he go to a hospital if he's ill?"

The man in the street arose to his feet, with a seeming effort, and stood unsteadily as if seeking to gather strength with which to go on. Whether he could summon that reserve of power appeared dubious.

"Perhaps a friend gave him a drink," suggested Barrows cynically, "or possibly his attack was too sudden for preliminary arrangements."

The stranger stood uncertainly, and Pettigrew turned away his eyes, as if that were the simplest method of dismissing an unpleasant subject.

"If he has another one," he snarled, "I hope he'll have it somewhere else. You might tell Yates to give him a half dollar, provided he'll move on promptly."

But Barrows had rapped sharply on the window glass, and when the man looked up, out of haggard eyes, he beckoned him in.

"Why did you do that?" exclaimed Pettigrew in explosive exasperation. "I want him farther away, not nearer to me. I don't want the fellow dying in my lap."

"You suggested giving him alms," responded Barrows, as he saw the man weaving his way shakily toward the front steps and steadyng himself on the iron balustrade. "I applaud your commiseration, but it's always wise to investigate a charity. We'll just have the fellow in and form our own opinion of him."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN OBTRUDING THOUGHT.

BARROWS went to the hall door when the bell rang, and a moment later he heard Yates asserting himself in the tone of one standing by to repel invaders.

"Move on now, bo," commanded the butler truculently; "we don't cater to bums and beggars at our front door. Move on, I tell you."

"The gentleman upstairs"—the voice was weakly plaintive, yet insistent—"the gentleman upstairs beckoned to me."

"Yes, I assume the gentleman upstairs would have had me put out the sidewalk canopy and the red carpet if he'd known you were coming. I dare say—"

"Yates," ordered Barrows incisively from the stairhead, "send the gentleman up at once."

"Gentleman, sir!" For once Yates permitted his voice to carry its true emotion, and it was an emotion of shocked horror as he croaked: "Did you chance to see this person, sir?"

"I saw him and called him in. If he's not strong enough to climb the stairs alone, lend him a hand."

Yates groaned and seized the visitor's elbow much as a terrier might seize a rat, but the stranger drew it away and managed the stairs alone.

Entering the room where Barrows stood awaiting him, and where Pettigrew sat with ostentatiously averted face, the newcomer paused to lean heavily against the door frame, while he twisted his limp hat in nervous and tremulous hands.

"You called me in, sir," he began slowly, "and if I may just sit down and rest a moment—and get warm—I'll be obliged."

"You see, P. B.," broke out Barrows triumphantly; "how much better I read the human document than you?" He turned again to the ill clad man, while Pettigrew cast a frosty and inquisitorial glance toward the door. "This gentleman was for tossing you a half dollar and telling you to move on," explained Barrows. "He diagnosed you as a sick beggar—but I knew you more accurately. I had you brought in for warmth and rest—and conversation."

The stranger moved stumblingly to a chair and dropped into it.

"I am grateful," he declared.

"And now," asked Barrows with a smooth pleasantness of voice, "where is your cake of soap?"

The man in the chair raised his eyes, in

which still dwelt the aftermath of his seizure.

"What cake of soap?" he asked blankly. "The cake you did it with," smiled Barrows. "You see, you are among the cognoscenti, here. I allude to the cake of soap you chewed into a lather when you glanced up at us in our window and classified us as likely prospects. I refer to the small bit of soap that is used to induce a froth on the lips of the seeming epileptic sufferer and bring pity to the heart of the observer. In short, having seen the device resorted to before, I was interested in a chance to discuss the matter with an adept. I believe you are what is termed a 'dummy-chucker,' are you not? Is it, after all, a profitable business?"

He paused, and while the stranger still gazed at him with hurt eyes and reproachful lips, he went on.

"I trust you won't regard my curiosity as an impertinence. I am interested in the less obvious human phases, that's all, and I've wondered whether this particular practice is worth the difficulties it entails. One has to consider the constant watching for the policeman out of the tail of the eye—the ignoble necessity of rising, as it were, from a bed of pain on the sidewalk to hot-foot it away—and the occasional sojourn to the Island when the cop proves the better sprinter. Of course, if you don't care to answer my questions, it's your privilege to refuse."

"You mean"—the young man put his question in a faltering voice of wounded sensibility—"you mean that you believe me to be a faker and a panhandler?"

Barrows shook his head. "I don't use the term 'dummy-chucker' in any derogatory sense of accusation," he reassured him. "I was merely interested enough to invite you in for a pleasant chat. You needn't fear that I shall turn you over to the police; and I can also speak for my friend here. This gentleman's confidences are safe with us, are they not, Pro Bono?"

Pettigrew snorted. Nevertheless, he was relieved to find that he need fear no hydrophobialike demonstrations here in his study, and although he would not have confessed it, his curiosity was pricked.

"Suppose, for purposes of pleasantry," suggested Barrows with a smile that pointed the vast humor of his extravagance, "I tell you that in a somewhat more ambitious field, I myself have practiced the devious arts? Suppose I have for you a fraternal interest, such as a swordfish might entertain for a smelt?"

The young man in the black cotton shirt arose from his seat and shrugged his shoulders. With the philosophy of experience, he cast aside the rôle to which, it seemed, he had failed to bring a convincing quality of illusion.

"I don't get you," he admitted in a perplexed voice, "but I do get this. I'm on a cold trail. I seem to have fallen among wise guys and for a man in my situation that's worse than falling among thieves. Still this old house looked like a good lay. How could I guess that you two wouldn't fall for the fake? You looked like good, respectable solid ivory."

"My dear sir," declared Barrows genially, "every word you speak confirms my hunch that you are an interesting personality. Perhaps you will get more than you hoped for—if you sit here and sing for us the saga of your adventurous calling. The epilepsy failed, I'll admit—yet a good story is worth more than a fake fit. The minstrel is worthy of his entertainment."

The dummy chucker smiled, and there was a flash of good white teeth.

"I wouldn't care for this pinchbeck business myself as a steady graft," he confessed, "but lean days set a man back sometimes and force him to resort to the things he hoped he'd outgrown."

"In absolute confidence," came the ingratiating voice of Mr. Barrows, "what is your specialty?"

The other sat looking him up and down for a while with a bold effrontery of gaze, yet with a shrewdly biting appraisal. Pettigrew watched the face of the watcher.

At the end of that pause the dummy chucker answered: "Whatever it is, it's mine. Suppose you just let it go at that."

"Quite so," agreed Barrows. "I hoped you felt reassured as to our attitude, so that you could talk freely and we could listen open-mindedly."

The vagrant who balked at autobiography sat for a while in silence as if he sought to analyze a situation which seemed rather too innocent to be genuine and yet too genuine to be other than innocent. His face meantime was, in itself, an interesting study. Across it passed shrewd and trenchant expressions, as if he were accustomed to gauge matters by symptoms more obscure than apparent.

"My invitation to you is simply this," amplified Barrows, "we shall have luncheon in an hour or so. If you care to do it we invite you to remain and eat with us. When you leave, if the conversational entertainment provided by you has been worth it, we may feel disposed to make you a small monetary gift. We shall not call the police or lecture you. We hold no brief for any prosecution."

The dummy chucker seemed to consider. If he declined, this whimsical person might see fit to detain him and call an officer. If he remained with a show of willingness he faced no worse alternative. Such appeared to be his silent thought, and at its end he nodded with a grin.

"Righto," he said, "but I won't talk about myself. Let us say that I've been an observing wanderer through life and have seen strange birds and beasts—of a human sort."

Pettigrew sat as one apart. He was wondering whether his tyrant had dragged in this human refuse from the gutter merely as a gratuitous insult to his pharisaical dignity, yet as the talk went forward, he found himself at moments forgetting his own duress and falling captive to an unwilling interest.

Here was a type entirely novel to his experience—a man who talked with easy transition in two tongues. One of them was the amazingly robust, if often unclean, argot of criminals and the other was a language of almost academic precision.

Familiarly from these vagrant lips dropped personal reminiscences of London and Constantinople—but it was Limehouse and Stamboul that he knew best—and over all the conversation was draped a mantle of large and pagan freedom from any censorship of conscience or any fettering of ethics. Medicine was touched upon, and he talked

as one who had been a practitioner—without honor.

Versifying, soldiering, school teaching and highway robbery—he seemed to have tried them all. A casual side comment suggested poisoning and he told how the art of the Borgias might be adapted to modern usage.

But from these and kindred topics Barrows led him deftly aside. Indeed, just as Pettigrew's interest became truly arrested Barrows seemed to feel that a possible error of hospitality had been made. Barrows began directing the trend of talk more primly and cautiously and once or twice Pettigrew thought he detected well masked evidences of impatience and anxiety in the eyes of his jailer.

Once Miss Page entered the room on some routine errand and eyed the visitor with open distaste, but when luncheon was over and the visitor stood on the order of his going, Pettigrew thawed to an unusual degree.

"I have an overcoat you can have, if you want it," he made magnificent proposal.

"Thank you. I'd be glad."

"I can't look it up now," the old man qualified, "but if you come back to-morrow—"

"I'll do it."

Barrows frowned almost imperceptibly as he watched the dummy chucker descend the stairs, then turned and went back into the room.

"Why, may I ask," demanded the old man petulantly, "did you see fit to offer me the affront of bringing that rat here?"

Prescott Barrows seated himself, and for a minute or two, looked broodingly out of the window. The receding figure of the conscienceless visitor could still be seen going southward across the square. After an absence of two hours the man and woman with the hurdy-gurdy had returned and the thing was emitting its damaged tune unimproved by the interval.

"There," commented Barrows with a nod of his head, "save for the grace of God goes yourself and myself. That rat, as you call him, is just a P. B. Pettigrew—or a Prescott Barrows—out of luck."

Pettigrew bridled.

"This is a new pose," he began sourly. "You have at least been the avowed crook up to date. If you're going to become the preacher, too—"

"Not permanently the preacher," answered the other lightly. "I merely want, on occasion, to open your eyes to your own moral shortcomings. My instincts are so humane that if I didn't resort to such devices I might, at times, think of you as a weak and cowardly old man, whom it's no pleasure to strip naked. I don't suppose you have wasted many hours reflecting on how the days pass there at Sing Sing for the one member of our trio that went through the mill?"

"Have you?" retorted Pettigrew savagely.

"When I first came here," Barrows reminded him, "I explained that I could do nothing at the time of Challon's trial—when help might have brought results—because I, as well as he, had been robbed. You had the swag—all of it."

"And since then have you troubled yourself in his behalf?"

Barrows's face hardened.

"At least from time to time I've thought of him," he said. "The poor little rat had one game moment when he blazed up into a sort of martyrdom. Before we got to him he was decent. I'm not a sentimental-ist, but it was we who corrupted him and it was you who fattened on his dishonor. I was thinking of Challon all the time we were talking with that bit of human flotsam that drifted in here and drifted out again a moment ago."

"What had that hobo to do with it?"

"That hobo had come from something different—as Challon did. That hobo is about the best Challon can hope to develop into when he comes out—if he ever does come out."

"Why?"

"Because when the gates open for him, he emerges with a brand on him, and the police will always be watching him. When he seeks a job, they will see to it that his Sing Sing reference is duly presented. After he has worn threadbare the forlorn resolution that some of them bring out to 'go

straight' he'll cast it aside and become—a rat."

"If you felt all this so keenly, why didn't you do something looking toward his redemption when you could?"

"I turned several wheels in vain. The company thought he was in the right place. Naturally, nothing was to be gained by approaching them.

"I managed to get a message to the boy himself there up the river. I sent him word to sit pretty until I could do something—but he figured out that it was I who'd got him there and he sent me back insults."

"So then you passed him up?"

"I had to. He wanted me to get my share of the punishment, and he was young enough to be a fool. He notified the authorities that he expected messages from no friends, except his own family. He even warned them that if they watched and traced any messages sent in to him—or any inquiries made about him—they might strike the trail of the bigger crook. After that I couldn't even inquire."

"May I ask," inquired Pettigrew biting-ly, "whether you mean to apply any of your present gigantic theft to purposes of philanthropy? Do you expect to help him now?"

"How," demanded Barrows icily, "could I help him now? Would you suggest sending him a Christmas box with our cards in-closed? Or do you counsel our going to the Governor with a pardon plea, based on our ex-cathedra knowledge of the truth?"

"With all the money you're making," suggested the man from whom he was making it, "you might at least grubstake him when he got out."

"Capital!" exclaimed the other derisively. "And how would you suggest going about it? Shall I stand at the prison gate when it opens on him and hand him the cash? In that event I might as well keep moving and pass him going in as he comes out. Don't you imagine that so unusual an interest evinced in an emerging convict would lead to certain investigations?"

Pettigrew shrugged his shoulders.

"I merely wished to show," he remarked tartly, "that unless you had in view some substantial reparation, it's the merest

hokum for you to preach at me. I'm not mourning over the fact that one out of three thieves got caught. God knows I wish it had been two."

"But you draw the line at three?"

"There is a highly practical phrase to this effect: 'I don't care what happens so long as it doesn't happen to me.' It might be a better world if more people admitted how far they subscribed to that principle."

"Have you ever spoken on that theme," asked Barrows, "in one of your addresses to the brethren who, like yourself, have experienced the social awakening?"

Pettigrew frowned out of the window and shook his head at the hurdy-gurdy woman who was craning her neck below and holding out a catch penny tambourine.

"I've said before," commented the younger man, "that I'm no sentimentalist, yet I've lost some sleep thinking about the boy who's rotting up there; whose companions are pallid and depraved; whose future is blank. I mean to keep you reminded of him, too, and if you lose no sleep over it, it won't be my fault."

More annoyed than contrite, Pettigrew scowled at the thought of being frequently admonished as to his lack of humaneness.

This black look stirred his tormentor to cast another verbal missile.

"What an unfeeling brute you are, P. B.," he remarked, partly in wonderment, but wholly in malice. "Even in the things that you do not say, you show your complete divorce from all normal sentiment. Has it never occurred to you to question what became of the old mother of that dead chauffeur?"

"I have no responsibility there!" the old man declared stoutly. "He was paid beforehand; and any driver who charges two hundred dollars to make a 'get-away' is expected to assume all risks."

"But that stray bullet also put an end to his mother's daily bread."

"Bah!"

Barrows thoughtfully considered the disgust on his companion's face.

"No; it is not a mask," he confessed, half to himself. "Old Pro Bono really is nauseated at the presumption of an old woman who required room and board.

"Well," he concluded, snapping into direct speech; "I shall make you writhe now. I couldn't buy freedom for the boy in Sing Sing, but I saw to it that the result of his unfortunate shot meant a continuance of room and board for the chauffeur's mother. What do you think of that, P. B.?" The little old lady was sheltered and clothed and fed, and when her time came to die she was buried in what the neighbors called a 'grand' style."

"I think you were a fool to waste the money!" Pettigrew retorted.

"Oh, it's all coming back to me."

"How?"

"I'm collecting it from you!"

And then P. B. writhed.

CHAPTER XVII.

LOVE'S PROBATION.

WHEN Barrows took Pettigrew for his drive that afternoon, he reflected that he had managed to keep the current of affairs moving rapidly enough to escape any valid charge of stagnation. Yet, as he gazed at the lean and somewhat ascetic face framed between upturned sable collar and glossy silk hat, one might have inferred that he was not entirely content.

Casting a sidewise glance at Barrows out of the tail of a cold and hostile eye, Pettigrew himself drew such an inference. Pettigrew thought he could distinguish a lurking trace of anxiety on the well modeled features and a hint of flaw in their customary self-confidence.

Perhaps, mused that reflective being, the audacity of his enterprise was beginning to wear on Barrows; but that was an abstract idea. Perhaps the more concrete thing was that Barrows was regretting the unwisdom of letting the fake epileptic enter the house and talk so freely of the ease with which the process of elimination may be applied to human life.

In that unusual human creature, who had so strangely come and gone—and who was to come again for his overcoat—the elderly captive described possibilities as a useful varlet.

That idea was as yet vague and nebulous. How could he tell the creature enough to make him an active collaborator in felony without also admitting things which must not be divulged?

How, even granting an inspirational solution for that premise, could he ever see the man alone or formulate a conspiracy, free from the vigilant watchfulness which never lifted?

He could not leave his house except chained and under escort as he left it now. He could not move from room to room without clanking as he walked with a stuttering shortness of step. He could not give an order to a servant without the chance of its being relayed and censored. Yet men escape from iron cell-tiers in stone-walled prisons—and their urge to ingenuity could be no stronger than his own. The solving was up to himself.

His idea, impossible as it seemed, was yet a thing of provocative fascination, and he mulled it over as he rode in chains along the avenue. It brought a sort of balm to the bruises of his sensibilities like that of a man who has been given an anodyne against pain.

As the car turned from the end of the avenue in the dusk, Pettigrew fancied he made out the same shabby figure under the spot of an electric globe; but he could not be sure, and the next instant he stiffened wrathfully as he recognized George Eldoras, the man who had deprived him of his beloved picture, striding briskly along the sidewalk.

The machine stopped at the curb, and with deft hands that made no undue display of their movements under the lap robe, Barrows freed the ankles of their fetters, and with due dignity the two gentlemen proceeded together into the house.

There, in the hall, Edith Page was waiting, and with a glance at the grandfather clock, Barrows spoke apologetically:

"I supposed that you had gone home, Miss Page. We hadn't meant to keep you here so late."

"I wasn't sure that there mightn't be some further instruction," she answered quietly, "so I waited to ask you."

"Nothing more to-night, thank you.

And please forgive my failure to say so before we left."

Five minutes afterward, Barrows heard the street door close, and knew that the girl had ended her first day's work as secretary to the man in pajamas and iron anklets. Indolently he strolled to the window to assure himself of the correctness of his assumption. It gave him a more comfortable feeling to know definitely who was in the house and who was out of it.

In the trim simplicity of her serge suit and street hat, he saw the girl turn briskly toward the avenue, and then he saw George Eldoras step up and raise his hat, confronting her.

Edith Page halted suddenly and stiffened, but the man wheeled and fell into step with her, and, with the air of fastidious avoidance for anything like a scene in public, she suffered him to walk beside her, though her carriage was rigid with an affront which, even at such a distance, Barrows could read.

As the pair went along the street together, Eldoras was talking rapidly under the enveloping chill of silence on the girl's part, which he feared would presently break in indignation.

"I had meant to keep my word and wait for a note from you, Edith," he declared with a curbed stressfulness of voice; "but the day has been a century of purgatory for me. The suspense paralyzed my faculties until I could neither work nor think—except of you. I waylaid you here because I couldn't face the night without seeing you. Perhaps, during the day you've thought about it. Perhaps you've decided to give me my chance—"

"I've been working," she answered with a noncommittal brevity, yet with less anger in her tone than he had feared. "My time wasn't mine to spend on my own thoughts."

"If they're working you as hard as that—" he began indignantly, then broke off and began again. "No, dear, you couldn't help thinking of it, however busy you were. I don't mean to persecute you with my insistence, but we loved each other—I still love you. If the thing that has brought about my excommunication

can be cleared away, there's no good in letting it linger, like a slow poison, in our lives."

"You promised me," she said more reproachfully than angrily, "to wait for a note from me."

"I know it, and I've broken my promise—but I've only broken it to the extent of begging you to give me that note now—verbally."

Edith Page looked ahead of her as she walked. For the distance of a half block she maintained her silence, then she turned her head and nodded briefly.

"Perhaps you're right," she acceded. "There's nothing to be gained by putting off the interview; but don't assume that I mean anything more than that."

She paused with a catch in her voice, but, when she went on again, she had steadied it—almost.

"I didn't disappear without a word, because I didn't care. It wasn't an easy thing to do, and the reasons that forced me can't be brushed aside with phrases. Unless you have something to say that carries more weight than what you said this morning—"

Again her sentence ended short of its period, and in grave acceptance the man nodded his head.

"I'm asking a hearing," he said, "not a verdict in advance. Then I may go with you now? Won't you dine with me somewhere first?"

"No," she answered resolutely, although she was to dine alone, and from the unbecoming resources of her kitchenette refrigerator; "but I'll give you the address, and you may come this evening at eight."

It was seven fifty-nine when Eldoras, who had been fretfully pacing the street for a half hour before the door of a somewhat shabby structure in West Eleventh Street, set his shoulders and entered it. He knew the character of the place instinctively, and his heart sank.

This was a house which advertised apartments, but which was in reality a place of cheap lodgings masquerading under a more formal designation. Dreariness permeated it to saturation, and Eldoras knew that to admit it as one's address was to declare the pinch of one's poverty.

But one thing it had—that drab respectability which made virtue linger in the memory of its tenants as a quality inseparable from the odor of boiling cabbage. Edith's apartment had once been a large and single room, but now it was divided by a partition into two cramped cubicles—and a hutch, flatteringly called a kitchenette.

Yet, even in such unfavorable soil a few deft personal touches had blossomed and gone far toward relieving the dingy squalor of murky walls and threadbare carpets. It was as though the spirit of this lodger carried its own cleansing alleviation of air and sun into the confining staleness.

Into the mind of George Eldoras intruded the uneasy thought that the price which Edith had seen him pay for a small landscape would have carried the lease on this whole wretched house for several years.

He wondered vaguely whether that disturbing realization had not indeed been born of the cryptic, Mona Lisa quality of her smile as she opened the door for him, a smile that was baffling in its locked inscrutability.

She herself looked to the man quite flower-fresh and beautiful in whatever change of costume she had made from her severity of business uniform. He supposed a woman would have seen the pathos of cheapness and makeshift in her clothes; but to his masculine eye, although it was an eye trained to the measurement of subtle artistic values, there was apparent only a brave success.

The mean surroundings had distinctly shocked him, and as he took her hand in both his own, he found himself protesting, "But, dear, this isn't nearly so comfortable a place as that from which you ran away, is it?"

Edith laughed.

"I didn't really run away from you in such panic as all that," she assured him. "I only refrained from telling you I was moving. The reasons were those of economic determinism."

"Economic determinism?"

"Yes. You know I was living with another woman—but she was doing more than fifty-fifty on the expense. Even my share was too much."

"And so you came here!"

Eldoras had not meant to let his tone sound so lugubrious or tragic a note, and the girl smiled mockingly. Just now she felt that it was safer to smile than risk a gravity behind which tears lay so dangerously close.

"It's scarcely polite," she observed, "to criticize the mansion that flings wide its portals to you in entertainment."

Under the hot sweep of impulsiveness, he stepped forward, and his arms came out as if to seize her and carry her away, in some sort of rescue, from this beleaguered of conditions. But she eluded him with a disconcerting quietness of movement, and he found her regarding him coolly and a bit warily from across a small jig-saw table of monstrous ugliness.

"I want to take you out of all this," he declared passionately. "You don't belong here."

She offered no response, yet had he known it he had said the one thing that could shake her self-containment with the violent force of an earthquake. She had fled from him only because he had said nothing like it before: because after she had let him engage her heart irretrievably she had waited vainly for just such a declaration. She had waited for his lover's ardency to graduate into some suggestion of marriage — and that graduation had never come.

She wanted to cry out, "Why don't you do it, then? I love you, and I want to give you all I have—and all I have is myself!"

But she said nothing of the kind, and the enigmatic quality of her half smile carried no betrayal of the deep tumult in her heart. She wondered why he said: "I want to take you out of all this" in such a despairing tone as a man might use in lamenting that he wanted the moon!

"Perhaps we had better remember," she suggested, "that you came this evening because you insisted I owed you a hearing."

Eldoras inclined his head.

"This morning," he reminded her, "you accused me of being a sham, and when I pressed you to make the accusation more explicit, your only charge was that I'd concealed from you some alleged prosperity."

"The only charge?" she repeated in amazement. "Was the whole matter of telling me you loved me, of accepting my admission of love for you—without showing me any real portrait of yourself or your life—was that a little thing?"

"Was judging me and my life only by circumstantial evidence a fair thing?" he countered.

"You knew all there was to know about me," she answered slowly. "You knew that I didn't give my love lightly—that I'd never given it before. You should have known, too, that I didn't mean to give it to a man who wished only to play with it. I didn't question your sincerity—until it dawned on me that you had nothing more to say."

"You found me congenial. You were willing to take me out to dinner and make love to me—and it seems that was all."

She paused, then went on, with a level-eyed earnestness, "It meant too much to me for that. To me it must be everything or nothing—and if it were to be nothing I must know it and make up my mind to it in time."

"To me, too," declared the man simply, "it meant everything."

Edith Page shook her head gravely, in denial. "To you," she answered, "it didn't even mean frankness. I met you, as people meet each other here in New York, through a common and casual acquaintance who drifted on and passed out of both our lives.

"I knew nothing about you except that, into a loneliness that hurt, you came with something like the password of comradeship. I liked you so tremendously that, at first, I didn't let myself see as much of you as I wanted to—because I knew it would hurt to lose you."

"You had no chance to lose me," he protested, but she answered steadily: "I did lose you. In spite of all my cautiousness, I found that I'd given you my love, and that you were playing with me, and it just about broke my heart."

"What gave you the utterly absurd idea that I was playing with you?"

"The withholding of your full confidence." She broke off as if considering a

difficult utterance, then made it with the clean-cut unflinchingness of surgery, "Because you never said—until to-night—anything about wanting to take me out of all this, and to-night you said it as though it were an impossibility."

Eldoras rose from his seat and stood looking down at her. His engaging face was gloomily set to an expression of lamentable wretchedness.

"I didn't ask you to marry me," he said slowly, "because I couldn't. I loved you, and I do love you with every breath that I breathe, and with every thought in my mind—and I told you that."

"If you couldn't ask me to marry you," her eyes were holding his with a brave and undeviating directness—"don't you think I should have known it—before I let my heart go at a runaway pace? And since you didn't warn me, but made love to me instead—just as though there were no obstacle—isn't my accusation proved?"

"But the time will come—and it will come soon—" The man went on talking with a trancelike intensity—"when I can ask you, and all my life is building to that time. All I plead for is suspended judgment. All I ask is for a little time and a little trust."

"And during that time, when I am asked to trust with my eyes shut," she inquired steadily, "I am not to know what the thing is that stands between us with the barrier of impossibility? I am not even to know whether it is an existing marriage or—"

"Great God, no!" he broke out tempestuously. "You can't think me such a cad as that. If there were any other woman, you'd have the absolute right to know. There is not. There has never been."

"Yet I'm not to be told what it is—and I do know that it's not the usual obstacle of money."

"But it is. This morning you called me rich. I'm not rich."

"Not rich? And yet you can buy Corots? You can live in an apartment that is prohibitive to men in moderate circumstances, and drive a car that—"

"Please wait," he pleaded desperately. "Those things are true, and yet I am, in

effect, poor—so poor that the one thing I want with all my soul I can't have. I bought the Corot—yes—but not for myself. God knows I don't want it, and if I did I couldn't afford it."

"Not for yourself? You mean you were buying on a commission?"

"No. I bought it for John Morton, because John Morton believed old Pettigrew held a grudge against him and would refuse to deal with him direct. I didn't get any commission or ask any. I did it as an accommodation to a financial nabob whose friendship can make me, and whose dislike can ruin me—and when I saw you there, and read your thoughts, every dollar of his money I paid out was like shedding a drop of my own blood."

Edith Page looked at his passionately earnest face for a moment in silence, then broke into a peal of half hysterical laughter.

"And to-day," she declared, "I wrote a letter to John Morton, inviting him to come and buy what he chose!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed the young man fervently. "Then I needn't play the gentleman lackey any longer in that quarter. At least now you see—"

"No," she interrupted, "I don't see. I don't see how a man can live as you live and do business with such money royalty as John P. Morton, and yet be so poor that—" She broke off again and shook her head. "But unless you choose to tell me," she hurriedly added, "that's none of my business."

"This much I can tell you," he declared. "I live as I do because I must wear that front of affluence or lose business with the men whose association I need. I live, if you choose, like a plunger, taking in a large income and disbursing it again as a sort of overhead. But I need only to turn a corner that lies just ahead to be past all that. I need only a little time to stand permanently established and to lay all I have at your feet."

"And meanwhile," she prompted him with possibly the slightest trace of irony, "'He travels fastest who travels alone.'"

"No, not that either. Whatever income I have I should joyously ask you to share with me without waiting—if I could regard

it as income. Until I turn my corner it can't be so regarded. It is a sinking fund. I might liken my situation to that of a man who has bet all he has on a single race. Success means triumph and fortune. Failure means ruin. There is a difference, though."

He was talking with pleading earnestness and burning eyes: "I don't think in my case there is the hazard or doubt of a horse race, still until I cash my tickets I have nothing—nothing at all."

He paused, and met her eyes beseechingly, and she encountered the gaze with one of steady thoughtfulness—but made no answer.

"I love you," he declared, "with all the power of love that is given to the human heart. I love you with tenderness and passion and steadfastness. I want you to marry me, and meanwhile I want you to trust me until I can turn my corner."

He paused and breathed deep: "God knows," he added, "I'll waste no time and no effort in pressing toward my goal. I rest my case."

Edith sat with her hands folded in her lap for a while, as he waited. In her face he could read no more of her decision than a man can read on the outer panel of a jury room's closed door, beyond which his fate is being balloted. Finally she spoke in a low voice:

"I retract my charge that you are a sham," she said. "I withdraw all the accusations I made. I admit that I still love you—more, perhaps, than ever."

Eldoras came forward with a step that was swiftly eager; but her hand came up and she said, quickly, gaspingly, "No, please wait!"

Again she hesitated, then rose and stood as if braced: "But, dear," she declared, with the tension of finality, "we are drifting, and we can't afford to drift. God grant you success in turning your corner. If my prayers are heard, you'll turn it triumphantly—but by your own statement it's a sort of a gambling chance—and I can't carry my life into the betting ring."

He had halted where he stood, and abruptly his face blanched. "But you say you love me," he pleaded. "If you do, can't you trust me?"

"I can trust you always, I think—but I can't trust blind luck—and that's what it seems to be."

He reached out his arms, and she stood looking at him, her eyes widened with sufferring and the effort at self-command. Then she sank into her chair and clasped her face between her hands.

"Don't make it harder, dear," she begged him. "It's just a wonderful dream—that didn't come true; that's all."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

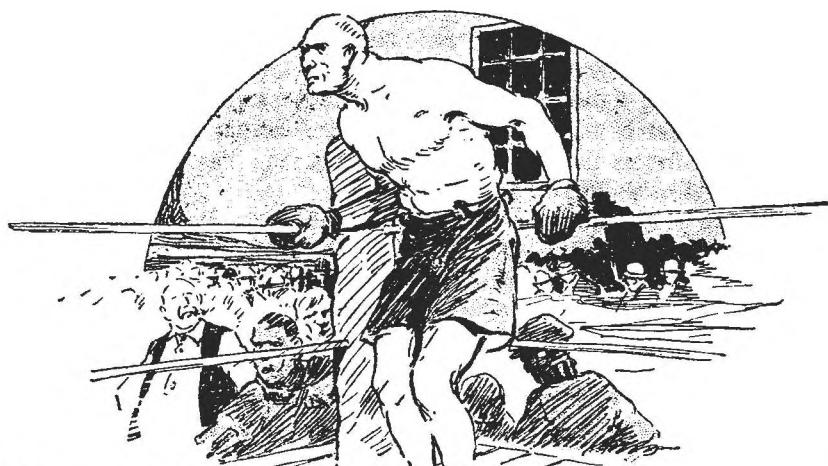


WHERE STRENGTH LIES

STRENGTH lies—not, as one would suppose, In knowing things—but that one knows *He doesn't know*, and makes the pause, Before advancing toward his cause!

Strength lies in knowing what you lack,
In preparation for attack:
In knowing what you do not know—
In getting set, before you go!

George A. Wright.



Socker Dooley Triumphs

By **CHARLES FRANCIS COE**

FIGHTS may come and fights may go—but oh, boy!

It was that time down in Ginkburg that the fight of fights took place. Ginkburg, be it said, was far enough from the province of boxing commissions and strict supervision so that real battles could be held. And being one of the fighters was none other than the world famed Socker Dooley, they didn't come too big, nor too tough. Socker met 'em all!

To get the story in its entirety we must be in on a conference between two fistic impresarios of the small time circuit. One "Snippy" Dix managed to retain a lease on the Ginkburg Opera House wherein he staged bouts.

Snippy was not without his qualifications. He had the good sense to confine his activities to the sphere wherein his blatant ego was accepted at nearly fifty per cent of its face value by a credulous fandom; and that meant a fortune. Confidentially, the only reason that Jack Dempsey hadn't appeared at the opera house last week was that he had busted a knuckle.

And positively the only reason that he would not appear next week was that Snippy had signed a hidebound contract with none other than the mighty Socker Dooley.

Now, in all fairness and common sense, who would want Dempsey around when they could see the Socker? No one, of course! Therefore Socker was coming. And that was but the half of it!

Facing the next champion would be the one and only "Mauler Mike." Every one knew that this bruiser was about the hottest thing in the ring. Never knocked off his feet! Sixty-two knockouts out of sixty-three fights! He was the only—but what's the use? It was the real Mauler Mike and the real Socker Dooley!

Well, the papers played the fight a lot. The fact that Socker Dooley had won his last fight just after the surrender of Napoleon was of no direct consequence. Neither did it matter that Mauler took a licking in the political riots that presaged the purchase of Louisiana by the United States.

That is, it didn't to Snippy, nor yet to

Mauler or Socker Dooley. Those august gentlemen were infinitely interested in eating, and the one way open to them was fighting and promoting fights.

But Snippy was worthy of broader fields in that he was not averse to shady money, and not without ideas as to how to secure it. When he saw the condition of Socker he had visions of a slaughter. Then he sized up the Mauler and the visions became vivid.

This Mauler was going to paralyze the aged Socker at the first wallop, and no one had ever said that Mauler could not fight—for a few rounds.

Snippy figured. Snippy thought. Snippy dreamed. Culminating the foregoing laborious processes, Snippy decided. He journeyed to the camp of Mauler Mike. With the apish fighter, whose appearance recalled the dark ages, he went into deep conference.

Be it said, in consideration of the unadulterated truth, that both these leather warriors of a day long gone regarded the battle in the same light. Their greatest fear was that some younger man would come along and displace them in the favor of the promoter.

It therefore behooved them both to convince Snippy Dix that they were of the present vintage of live wire fighters, and simply "rarin' to go!" Mauler had this uppermost in mind during the conference.

"Lissen, commish," he began, "I ain't never seen dis Dooley party work, but I'm wise to me own wallop! Dis guy's health is due fer complete wreckin', chief. I ain't none uh dese braggin' pugs; not no more than you are, but I'm hep tuh me own wallop, admiral, I'm hep tuh me own wallop!"

"It's looks like a sure thing to me," admitted Dix. There was in his heart a great love of money, but penuriousness is ever a breeder of caution. "I can see two radium bushes growin' in our front lawn if this works out!"

"Radium bushes? Yer speakin' me native tongue, Oliver. Let's have de idea back uh dis radium chatter. Whatever is de big idea? I'm wit yuh from hell to breakfast!"

It all sounded reasonable, this ready ac-

quiescence; the obviously superior condition of Mauler as compared to the faded Socker; but Snippy wanted to be more than sure before he risked the few dollars he had accumulated. From the outside looking in, the plan was all that any "fixer" might ask. On the other hand, the better the fixer the more thought given the "fixing."

"I'll think it over for an hour an' see you later," grunted Dix, and left. He went his way blithely unconscious of the state of mind into which he had plunged poor Mauler Mike.

"My Gawd!" gasped the stricken bruiser from low New York, "I didn't make it strong enough!" He was on the point of following Dix to explain that he had withheld some of his prowess that he might avoid scaring the general public into the belief that the fight was too easy for him. However, he thought better of it and retired into the shack that had meant beans to him for the last five days, and held promise of all the hazily remembered things that two hundred dollars in one pile would buy.

Snippy journeyed then to the camp of Socker. Better that he be sure the Socker was helpless before the onslaught of Mauler. Then he could bet his money in real safety; that being the only manner in which he would consider the risk.

But all men are alike in some respects. Socker had to eat as well as Mauler Mike. Therefore he proceeded to spill his "mutton talk" as prolifically as had Mauler.

"Dat 'hash hound?'" he demanded belligerently. "Lissen tuh me, Cull, I'm gonna hit dat crow so hard on de button dat his feet'll swell! Boy! If I happen ter miss him de wind'll give his near rel'tives pewmonia. Kid, I'm *rough* w'en I'm scrappin'! It's me bizness an' dere ain't no sent'ment in bizness!"

Poor Snippy was doubtful. He had heard many pugilists shout their prowess before the fight and then develop into the mellowest of "bums" when the bell commanded "do." Ordinarily he would have grinned knowingly, passed the comment along to the papers, and "checked up de gate."

But this was different. Here were two men whom no one knew except from records the very length of which alone, cast shadows of doubt over their present possibilities. No one was kidding Snippy much about how long these birds would last against a hitter! Both were the merest of shells. Both would probably collapse at the first sound wallop.

Which would go first? It was a dead cinch that the fight could not go past six rounds. Neither of them could keep out of their own way for that length of time. Socker presented no doubt at all upon this point. He couldn't hold a pair of boxing gloves in front of him for eighteen minutes, much less fight with them. He had been a wonder in his day, true, but that was in his day. Now—!

It certainly seemed a cinch for Mauler Mike. There remained only that hundredth chance that the New Yorker might "walk into one" and find a soft spot after he had felt age and disintegration gnawing at the pit of his stomach. Overcome that possibility and here was a clean up worthy the name!

Night found Dix once more in the company of Mauler Mike. What a relief it was to the latter can but be guessed.

"Listen, Mauler," the promoter began. "There's two hundred bucks in this mill for you. I can't see any reason why we can't make that three hundred—if you bring home the bacon."

Mauler began to see. This affair was to be cooked in his favor. One of the big advantages in that was that victory might mean another bout. On the other hand what was Dooley getting for "laying down?" It made a lot of difference to Mauler which end of the purse showed the more money. If Dooley was getting five hundred for quitting, then Mauler wanted to do that part of the job and let the laurels of victory rest upon the brow of Socker.

Snippy realized the thoughts that were passing through the Mauler's mind.

"You're all wrong, Mauler," he snapped. "This ain't a cooked fight. I'm not laying any dough on a sure thing. I'm figuring you to win and I'm going to treat you

right if you do. I'm figuring on *making* you win, if I can."

"Pray erlong, pray erlong," insisted Mauler Mike. "Lemme git yuh straight on dis deal."

"This here Socker used to be good," said Dix softly, "he's a 'beaner' now. He'd fight for a mess of hash. I'm going to let him think that he's a cinch to win from the first bell, and I'm going to ask him to give the fans a run for their money, by letting you stay three or four rounds. Then I can bring him back for another bout, he'll think. Well, I'm going to wind your right hand with tea lead. And then you only need to sock him once and there won't be any more Socker Dooley."

"My Gawd! Man, alive, yer dome is hidin' a still dat will make thirty-year-old Bourbon in twenty minutes! You ain't got no right outside de White House, you ain't!"

"You'll go through then? You'll play the game with me?"

"Will I? Does yuh inquire, will I? Myron—my birthmark looks like your name!"

And while the Socker trained with a clean heart, the plotters wove the skein of his disaster about him. It certainly did look like a sure thing. Neither of the fighters had the slightest hope of winning, until Snippy thus cast the assured victory upon the fading wrinkle that marked the passing of an eyebrow from the countenance of Mauler Mike.

The preponderance of the Ginkburg population was miners. When it developed that Socker Dooley had spent some time in the same vocation, it followed that public sympathy gravitated toward him. When mysterious money backing Mike began to appear about town, public spirit cultivated a resentment.

A miner should bet on a miner. So they did. It wasn't long before there was a lot of money backing both men. And interest follows money in more ways than one.

Crowds began watching the men train. At the camp of the Mauler it was readily seen that he was holding back just a little. A clever manner of getting more Dooley money into the ring! Then the same was

discovered at the Dooley camp. It was noticed that both men gave evidences of tiring easily under the strain of training.

Both men were faking! More money was bet and it was commonly conceded that this would be the fight of an age. A gathering of Mauler Mike adherents sought him out in his camp. They watched him train. For their benefit he "cut loose" a little. That night in the hotel lobby, new Mauler money was offered.

Then came a committee to the camp of the Socker. It savored of old times, and Socker caught the spirit of the thing. He summoned all his old tricks and made considerable of an impression—for a few minutes. Then he met the committee in a heart-to-heart talk, following his "work out."

"Gents—de only t'ing I ever got bawled out fer was not talkin' enough. I ain't no kind of a guy ter tell about me old man's oldest son. I'm just like uh vi'let, w'en ut comes ter shrinkin'. But yuh kin anchor dis fact in fer feeble 'well uh thought': De're ain't no kind of a chanst fer dis here bimbo once I gets him inside de ropes!"

Socker spoke with cold finality.

There were decided and enthusiastic nods of approval from the avid audience. Their reception of his statements urged Socker to continue:

"Boys, I ain't never felt no better since de time I made de world sit up—an' Dan Sykes lay down—an' take notice. If yuh got any gelt yuh want tuh see grow like an explosion—get it back uh me, dat's all, get it back uh me! Dis here 'ant eater' ain't gonna be sure uh nuttin' after he gets a sniff uh de powder I carries!"

And so the ball rolled merrily on. True to his promise to Mauler Mike, Snippy Dix presented himself at the camp of Socker. His tale was one which would have wrung tears from a heart of stone. He was only a poor promoter. And wasn't he slipping Socker a "soft two hundred"? Then wouldn't Socker please "make it look good" by giving Mauler a chance?

"I ain't no crook," Socker assured him. "If you come aroun' here tryin' ter fix a frame up, I'll leave yuh flat, Snippy. But dis here's diff'runt. It don't lose nobody

no money an' it don't change de final result. I'll see it your way."

Poor Socker well knew that to see it any other way was the best way in the world to court disaster. In the excitement of the moment he mustn't forget that his battle was "cake and wine" to him. To lose the chance meant to lose the grub. But he certainly would "stretch" that Mike person at the earliest possible moment.

With Snippy scheming, Mauler wondering not a little, and Socker oblivious to all but a determination to make the most of a showing possible, the night of the fight arrived.

The Ginkburg Opera House was nothing much to boast about, but its very walls bulged with the perspiring humanity that found entrance long before the actual fight time arrived. It was through this cheering jam of fight fans that Socker made his way to the ring.

Be it a thousand years hence, Socker would always feel that indefinable thrill that presaged entrance to the squared circle. He but needed to hear the yells of welcome, breathe the thick smoke of unchoice tobacco, look upon the murky rays from the lights over the center of the ring; and all else in the world faded past the immediate call of memory.

Mauler Mike had preceded Socker into the ring. This was as it should be. There is nothing like "keeping them waiting."

Amid the incessant cheering that greeted his appearance Socker strode across the ring, stopping only when he faced Mauler in his own corner.

"Come fer yer beatin' after all, eh?" he sneered. "I kinda figgered yuh'd run out on us."

But the Mauler was old at the game. He knew the tricks and came back at Socker in kind. "I'm fightin' here nex' week, too," he pronounced in a disinterested tone. "There's a careless guy challenged de winner!"

"What's de idea uh de gloves? Take 'em off!" There was strong suspicion not untempered by surprise in Socker's voice. That any one should attempt to take him in on that old game! Gloves are put on in the ring, and each man has a right to

look over the hands and windings of his opponent.

Snippy Dix presented himself at the ropes. Now was the time for him to assert himself. He hadn't been fooled a bit by the "mutton talk." He felt pretty certain that either of the men would fight a lion for the promised purses.

"Take your corner, Dooley," he snapped softly. "There ain't nothing wrong, and if there was it would only kill the fight. Don't start nothing now."

It wasn't fear that deterred Socker from further expostulation. It was sense. He turned to his corner to await the bell. In his mind was great wonderment, nevertheless. There might be anything from a porous plaster to a meat ax under those gloves! Well, watch the Socker just the same.

"Yuh can't git hurt by nuttin' dat don't hit yuh," he muttered.

He gained his corner and seated himself on the little stool. At his elbow was a local handler imbued with that instantaneous loyalty which is a part of his kind. If the Socker lost, this chap would feel it a personal grief. Explain it if you can, it certainly is the truth.

Then Mauler stood and shed his bathrobe. For the first time Socker had opportunity to judge of the physique that he was called upon to beat into submission. He noted the broad, forward slung, sloping shoulders. He saw the hamlike fists dangling almost to the knees. The heavy muscles that rippled under the bestial face.

The handler, too, saw these things; and the crowd, as was evidenced by their acclaim.

"He's an ape!" gasped the handler, questioning the evidence of his own eyes.

Socker gazed spellbound for a fraction of a second. For the first time in his ring career he knew fear.

"What de hell are we gonna trap dat with?" he whispered. "Dat ain't no man!"

And from out the mystic recesses of an unintelligent mind came suddenly, gems of the deepest psychological conviction. The handler spoke:

"See dem tin ears? Somebuddy hit 'em! De same fer dat nose, dem feeders, an' dem

eyes. If anybuddy hit 'em, you kin! An' if *you* hit 'em—well, kid, we'll find a place ter lay him!"

It was true. The Mauler certainly had been hit upon many and diverse occasions, to say nothing of every inch of his rippling carcass that presented itself to view. And just why had Dooley been named Socker, if not for the very "sock" that would soon land upon those uninviting features? The handler was right.

The bell rang. The fight was on.

They met in the center of the ring, Mauler crouching warily, the whites of his eyes visible as he leered slantingly over the new gloves that adorned his mighty fists; Socker, erect and smiling a smile that was born of habit rather than desire.

A moment they fiddled for position, then that restless left of Socker's straightened. The glove popped resoundingly onto the nose of Mauler Mike, and the Dooley betters shouted their approval as they saw the bullet head snap back. Before Mauler could regain his poise Socker was upon him and his right fist whanged against one of the shriveled ears.

The referee "broke" them from the clinch that ensued. As he stepped back Socker managed to grin meaningfully into Mauler's face, and mutter—mutter something that sounded to Mike as though aspersions were being cast upon his fighting prowess: "Watch me close, Mauler. It ain't never too late ter learn."

Once again they fiddled, then suddenly the right hand of Mauler Mike swept forward in a whistling arc. Socker had been waiting for that. He stepped neatly out of danger, and prepared to step inside again when the blow had passed, thus landing another right of his own.

But it wasn't to be. The blow missed Socker well enough, but when he went to step in there was no place to step. That fist of Mauler's just naturally kept on going. There was nothing to stop it. The velocity of the punch took all the arm length that Mauler possessed. Then it took Mauler. It was as though he had grabbed hold at the end of an express train. He was jerked from his own feet by that flying weight and spun completely around before he brought

up in a sitting position upon the floor. A moment he sat there, stupefied. Then he saw the fist on the floor of the ring, an arm's length from him. He drew it to him and lifted it into his lap.

Socker had gone just a trifle pale at the course of events. To be hit by that right hand might mean anything from sudden paralysis to complete decapitation. Certainly it meant nothing less.

"Three—four—five—"

The referee was counting, and Mauler rose again to his feet. There was a look of puzzled doubt upon his wrinkled brow. In a ringside seat was Snippy Dix. Their eyes met momentarily. The meaning that Snippy transferred was all too clear. Mauler began to fear for his two hundred, to say nothing of the bonus promised. He happened to know that several thousands of dollars had been wagered upon him to win that fight, and it looked considerably as though the tail had wagged the dog on that last punch.

As for Socker, he was recovering from the first fear that had attended the proof of his suspicion regarding that hand of the Mauler's. Here was a ring general worthy the name, this Socker Dooley. All in the world that he had was experience, but he had oodles of that.

He grinned just a little when they faced each other again.

"Don't drop dat mitt on yer foot, Mauler," he warned. He must play a waiting game, he felt, and get the Mauler to quit to him for fear of what would happen to him if the crowd learned what was in that glove. He whispered something of the kind to Mauler Mike in the next clinch.

In the second round Mauler conveyed a message from Snippy. The promoter had whispered it to one of his henchmen who was doing duty in Mauler's corner.

"De boss says dat if yer screeches about dis mitt, de referee is gonna call de jam 'no contest,' an' dat means no purse. Fer Gawd's sake, Dooley, be reasonable!"

Here was indeed a menace. There was no alternative. The fight had to continue on its merit, with all the advantage with Mauler Mike.

The second round was much like the first.

Mauler was a very tired fighter when he sank upon the stool to be revived against all the laws of nature. Recuperation is the privilege of youth, from the ring standpoint.

In the third Mike's right lashed out once more. It barely missed Socker, who shivered a little at his proximity with devastation, then chased the Mauler across the ring as the latter "followed his right." If it was hard to start that weapon, it was harder to stop it.

In the fourth round Mike fought defensively. The right rested menacingly against his hip. He seemed awaiting opportunity. His weary left prodded ineffectually at Socker. He was obviously tired. Now was the time for Socker to finish him. Dooley adherents shouted encouragement and advice. But Socker seemed heedless. He fought no harder than Mauler.

Then came realization. Both men were tired out. Two left hands were partially suspended in mid air—two hands laden with the weight of years and the pressure of exhaustion.

Two pairs of feet wandered flat and sluggish about the ring. Four knees found it easier by far to bend than to straighten. Two right fists, fairest of all pugilistic possessions, hung lifeless; monumental to the call for youth.

But there was experience, generalship in that ring, past the understanding of the new generation of pugilists.

Whereas the Mauler awaited the one grand blow that would win him the fight, Socker sensed with a feeling of joy that the trick they had attempted to work on him was very apt to develop into a boomerang. He governed himself accordingly.

The Mauler's right now hung at his knee. The whites of his eyes watched with a growing fear the lagging right of Socker. Every breath he drew resembled a snort. To land on the floor for any reason was to be counted out. He simply hadn't the strength to get up.

What he didn't know was that Socker was in exactly the same boat. Brains were with Dooley to greater degree than with Mauler. And he used them to the extent of showing his condition less plainly.

By leaning forward he managed to make his feet follow him and got into a clinch. Immediately he leaned heavily upon Mauler, and, had not Mike done precisely the same thing upon Socker, they must both have fallen. As it was, they swayed perilously about the center of the ring, each preventing the other from dropping.

Poor Snippy Dix, from his ringside seat, sensed the impending loss of his bets. He became desperate.

"Use your right!" he hissed at Mauler. "Get it over!"

As if drawn by the power of a magnet, the fighters whirled over to the side of the ring, and Mauler managed to gasp forth his misfortune so that Snippy could hear.

"Me right? Use it? My Gawd! I can't even *lift* it!"

The referee was making valiant but futile efforts to separate the clinging men. He cussed and demanded to no avail. Finally he threatened to declare the fight no contest and drive the men from the ring. This meant no purses. The Mauler was getting desperate. By a mighty effort he caught his balance and let go his support. Once more the fighters faced each other.

"Boy! If I had somebuddy ter hoist dis here right, I'd jus' nach'ally drop it onter yer dome, Oswald," growled Mauler weakly. And from somewhere Socker found the strength and the humor to grin.

For a moment they stood facing each other. Then Socker drew back his aching right and managed to throw it out in the general direction of Mauler. In his attempt to avoid the punch Mike lost his balance. He grabbed wildly at Socker. The latter had thrown himself off balance with the effort of the blow, and the two crashed to the floor of the ring.

A sort of sigh escaped Mauler. A sigh of relief. They lay there a tangled mass of arms and legs. The referee stood over them uncertainly. He couldn't count them both out.

Suddenly Mauler caught the eye of Dix. It inspired him. He made an effort to rise, but the mind of Socker was not as numb as his body. He clung with all his remaining strength to the torso of Mauler Mike. The latter gave up in despair.

"Yuh don't git up without yuh carry me wit' yuh!" grated Socker.

Once more the referee was threatening that dread "no contest" ruling. Each fighter looked cautiously at the other. In the next few seconds the fight would be won or lost. Both knew that. Had either held up his chin for a fair chance, the other could not have hit it.

Then the light of an idea illumined the eyes of Socker. He got his knees under him and raised his body. Somehow he eluded the grasp of the Mauler and got one foot under himself. The crowd was cheering wildly now. Dix was screaming hoarse commands and threats at Mauler.

"Leave him up!" he bellowed. "Then take yer ten count for gettin' up yourself."

It was the one plan that was workable, as the Mauler readily saw. Socker got to his feet and skidded around the ring on knees bent almost double. The referee began counting over Mauler. As he did so Socker discovered that he could not stand still. He had to keep moving or sink to the floor.

He managed to guide his course so as to keep clear of the ropes. The faces of the crowd were a mere blur that oscillated dizzily. At least he knew Mauler could never catch him.

Mauler was on his feet now. He managed to get hold of the ropes with his left, and there he stood, steadying himself and looking around in an attempt to locate Socker.

"I'll do ut!" Socker was muttering to himself. "It'll work!"

He guided his staggering steps in the direction of the Mauler. The crowd yelled a wild approval and sprang upon chairs in anticipation of what was to come. Only hazily was the Mauler visible to Socker, but he steered a straight course.

As he approached the Mauler rolled his eyes helplessly. The right that had seemed a sure bet to win for him hung lifeless at his side. The left clutched the rope in the one hold that kept him upright. He might as well have had no hands at all.

Socker gave no heed to hitting. He just crashed into the form of his adversary, on over him, and into the ropes, where he hung

like some great spider. The Mauler collapsed and stayed collapsed. Once more the referee was mystified. From the security of the ropes that held him upright Socker coughed out of flattened lungs and managed to gasp at the third man in the ring:

"Gawd, man, ain't yuh never gonna count? Can't yuh see w'en a guy's licked?"

And thus it was that the Mauler listened to the fatal ten being tolled over him while Socker Dooley had the unexpected joy of once more looking down instead of up while the count was being made.

That night in the hotel lobby an enthusiastic gathering proclaimed the arrival of the victorious Socker. He swaggered into the place with no trace of the battle he had just survived. On all sides were people who were happy in possession of funds that Socker had won for them.

"You guys might uh been a little scared there for a while," grinned Socker in truly deprecatory manner, "but I ain't been in

de game fer years without learnin' somethin'. I had dat bird any time I wanted him after de second round. But I was afraid ter take a chanst on bustin' me knuckle. Mebbe you guys ain't 'jerry' to ut, but—I'm as good as matched wit' Dempsey fer nex' summer if he don't run out of ut!"

And because of their admiration for this great fighter and the rare ability and judgment that was his, the residents of Ginkburg made up a purse for him from the winnings he had brought them.

Fickle Fate had again cast her best fortunes upon the passing Socker. As he left the hotel to catch the early morning train for the East he passed a little group at the door who were still talking over the fight of the night before.

"This man Dooley's got everything!" one of them proclaimed knowingly. "If he fights Dempsey he'll give him a battle."

"You sed ut, kid," agreed Socker vehemently. "Stowin' away dese guys is a evenin's pleasure fer me!"



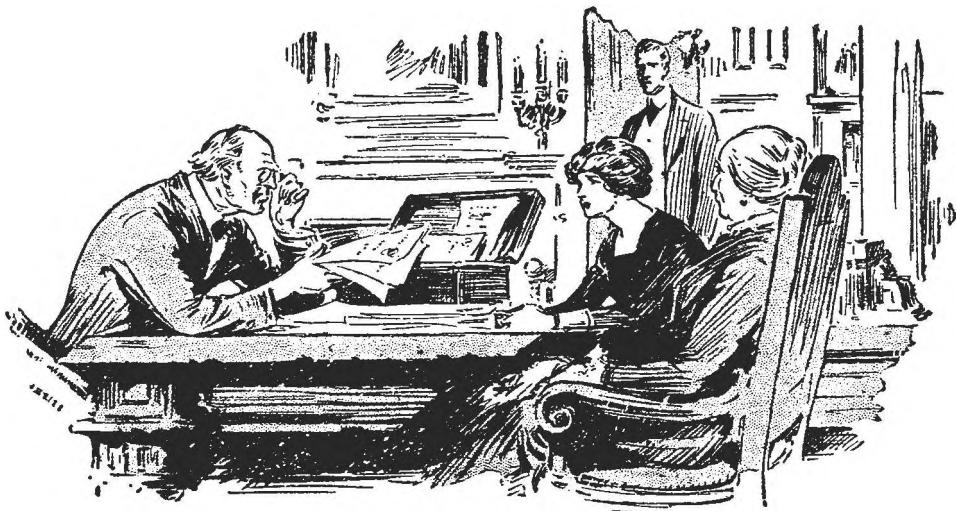
THE IRON-KNEED

SQUIRREL-COATS and coon-wraps,
Not as Lobby loon-traps
Do I see them since I've steeped in our good old times;
But as winter shags for men,
Breasters of the blizzards when
Pewter pennies could buy more than our silver dimes.

Squirrel-tails and coon-caps!
Scant the afternoon naps
For the stripe of Marion, spit of Daniel Boone,
One the flail of Cherokee,
The other sharper than Shawnee,
Adventurers that aimed as high as if they sought the moon.

Squirrel-coats and coon-wraps,
Covering no June-laps
Flower-soft like Luxury's: these men were iron-kneed
They'd have scotched the parlor snake,
Indian giver of tea and cake,
Trenchermen and tankardmen of blizzard-white breed!

Richard Butler Glaenzer.



A Million to One Chance

By **ELIZABETH YORK MILLER**

Author of "The Ledbury Fist," "The Greatest Gamble," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PRINCESS OR CINDERELLA?

THREE'S the Priory—you can see it across the meadow."

Julie Duplessus gasped with astonishment, and Jack Kennard dug his hands into the pockets of his ulster and told himself that the wealth of the Beauforts must be beyond his limited imagination.

He frowned as he glanced at the clear profile of the girl who was his wife. So haughty, so coldly serene behind the glittering barricade of her riches, she became in that moment unattainable.

There it lay, Beaufort Priory, one of the noble country houses of England; its granite walls hung with the ivy of centuries;

its broad terraces and great arched gateway through which a coach and four could drive to the inner quadrangle; its clock tower and cobbled bridge over what had once been a moat. The Priory had been lost to the Beauforts for a hundred years before Carol's father bought it back again.

"It is all—yours!" Julie Duplessus exclaimed faintly, as the car slid swiftly along the driveway—half a mile from the entrance gates to the mansion itself.

"Yes, it is all mine," Carol replied, thrilling a little.

Although London was fog bound that morning, the countryside lay under a blazing sun, which contradiction so often happens. The air was still, and as the car passed under the arched tower gate into the court-

yard one felt that a purposeful hush pervaded the atmosphere.

The main doorway was flung open and two footmen appeared. From their demeanor, Carol knew at once that the message concerning her uncle was a true one.

The housekeeper, in softly rustling black silk, hurried forward to welcome her.

"This is my husband, Mrs. Blake," she said.

The housekeeper dropped an old-fashioned curtsey.

"And my uncle?" Carol asked.

"There's not much hope, miss—I should say, madam. I'm afraid not."

"Tell me."

"Well, he wasn't really so bad until yesterday. Just influenza, as you might say. Miss Beaufort called in Dr. Ransome from the village, and he told the colonel to keep to his bed.

"Well, you know, miss—madam—the colonel's more used to giving orders than taking 'em. He would get up. He spent all yesterday in the library going over business papers and things. Seems as if he knew he was in for it.

"A dozen times he was on the telephone to Mr. Barnes, and Miss Beaufort couldn't do nothing with him. When Dr. Ransome called again in the evening he said he must have Dr. Izzard down. He couldn't take the responsibility alone. Dr. Izzard's with the colonel now."

"He really is dangerously ill." Carol could scarcely comprehend it.

"Yes, madam. Dr. Izzard says we must be prepared for the worst." There was sympathy for the young mistress in Mrs. Blake's eyes, but no trace of moisture.

"And my aunt? I must go to her at once."

"Miss Beaufort's resting just now, madam. I suggest that you have some tea. You must be tired after your long drive. I'll send in tea and then see about your rooms." The housekeeper glanced a little dubiously at Kennard and Julie Duplessus. "I had your room got ready, Miss Carol—I mean, madam. But Miss Beaufort didn't say anything about—"

"Just tuck me in wherever it's most convenient, Mrs. Blake," Jack said.

"The tapestry room," Carol suggested. Mrs. Blake was surprised, but concealed it. The tapestry room was in the west wing, whereas the apartments occupied by the family were in the eastern one.

"And give Miss Duplessus the powder closet next my dressing room," Carol said, thus disposing of the matter. "I should like to see Dr. Izzard."

"Yes, madam. I'll tell him you are here."

At that moment a decrepit cab from the station lumbered up, depositing Mr. Barnes, the solicitor. He had a worried expression and he was burdened with an immense tin dispatch box marked with the name of Colonel James Beaufort.

Jack Kennard felt out of it all, as he had from the moment Beaufort Priory was pointed out to him across the lush meadows. He wondered what on earth he was doing here, anyway; how small his own offering to Carol could be, even if she condescended to take it.

Until now he hadn't thought of himself exactly as a poor man, despite the splendor of the house in Grosvenor Square. That house had made him feel sorry for Carol. The Priory gave him serious material for thought.

He could give her his love, supposing it were ever acceptable, and nothing more of the slightest value, as far as she was concerned. The modest but beautiful home of his dreams crumbled into the air from which it had arisen.

She already had her homes—too many of them, and too overpowering. In effect, she had the whole world, and she didn't want his love. In that moment there was a certain kinship of feeling between Jack Kennard and Father Dawley.

He tried to recall that it was only yesterday when she had seemed to be so cozily at home in Mrs. Carey's studio.

They had their tea, at which Dr. Izzard and the solicitor joined them, but the doctor made short work of it. He had to get back to the sick room.

The solicitor, a thin, elderly man, whose well known city firm had attended to the affairs of the Beauforts for thirty years, stared mournfully at Carol and said little.

In all delicacy they could not discuss legal matters just yet.

The French girl, taken in charge by Mrs. Blake, went up to unpack Carol's belongings and Carol was soon informed that her Aunt Pamela would receive her. It was like Aunt Pam to hold herself aloof, to instill awe-inspiring ceremony into any crisis.

As Carol hurried along the endless corridor to Miss Beaufort's suite, she pictured her aunt severely imposing, detached from any outward semblance of grief, as she had been when Carol's father died. Aunt Pam would be distressed, but she would not show it.

To Carol's intense surprise, however, she found Miss Beaufort in a state of agitation bordering on collapse. In her younger days she had been a great beauty and still preserved many traces of the rather cold fascination she had shed about her as a girl.

To-day she seemed all gone to pieces; her hair was ruffled, her face blotched from weeping. She began to tremble violently when Carol came into the room and sank down in a chair close to the fire, crouching and quivering like a sick animal.

"Oh, poor Aunt Pam!" Carol cried, forgetting all her own grievances at the sight of that wretched figure. "I'm so sorry for you, dear. Perhaps he'll get better. Don't cry, dear."

Miss Beaufort straightened up for an instant, then her shoulders sagged again.

"It's all right," she muttered thickly. "Only—you see I'm in no condition to meet your husband. Was it necessary to bring him here—at such a time."

This was more like the Aunt Pam whom Carol could understand.

"Don't you think he ought to be here?" she asked.

"You knew your uncle's wishes. I suppose even while he lies on his death bed you won't give in," Miss Beaufort sobbed.

"You mean, have my marriage annulled?"

Miss Beaufort nodded and shook out a fresh handkerchief, which she applied to her eyes.

"I'm afraid I can't let anybody else decide that for me," Carol replied.

"Will you appoint him to manage your affairs after—after poor Jim—"

"Dear Aunt Pam, I hadn't thought about anything of that sort."

"You will have to think shortly."

One of the nurses entered the room and beckoned silently. Miss Beaufort jumped to her feet, made a wavering motion to smooth her ruffled hair, and turned a white face to Carol.

"Come," she said.

"Colonel Beaufort has passed away, sir," one of the solemn footmen announced some half an hour later. He lifted the ponderous tea tray and paced out with it.

Mr. Barnes coughed and took the precaution to look at his watch.

"Fifteen minutes to six," he said as if that had an important bearing on the matter.

Jack Kennard and the solicitor had been left to their own devices in the great entrance hall, with its tapestries and stags' heads and the mammoth chimneyplace, where one might almost believe the proverbial ox could be roasted. They had talked about the weather and other manufactured subjects. From time to time Mr. Barnes would break off in the midst of a sentence to stare meditatively at the tin dispatch case he had brought with him.

"It—er—seems to have been very sudden," Jack replied awkwardly to his companion's comment on the time.

"Well, in a manner of speaking, yes. The old gentleman's been breaking up for some time. We knew it. We all knew it. He was ripe to be carried off by anything."

Mr. Barnes's manner implied that he himself was a two-year-old by comparison with the late Colonel Beaufort.

Jack fidgeted uneasily. He wondered if there wasn't something he ought to do at once to show his helpfulness. Had Carol been tremendously fond of her uncle? There would be telegrams to send, the funeral arrangements to be made.

But these people were so self-sufficient. It seemed as if a Beaufort funeral, like a Beaufort wedding, would carry itself to a triumphant conclusion by its own magnitude. Very likely Mr. Barnes had already

made the arrangements when all was lacking but the corpse.

"Perhaps you would like to go to your room," Jack suggested, smiling grimly to himself at daring to take on the rôle of host even to this small extent.

"Presently. Will you come into the library a moment? Unless, of course, Mrs. Kennard—"

"Oh, my wife will be with her aunt," Jack replied.

He wondered if Mr. Barnes knew how precariously Carol and he were married. Colonel Beaufort would surely have taken his solicitor into confidence on that subject. But it soon became apparent that Colonel Beaufort had done nothing of the sort.

"Fine old place this," murmured Mr. Barnes as he lifted his dispatch box. "Great pity! Terrible shame. Mr. Francis would turn in his grave if he knew. I mean in his coffin. There's the most amazing vault under the chapel. You'll have the pleasure of seeing it. The last of the Beauforts. All of that name gone now—I mean this family. Mr. James was the last. Perhaps it's as well he didn't marry. He never had a head on him for much of anything."

Jack caught only snatches of this speech, and these he did not understand.

Mr. Barnes knew the way of the house and exhibited it with the pride of an official guide. The library was magnificent, but it had a cold, unused look. All those books. It would take a lifetime to read them.

Jack was just enough of a student to feel his fingers itch at the sight of those thousands of warm, mellow bindings. Walter Rathbone would have gone stark, staring mad at the idea of any one person being able to command such a treasure house for his or her personal indulgence.

"Tidy lot of books, eh? That portrait over the mantel is a genuine Franz Hals. Well, there isn't much of a fire in here. I wonder if I might venture to smoke?"

"I don't see why not," Jack replied.

The presence of the dead seemed very remote in this vast establishment.

Mr. Barnes produced a shabby old pipe and loaded it.

"Strictly speaking, what I want to say

to you, Mr. Kennard, is unprofessional. However, you are Miss Carol's husband, and as a humane man, I feel that she ought—in a manner of speaking—to be prepared for the worst. I am not acting entirely upon my own discretion. Only yesterday, poor Colonel Beaufort begged me over the telephone to prepare her. Properly speaking, you are the one to do it."

Jack moistened his lips which had gone suddenly dry with apprehension.

"For what am I to prepare her?" he asked.

Mr. Barnes gave him a commiserating glance.

"Colonel Beaufort got through her money. That's it in a nutshell. He never had any head for business and Mr. Francis ought to have known that. Everything the colonel touched went wrong. He shouldn't have touched anything—but he had full control and could do as he liked.

"He fancied himself buying and selling shares and messing about generally, and he laid his failures to the war. That might have had something to do with it, but not all—not all, by any means. For two years he's met your wife's supposed income out of capital.

"In another year the crash would have been inevitable. As it is, we may be able—after everything is settled up—to make a little income of a thousand or so for her. Miss Pamela has a private settlement from Mr. Francis, which leaves her modestly independent."

It appeared to the solicitor that Mr. Kennard was scarcely attending to his momentous news.

In fact, Jack's thoughts were far a-field. His dream home had come into being again.

If it were true that Carol had lost her heritage, might there not be some hope that she would find it again, in a different way?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE HEART KNOWS.

IT was all over, and what a business it had been. Jack Kennard had settled down in the vast library which by now had become quite a companionable apart-

ment, with the extra tables put in for the convenience of Mr. Barnes's multitudinous documents and the accommodation of the two secretaries and lawyer's clerk.

Miss Duplessus took her turn at the typewriter, having volunteered the information that she was accomplished in that direction, and proved invaluable. She was an intelligent little thing and a hard worker. The library at Beaufort Priory had become a teeming office for winding up affairs of the estate.

Through it all the two black robed women, aunt and niece, moved as in some sinister dream. Miss Pamela had suspected that everything was not well with her brother's financial industry, but she had not remotely suspected the worst, and it was the worst which had happened.

As they went into it, deeper and deeper, it became apparent that when Mr. Barnes had said there might be an income of a thousand or so for Carol, he had been rather too optimistic. In sheer panic Colonel Beaufort must have thrown good money after bad, hoping to retrieve his disastrous speculations. The vast fortune which Carol's father had built up was scattered to the winds.

Miss Pamela, luckily for herself, was snugly sheltered from the gale. Some instinct had made her keep her investments in her own hands. Tearfully she said she would share what she had with Carol; they two would make a little home for themselves somewhere. She was quite consistent in her ignoring of Kennard.

The mortgages over Beaufort Priory weighed heavily on her. Of course they need not turn out this very moment, she understood that, but it was a great anxiety to feel that she might be called upon to help with the running expenses.

Carol, herself, was dazed. Her strongest feeling was one of pity for Uncle Jim. No wonder he had refused when she wanted to make settlement on Lloyd.

Poor Uncle Jim—he must have lived a dog's life these last few years. No wonder he had tried to persuade her to have her marriage annulled. He had gone in constant fear of having to face the facts which his folly had produced.

Yet it was difficult to reconcile one's memory of him with this idea of a haunted man. Uncle Jim had always appeared so full of self-confidence, so pompously secure of himself, so dictatorial to others; and while he must have spent quite a lot of time blundering on the Stock Exchange, one remembered him best as setting out for his club where the rubbers of bridge went on until the small hours. Auction bridge had appeared to be the only serious business of his life.

And now he was dead—"Timed it nicely," as Mr. Barnes said—the last of the Beauforts, laid to rest in the vault of his forefathers by the kindness of the war profiteer who now practically owned the Priory, and all that in it lay, to the very coffins under the chapel.

There had been a great gathering of the clan, but among them were no male Beauforts. Here and there a spinster cousin bore the name, and there were plenty of sons of married daughters, but they were not Beauforts.

Carol had received one letter from Sybil Carey which she answered. Mrs. Carey wrote, without knowing of the financial crash, just a formal letter of condolence, and the mere announcement that she was going away somewhere.

Father Dawley, much depressed, came down for the funeral. The mission was endowed sufficiently to keep it going as it was, but the endowment allowed for no luxuries in the way of charity, and Father Dawley felt that in some way he had been treated unfairly. He found it very hard to get it through his head that things were as bad as they were, and he did not urge Carol to return to St. Bede's.

She reminded him of his promise to find employment for Julie Duplessus, and he replied vaguely that he would try, but the parish was not very prosperous, so many poor people, out of work, *et cetera*, that it was doubtful if he could do anything.

He was a little cold toward Carol, and it was from him she first learned that some of her worldly importance had vanished. She did not realize that Father Dawley's coldness was not merely a matter of money, although that had something to do with it.

He was genuinely hurt with her for seeming to prefer Jack Kennard to St. Bede's.

During that period, Carol found her greatest comfort in the companionship of Julie Duplessus. Aunt Pam, of course, did not in the least approve of the French girl. She said she was "a common little thing," and Carol would soon find out how impossible it was to look after every waif and stray who solicited her charity.

But worst of all, this girl's history was dead against her. She had been, on her own confession, one of a gang of thieves. Beaufort Priory was filled with valuables. Who could say, with a girl like that in the house, what might not happen?

Dandy Grogan, according to the newspaper reports which Aunt Pam had read, had been Julie's lover, and he was still at large. For all they knew, she might be in communication with him.

In vain did Carol protest that, having betrayed the gang, Julie went in fear of her life from Dandy Grogan; that the girl had never willingly lent herself to that life. Aunt Pam knew better, and was as disagreeable as she well could be.

The attachment of the French girl was sincere. She wept when she learned that "all this" did not belong to Mrs. Kennard, after all; that Mrs. Kennard had been stripped of her earthly goods. She toiled at the typewriter to save the cost of an extra clerk, and sat up late at night sewing for Carol's benefit. For an hour in the afternoons they walked in the vast park—Carol for exercise; Julie, in painfully high-heeled shoes, for sheer love of Carol.

"It is so sad, for you, *madame*—but it might be so much worse," Julie would say, determined to be cheerful. "With such a kind and handsome husband, you are not poor, really. Me—I hope one day to be married, also."

"Do you? Why?" Carol would ask.

"Ah, *madame*, surely the answer is in your own heart!"

But one day, in the midst of this sort of thing, it suddenly struck Julie Duplessus that she had made a colossal blunder. She flushed up to the eyes, stumbled in her speech, and said no more.

She hadn't thought of it before, that this

young couple, so recently married, inhabited separate wings of the palace—so to speak—and, as far as one gathered, never saw each other except at meals and when Carol came to sign documents in the library.

Why, Julie herself had a great deal more to do with Mr. Kennard than his own wife. Sometimes they had worked together until midnight, with never a single interruption from Mrs. Kennard. Had Mrs. Kennard objected?

The French girl was shrewd, and understood human nature. She could detect no sign of jealousy in Carol's manner toward herself, and while Julie rather admired Jack, and thought his jokes too clever for words, she was quite innocent of any feeling to which a wife could take exception.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE MAN WITH HENNA HAIR.

IT was Christmas Eve, and James Beaufort had lain in his coffin nearly three weeks, when an uninvited sinister guest came to the Priory. He was so modest about the sort of reception he might receive that, although he had arrived early in the day in the guise of an inspector from the local waterworks, it was not until after midnight that he intended to have a look around.

All day he had waited philosophically in a cold attic room, sustained by a pocketful of sandwiches, a flask of whisky, and innumerable cigarettes. In one of his pockets was a sharp-bladed, ugly looking knife, and in his heart was murder. He also had a large black bag for what plunder might come his way.

But murder was his real mission. Dandy Grogan had that temperament which never forgives an injury, and he was not one to count the cost. For instance, it mattered not to him that the mediæval architecture of the Priory admitted of but one entrance—or exit—for tradesman, commoner or peer, and that when at night the massive gates under the clock tower were closed, whoever was inside and wanted to get out might experience considerable difficulty.

There was a sheer drop of twenty-five feet from the ground floor windows to the grassy bed of the moat, and a watchman was on duty all night. Grogan, however, had no fear but that he could negotiate that drop without injury to himself. He was as lithe as a cat. His greatest problem was to locate the bedroom of the girl into whose heart he meant to plunge his knife.

Downstairs there had been no special attempt at festival. Turkey and plum pudding appeared at dinner mechanically, as it were. Also a bottle of '49 port which the butler produced at a strong hint from Mr. Barnes, who felt that he needed it.

There had been no thought of Christmas gifts. The day was upon them before anybody realized it. After dinner a table for bridge was made up, Miss Beaufort, driven by boredom, consenting to waive her antipathy to Kennard for the evening. They played in one of the small drawing-rooms, and she graciously permitted the men to smoke.

Julie Duplessus went into the library to finish off a batch of letters.

She felt a little melancholy. What on earth was to be her future? Miss Beaufort's hints, and the obvious situation which unfolded itself in every letter she typed, told her that even were Mrs. Kennard of a mind to employ her indefinitely in the capacity of secretary companion, there would be neither the money nor the reason for such a situation. But depressing as it was, this Christmas was infinitely better than last, and perhaps next year's would show a further improvement.

Tap, tap, tap, went the typewriter, under her slim fingers. Anyway, she was earning her board and keep. All she wanted was to go on earning it. Tap, tap, tappity-tap.

What was there wrong between Mr. and Mrs. Kennard? They ought to be so happy. It couldn't be because Mrs. Kennard had lost all her money. Mr. Kennard wasn't that sort of gentleman at all. Were most marriages unhappy? So soon, too. Tappity-tap, tap, tap-tap.

Upstairs in the secluded attic of his choice, Dandy Grogan rose from the trunk upon which he had been reclining, stretched

his stiffened muscles and thought he might as well spy out the lay of the land a little. He knew the ways of big houses.

It was that quiet hour after dinner when the family fed and, their wants satisfied for the moment, the servants would be gathered for their own evening meal. A little later the maids would be turning down beds and the footmen replenishing fires, but just now one could count upon comparative privacy.

He ventured forth and made his way down to the bedroom floor. His instinct was cunning in such matters, and it was scarcely a couple of moments before he discovered Carol's rooms and the powder closet adjoining. This, beyond a doubt, was Julie Duplessus's bedroom, for the proof was there on the mantel, the treasured photograph of her father in its battered frame which accompanied her everywhere.

So she was here. He had feared a little that the rumors which had reached him were not reliable. One of his pals who lived in Limehouse had told him that she was first staying at St. Bede's Mission, but had gone into the country with Mrs. Kennard. She was here.

And now that he was here, in her room, wouldn't it be as well to stay? He took a quick survey of the possible hidingplaces. It was decidedly risky. One side of the room was occupied by built-in cupboards, originally all shelved, but some had been converted into hanging wardrobes.

He investigated them and found one stacked with household linen and blankets. It was scarcely likely that Julie would have any reason to use that one.

Ascertaining that the door was pierced at the top for ventilation, Grogan burrowed down among the blankets and shut himself in. It was much more comfortable here than in the cheerless attic. He finished his whisky, and decided that a little nap wouldn't do him any harm. He could sleep quite expertly with an eye and an ear open.

Tap, tappity-tap, tap. Very near the end of her task, now. She might as well go to bed, although it was still early. Only half past ten.

Miss Duplessus drew out the last typed

sheet and laid it together with the others on Mr. Barnes's desk, ready for him to sign to-morrow.

To-morrow was Christmas Day, and Father Dawley was coming down to hold a special service for them. It was a feast day, yet no feast had been prepared for the heart of poor Mrs. Kennard.

"It is a very sad world," said Julie to herself. "I am young, but I have found that out, already."

Yes, she might as well go to bed.

One of the footmen came in.

"A gentleman has called to see you, miss. Mr. Rathbone."

Julie was puzzled only for the merest moment. Then she remembered that the clerks and messengers from Mr. Barnes's City office were in the habit of appearing when one least expected them. She only hoped this would not mean more work for her to-night.

"All right," she drawled indifferently.

And the next moment she was face to face with her fate.

True, she did not instantly recognize him as such. Mr. Rathbone's appearance was very much against him; he was handicapped at the start, but he soon made up for that.

For five solid hours he had sheltered himself from observation behind the trunk of a giant oak tree in the park from where he could command a view of the great gates under the clock tower. He even waited an hour after they had been closed for the night. And before then—that is to say, before five o'clock—he had kept a vigil, all along the line, that seemed to have been endless.

He was frozen stiff; hungry to the point where it had become ravenous; even thirsty. Not only his nose, but his whole face was blue, and the sight of it, corpselike and decorated with those extraordinary spectacles, caused Julie to start back with a faint exclamation of alarm, as he unwound the cozy muffler which should have warmed him, but somehow hadn't.

"You don't know how glad I am to see you, Miss Duplessus," he began. "Alive and well. I must confess I was some worried."

"I do not think I understand. Have I met you?"

"Well, you might have noticed me," said Rathbone, with becoming modesty. "I was in the court all through that coroner's business. I noticed you."

"No, I didn't," Julie said frankly. "What is it you wish of me, Mr.—er—"

"Rathbone. Walter. That's my name. Don't be alarmed, Miss Duplessus. You are in no danger now that I am here."

Julie took another step backward, which brought her within reaching distance of the bell.

"What is it you wish of me?" she repeated.

"I'll just check my notes, if I may," he replied, whipping a fat copybook out of his pocket. "Then, if I am right, we can proceed."

Julie laid her hand on the bell-push, ready for any emergency. Was he mad, this blue-faced young man with the hideous goggles?

"You must tell me, should I be wrong in any one particular—which I doubt," he declared, absorbedly flipping over the pages of his well-filled book. "Ah, here we are—'Duplessus, Julie. Remarkably interesting girl. Gave evidence that—' Wait a minute. The next page, I think. Yes, this is it—'Miss Duplessus said that Grogan, the wanted man, was a very desperate character and that she had reason to fear he might take vengeance on her for what she had done.' Is that right, Miss Duplessus?"

Dry lipped, Julie nodded. "Are you a detective?" she faltered.

Rathbone seemed to consider this question before replying. One could almost see him turning it over in his mind.

"I'm working on the Hugh Lloyd case," he said finally, "but independently of the police, if you understand what I mean."

"Oh—a private detective."

"Something like that," he admitted. "I'm a scientist, really. I work entirely on scientific methods—now, against your name I've got these further notes: 'Living for the present at St. Bede's Mission in Limehouse. Presumably under the protection of Mrs. Kennard. Question, why? An-

swer, see above'—'left on Tuesday with Mrs. Kennard for Beaufort Priory. Great Beaufort, Kent'—is this correct, Miss Duplessus?"

"I think it was Tuesday that we came down," Julie agreed.

Rathbone shut his note-book. "There's lots more, but I can tell it to you—the fact is, I've been thinking about you—in connection with this case, of course—and I've been worried about this fellow Grogan.

"I went to Scotland Yard and got copies of his photographs and full description, and there's a girl who lives in my boarding house told me she'd met him once, playing the swell in the West End. I got her to tell me all about him she could. For one thing, she said his hair was a funny red. If he hadn't been a man, she'd have thought he dyed it."

"He does," Julie put in breathlessly. "He uses henna. I don't know whether it's for a disguise or vanity."

Rathbone glowed. He was thawing out, now, and had quite forgotten his hunger. And Julie forgot the bell.

"You have seen Grogan? You know where he is?" she asked.

But the American was too much of an artist to be hurried.

"This morning it struck me that I needed a day in the country," he began afresh, "and the Lloyd case being on my mind, I decided to combine work with pleasure. Anyway, I wanted to have a look at this Priory. I came down in a third-class compartment with a most unpleasant looking fellow, and he asked me some questions about Great Beaufort which I couldn't answer. I didn't tell him I was going there, myself."

"Grogan! Did he come here?" The girl was as white as a sheet.

"There now—didn't I tell you it's all right? Just you listen. Yes, I came to the conclusion that the fellow was Grogan. I don't believe I'm mistaken. His natural hair is a sort of mousey brown, isn't it? Well, he's letting it go back to brown, but it still shows the henna—

"He jumped out of the carriage almost before the train stopped, while I waited until it was starting again. By that time

he had disappeared. I inquired my way to the Priory, finding out that visitors are allowed in the park, and pretty soon along comes this fellow, wearing a peaked cap with *Inspector* written on it and carrying one of those iron hook things that they use to open the lids of gas and water mains.

"In the train, he'd had it wrapped up in paper. I thought from the shape that it was a golf stick. And in the train he was wearing a soft hat.

"I let him pass me, and he just threw me an indifferent look as though he'd never seen me before in his life. I saw him speak to the man at the gate, and then go on in, across the courtyard to what I took to be the kitchen quarters.

"Well, Miss Duplessus, the long and the short of it is that he hasn't come out. I've been hanging around all day, nothing to eat, frozen stiff, watching for that bogus *Inspector*, who if he isn't Dandy Grogan, this is where I retire from the detective business, here and now."

"Why did you ask for me? Why didn't you ask for Mrs. Kennard?" she gasped.

Rathbone was as frank as he was methodical.

"Because I wasn't so sure that your stunt in court of being so afraid of Grogan wasn't bluff—that's why. I thought you might know he was here. Get me? I don't want to insult you, but I never take anything on trust. I have to prove it. That's my nature. I can't help myself."

This was not time to quarrel over insults. Julie's little hands clenched together and she gave an apprehensive start as a log crashed in the fireplace.

"Oh!—but you say he is here, *here!* Where?"

"Don't worry. This is a big place. He's hiding until everybody's gone to bed, and then he's going to come out and pinch the spoons and any other jewelry he can lay his hands on."

"He has come to kill me!" the girl whispered, her eyes searching the shadowy corners of the room. "If it is true that he is here."

"Well, pull yourself together, kid."

Rathbone took off his overcoat, although not invited to do so, and cast a speculative

eye on the fire-irons. A poker would make a good emergency weapon.

"I must tell Mr. Kennard," Julie said. "But I am afraid—afraid to cross the hall alone."

She stumbled as she went toward the bell and Rathbone considerately caught her, with the effect that there was an immediate improvement in his circulation.

"I'll tell you what," he said hurriedly. "They'll give Grogan at least five years in jail, and long before then you might be living in California. You never know. It's a grand climate. You wouldn't be afraid of him in California."

Julie smiled wanly. "Do you live there?" she asked.

"When I'm at home."

"I don't think I should be afraid—where you are. You are so clever."

Rathbone tried not to feel puffed up. He had known from the first that Julie Duplessus was the girl for him.

Very few women had told him that he was clever. The ordinary female brain was not capable of appreciating him.

Miss Beaufort stared indignantly at the footman who had come to interrupt a most important rubber.

"Miss Duplessus wishes to see Mr. Kennard?" she repeated coldly. "What can you possibly mean, Turner?"

The footman looked uncomfortable.

"I'm sorry, miss. I was told not to alarm you. But a detective has called, asking for Miss Duplessus, and he says there's a burglar in the house. Mr. Kennard might wish to ring up the police."

Jack rose hastily, followed by Mr. Barnes.

"A detective," exclaimed Miss Beaufort. "He asked for that girl. Did you hear, Carol? What did I tell you?"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE BITER BITTEN.

CAROL said nothing in reply to her aunt's taunt, but hurried out in the wake of Jack and Mr. Barnes.

The footman's announcement had been

suggestive. The "detective" had asked for Miss Duplessus, and there was a burglar in the house. If the little French girl, so childlike in many ways, had deceived her, Carol felt she could have no more faith in human nature.

There was much confusion in the library. Jack had sent at once for the housekeeper and menservants, and they were arriving in various states of dress and semi-dress. The ponderous Carson, brought down from Grosvenor Square, had exchanged his ceremonial coat for a comfortable old one of black alpaca; the housekeeper's feet were encased in red felt slippers, and there was a general air about her of one who had been on the point of going to bed; the knife and boots boy was in his shirt sleeves and baize apron.

Directly Carol set eyes on Rathbone, she remembered where she had seen him before, and in whose company. Was he the "detective?" Apparently so. Such an oddly familiar way he had, of button-holing Jack as though they were equals if not fast friends. She caught a little of what he was saying.

"Now, sir, I guess we needn't take up too much time over this. It's that fellow, Grogan. I've talked to Miss Duplessus, and she's of a similar opinion to mine. Just find out if an 'Inspector' of something or other called here about lunch time."

Julie Duplessus, white and trembling though she was, did not impress Carol as looking guilty.

"Julie, do you know anything about this?" Carol asked.

"Ah, *madame*, if it is true that he is here, then he has come to kill me. But I do not know. The American gentleman may be mistaken. It is such a strange story that he told me. He asks to see me because he says I may know something. But I know nothing. I am only afraid—a coward, *madame*. They killed my courage, those people. I want to go far away, forget; I want to go to—to California!"

The knife and boots boy supplied evidence. He talked most reluctantly, because he had a feeling that somebody would hold him to blame. His apprehensions

were justified. Under the merciless cross-examining of Mr. Barnes he nearly collapsed.

Yes, he was the one who had been encountered by the man from the water-works. He was terribly busy at the time; certainly the man was an accredited official; "Inspector" was on his cap—a blue cap with white letters.

"And what did you do?" Mr. Barnes interrupted.

"Why, sir; I let him in."

"Where?"

"He said he had to examine the bathroom taps."

"Did you take him upstairs?"

"No, sir. He said he knew the way."

"Did you see him, again?"

"No, sir."

"Then, as far as you know, he is still on the premises?"

The knife and boots boy burst into tears and was roughly shaken by one of the younger footmen.

"I suggest that we ring up the local police and then organize a search," Rathbone said. "If my surmise is correct, and I've not the least doubt about it, we've got the fellow trapped."

Again Carol looked sharply at Julie, but it was plain that the French girl was guiltless.

"He is very clever," Julie said faintly. "And he carries a knife. Oh, *madame*, can we not lock ourselves up somewhere? You and Miss Beaufort and I."

"I think," said the housekeeper, "that I will take the maids down to my sitting room."

She did not like the idea of a trapped burglar who carried a knife.

"It would be as well," Jack replied. "Carson, you might remain here and look after the ladies."

Carson drew a deep breath of relief. He was old—had no stomach for a man hunt.

Mr. Barnes telephoned to the police station in Great Beaufort.

Dandy Grogan sat up, suddenly wide awake. It was close and stuffy in the cupboard with the blankets, and he had napped more soundly than he intended.

It must be long after midnight, now, yet the household had certainly not retired. It sounded as if they were having a game of hide-and-seek all over the place.

Could it be possible that they had got wind of him? He hadn't been very careful with his cigarette ends and sandwiches in that attic room, but it was not occupied. Who would have troubled to pay a midnight visit there on Christmas Eve?

Even in the cupboard he could feel the stealthy patter, patter of footsteps, and hear a murmur of voices. They were getting closer.

The devil! He was trapped!

He stumbled to his feet and fumbled for the handle of the door. There was none on the inside. For the first time in his career he had blundered badly; had failed to remember that cupboard doors only have a handle on the outside. He put his shoulder to it, then waited.

The feet and voices were in the corridor outside Julie's room.

"I've said right along that here's where we'll find him, if he meant to harm that girl."

It was the American's voice; the fellow who had been in the train, and afterward he passed in the park.

Dandy Grogan ground his teeth and swore a mighty oath that if ever he got out of this— He reached for his knife, opened it, and set his shoulder to the door, this time in earnest.

But there again he blundered, for as he prepared to crash his way out, the door was flung open from the outside and the impetus sent him sprawling halfway across the floor.

Rathbone made a brilliant attempt to suffocate him before he could rise with a pillow snatched from Julie's bed, and one of the country constables, taken by surprise, stumbled and fell heavily across him with back-breaking effect, but Grogan had not earned his reputation as a desperate character by allowing such little things to impede him.

There was a sound of ripping cloth, and the amateur detective, with a gusty "Ouch!" fell back nursing a slashed arm, while Grogan wriggled out from under the

policeman, picked up a chair and hurled it full into the faces of the other men who were crowding into the room, and then made a dash for the window. He had it up and was over the sill and out, kicking himself free of Jack Kennard, who all but caught him by one leg.

Kennard looked out. It was as black as the bottom of a well.

"How far?" asked some one.

"Do you hear anything?"

The answer was profound silence.

"I believe he's got clean away," muttered Kennard.

They hurried out, one of the constables carrying a bruised forehead, and Mr. Barnes an arm which felt broken, if it was not. Only Walter Rathbone was left behind, and in the excitement he was not missed. He sat on the edge of Julie's bed, swaying dizzily, clutching a blood-soaked coat sleeve.

Unless he stopped that pretty quick, he'd be done for. It was beastly; he was going to die. If only he had three arms, then he might manage to tie one of them up. Yes, this was the end. He was dying; the world faded gently away.

When he woke up again he was in heaven, and a pale-haired girl angel had coaxed a warm hand under his neck and was imploring him to "drink some of this" for her sake. He was comfortably bedded on a feathery cloud and wrapped around with fleecy down. His spectacles were gone. He probably didn't require them in heaven.

Deliriously he tried to obey the pale-haired angel. Had Grogan managed to slay Julie Duplessus also?

Presently he became aware of the fact that there were other angels ministering to him, and that a fire was roaring up a chimney not far away. Did they have fires in heaven? Also, the cloud on which he reclined so luxuriously had posts at the ends unholding a canopy.

"Feel better, old man?" one of the gentlemen angels inquired.

"Where am I?" Rathbone murmured.

"It's all right, you're in bed. Drink all you can of this—it's hot milk. Do you no

end of good. Then you'll go to sleep comfortably, eh?"

That must be a doctor angel.

"Am I dead?" Rathbone inquired, somewhat peeviously.

"Oh, no!" cried the pale-haired one. "And you are not going to die. Your poor arm, it is so nicely fixed, and soon will heal again. Is that not so, doctor?"

The doctor angel said that it was so.

Rathbone took their word for it. The hot milk was most welcome, and he drank all they would give him, and then he went blissfully to sleep, feeling like a noble lord in his canopied bed, with the luxurious fire roaring up the chimney and a young footman told off to keep him company on a couch in the dressing room next door, in case he needed anything during the night.

The next morning he realized that he was very much alive, indeed, and that the entire household at Beaufort Priory, including Aunt Pam, regarded him as a hero.

For Dandy Grogan had not escaped. In the plunge from the window he had broken both legs, and was now safely lodged in the prison hospital at Maidstone.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS LOADED."

A FORTNIGHT after Christmas, Sybil Carey came wearily back to her little house in Chelsea, from which she had flown in panic after that interview with the cashier at Todhunter's ironmongery. She had made one desperate attempt to get into touch with Jack Kennard, only to learn that he had gone out of town.

Then came the news of Colonel Beaufort's death, and Sybil guessed that Jack was at the Priory. She did not guess, however, that Carol's fortune had gone to smash.

Grogan's capture was recorded in the newspapers, but the police gave themselves full credit for that, and Walter Rathbone's name was not mentioned. If it had been, Sybil would not have identified him as the young man who had passed himself off as her brother in order to obtain information respecting the broken skylight.

She had spent a lonely Christmas on the Norfolk Broads in a small inn where she was the only guest. She had done a very little work and wept a great deal, which was unusual. It should have been the other way about. Of late years she had scarcely permitted herself ever to give way to the luxury of tears. They were too costly. The woman who weeps pays a dear price for her self-indulgence.

But something had happened seriously to disturb the vagabond ease of Sybil's life. It had always been there, lying in wait to catch her, although until recently she had managed to elude it. She wished, now, that she had fought Francis Beaufort when he threatened her. To be sure, he had had everything on his side. The facts against her were too strong.

She had disobeyed him, a small enough sin in its way, but the effects were far-reaching. She knew what he would have told the world had she defied him—that his real objection to her painting was because she wished to continue studying under her old master. She had adored her master, but Francis Beaufort did not understand such adoration, and neither would the world have understood it.

Her master, too, was dead now. He had come often to the little house in Chelsea. In those days her husband's business interests had necessitated his spending days and sometimes weeks in the north. Sybil had been comparatively free, and had used her freedom unwisely. For that folly, if it could be called such, she paid by parting from her daughter.

It did not satisfy her now that in a certain sense Carol was restored to her. The daughter did not know, and so the mother wept and longed and bitterly repented the solemn oath Francis Beaufort had wrung from her.

She had made her plans to winter in Italy, but the winter was passing and her plans still hung fire. She could not go before she saw Carol again.

Also, the mysterious young man who had inquired about her broken skylight was very much on her mind. He probably was a plain clothes police official. But how could he possibly have traced a connection be-

tween her house and the finding of Lloyd's body in East Sheen? There had been mention of particles of broken window glass at the inquest.

Were the police instituting a house to house search on that clew? And why this unnerving silence? It had lasted nearly a month now.

It was in this mood that Sybil returned to London. She found a few letters waiting for her—a long one from Carol—and was met by Sarah with the disconcerting news that a young American gentleman had called three times to see her. He had given the name of Mr. Rathbone, and said he came on a business matter.

Sybil tried to pull herself together. He likely was an agent commissioned by some natural history society to inquire into the merits of her work, and something in Carol's letter strengthened that belief.

First of all there was the news about Colonel Beaufort's unwise stewardship, although Carol dwelt lightly upon that. She merely said: "I am going to be dreadfully poor. In fact, I am, although there has been no outward change yet, and I don't quite realize it."

She went on to say that they were leaving Beaufort Priory within a few days. Aunt Pam was very much cut up about it, and very busy superintending the packing of her own personal possessions. Aunt Pam was going to spend the rest of the winter in Bournemouth.

Carol did not care to go to Bournemouth. She wished Mrs. Carey would let her come along to Italy. She wouldn't make a nuisance of herself.

Sybil frowned as she read this bit. Was Jack Kennard to have no say?

Then came a brief reference to him. "Jack has to go back to Cape Town almost immediately. He sails next week. I don't suppose I shall ever see him again, but he has been most kind during this trying time, and I am certainly grateful."

"Well," thought Sybil, with a sigh of resignation, "I suppose one cannot force love, but a little common sense ought to tell that child that Jack is a man in a million, and the very one to make her happy."

But most of Carol's letter was devoted

to a Mr. Rathbone who, Sybil gathered incorrectly, had been staying as a guest at the Priory when the man Dandy Grogan was captured. She wrote:

It was entirely owing to Mr. Rathbone that the burglar was caught. The man nearly killed him, too. It was a dreadful affair. Poor little Julie Duplessus would have collapsed, I think, except for the fact that she took on the duty of amusing and helping to nurse Mr. Rathbone. They are in love with each other and going to be married next month. He's a nice boy and awfully clever, and they are going straight out to his home in California, where he has a very good position waiting for him in a university.

Even Aunt Pam likes him, and his being here during such a trying time has been a perfect godsend, although we are scarcely in the mood or position to entertain.

Possibly, considering the letter as a whole and trying to guess from the general context what Carol in her hurry had left out, this Mr. Rathbone had been inspired by her to take an interest in natural history sketches. The reference to a university suggested it.

The letter was three days old. There was more than a chance that Carol might be in London. And Jack? Within a week, a few days now, he was going back to South Africa, alone, but not free. But Sybil would have her daughter. Carol wanted to be with her.

A thrill of deep joy warmed the mother's heart, and she tried to tell herself that she was not selfish in being glad. She had honestly tried to push that haphazard marriage to success. It wasn't her fault that it had failed.

It seemed to Sybil that something quite pleasant might be going to happen any moment. Jack would certainly look her up again before he left, and she might be able to promise him that before long she would make her work an excuse to take Carol out to the cape.

She gave Sarah some money and told her to buy food, in case somebody unexpectedly dropped in to dinner. Sarah replied dolorously, "Yes, madam," and should she run to the expense of a chicken? Sybil added another pound and said to make it a turkey --a small one. She hadn't had a proper Christmas dinner.

"Who's coming?" Sarah asked.

"I don't know that anybody is," Sybil replied.

"Then who's to eat it up?"

"Oh, we will, Sarah."

Sarah grunted and said that turkey didn't agree with her, but it wasn't any of her business if people liked to throw their money away.

Sybil went out to dispose of more money, but legitimately in this case. She had to replenish her stock of brushes and paint tubes, and to order the dozen small canvases she would need. Also there were a few odds and ends of wearing apparel to be bought. One always contemplates a journey with the idea that there are no shops at the other end.

She lunched out, and it was nearly five o'clock before a cab deposited her and an armful of parcels at the little house in Chelsea. Had anything happened during her absence?

Something had.

There was a telegram from Carol inviting herself for the night. She would arrive about six o'clock.

"You see, Sarah, I was right about that turkey!" Sybil exclaimed with a happy smile, after reading the telegram aloud.

"Yes, madam," Sarah admitted gloomily. "That Mr. Rathbone called again. He said he'd wait, as I was expecting you back. I expected you sooner."

Her tone demanded an explanation, and Sybil gave it.

"I had such a lot to do--so many things to buy."

Sarah grunted. It was a grunt which said that everybody would be in the poorhouse if they went on in this reckless way.

"That Mr. Rathbone is in the studio, madam. I didn't offer him any tea."

"Well, you might bring some in," her mistress suggested amiably.

The smell of the roasting turkey was already in the air as Sybil went down the long passage to her studio.

On the threshold she paused.

Her visitor was on his hands and knees in front of the fireplace; his head as near to the smoldering coals as safety permitted; his gaze up-chimney.

Mrs. Carey was fascinated by the spectacle. What on earth was he doing?

Then a little shiver trickled down her spine. Could Carol's Mr. Rathbone be that inquisitive young man who had questioned the girl in Todhunter's?

He reached out, gripped the poker and began to scale away soot from the chimney back.

Mrs. Carey coughed and the young man dropped the poker and scrambled to his feet. His hair was all askew, and he had a broad smudge across his noble forehead, but of these blemishes he was ignorant.

"Pardon me," he said excitedly, "but wasn't the body just here?"

He took two strides away from the fireplace and halted, awaiting her answer.

A dreadful sensation of faintness swept over Sybil. She could almost see that dark spot on the floor under the rug, where one of his feet was planted.

"You're quite correct," she said. "And what are you going to do about it?" Passionately she added an afterthought: "Nobody else is to blame. I did it all myself—and will take the full consequences."

Rathbone was moved out of himself. He watched with deep concern as she came slowly down the studio, groped with a shaking hand for a chair and sank into it lifelessly.

"What are you going to do?" she repeated. "I know what the law is. I looked it up—afterward. But I don't know that it would have made a great deal of difference had I known before. I had not only myself to consider. However—" She finished indefinitely with a weary gesture.

"Pardon me," Rathbone remarked; not so excited this time. "I guess I understand how you feel, but until now I hadn't thought of it. I was too busy working this thing out."

"And what have you discovered?" Sybil asked.

"Why"—he tried to reassure her with a smile—"just how Hugh Lloyd was killed. There's only one little point I haven't fixed. How did the skylight get broken?

"The bullet didn't get in that way. It struck the top of your chimney at an angle, ricochetted down—see that mark on the

fireback?—struck the hearth and then flew into the room.

"Lloyd must have been standing where I am now. That's where he would have caught it in a dead line between the hearth and that little hole in the wall over there."

"How on earth did you find that out?" Mrs. Carey gasped. "And who are you, anyway?"

"Oh, I'm nobody," he replied modestly. "Only a scientist. And I've got nothing to do with the police."

Sybil motioned him to a chair. "Sit down, please. Tell me all about it. What led you to my house? How did you suspect that it happened here?"

The young man told her. There was not one single point of the evidence which had slipped by him.

He told her how he had gone to the British Museum and searched the newspapers for a clew, which he had found. Tucked away in an inconspicuous corner was a paragraph announcing that a certain Major Kelcey and his wife, Lady Barbara Kelcey, of Queen Margaret's Mansions, Westminster, were leaving that evening for East Africa to join friends in a big game shooting expedition. Mr. Rathbone argued to himself that these people might have been inspecting their guns and ammunition on the morning that Miss Carol Beaufort was married.

He went to Queen Margaret's Mansions and made inquiries. It was the highest flat building in London, and the Kelcey rooms were on the ninth floor, facing toward Chelsea. Through a maid who was in charge of the empty apartments, Rathbone learned that Major Kelcey's manservant had accidentally discharged one of the heavy rifles while sighting it out of the window. He was cleaning it, and "didn't know it was loaded." The time was about eleven thirty in the morning.

"So," said Mr. Rathbone, "that was enough to begin on. The next thing was to find what woman had sent Lloyd a note that morning, and later telephoned to his valet that he couldn't be married. She had an object in wanting to keep him from his wedding, and he must have had reason to fear her."

"Well?"

Rathbone smiled apologetically.

"It was easy, after I saw Mrs. Kennard come to your house one day, and the same evening you were dining with Mr. and Mrs. Kennard at the Scarlet Pimpernel. The woman was you."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BRIDGING THE EMPTY YEARS.

THE further trend of Walter Rathbone's inquiries had rapidly brought him to a logical conclusion. From the five-year-old file of the Cape Town papers he read up Lloyd's trial for the murder of his wife. The crown's most important witness in that case was Sybil Carey, to whom the papers referred as a well known painter, in private life a Mrs. Francis Beaufort, of London. Here was established a clear motive for Sybil's determination that Lloyd should not marry her daughter.

"And," said Rathbone, "you got him around here and locked him up. I only guessed that, but I know it now. I saw the bolts on the *outside* of the studio door. Then you probably went off and left him to think it over for a while; and when you came back—"

"When I came back he was dead," Sybil concluded.

"I say, you must have felt pretty sick!"

"I certainly wasn't very happy," she admitted.

"Then you got into touch with Mr. Kennard, and between you it was decided to get the body away from here."

"I tell you, nobody was to blame but myself," Sybil protested.

"Oh, well, I don't care about that. He helped you. You couldn't have done it by yourself. I won't pretend that I know how he did it. But you both became panicky when nothing happened."

"He was even foolish enough to go to a house agent's in Richmond and ask who owned Holly Lodge. There was a clew the police might have followed up. Perhaps they did. But the trouble with them is, they've been looking too far away from home."

"They think Lloyd was killed somewhere in the neighborhood of the Sheen military rifle range, and that soldiers carried his body to the garden of Holly Lodge at night. It was a theory I entertained myself for a brief moment."

"They had been practicing with high power ammunition all that week, and, as the medical evidence made clear, the bullet was not fired at close range, and so it must have been an accident. Consequently, the police have no vital reason for clearing up the lesser mysteries. I worked it out merely for my own pleasure."

"And now that you have done so?" Sybil asked.

Walter Rathbone extended a friendly hand.

"Mum's the word," he said. "My mouth is shut, from this moment. It had been in my mind to make the police look silly—but, on thinking things over—well, there's no sense to it. It'd only get you into a whole peck of trouble, and I guess I don't want to do that."

Sybil's lips trembled as she tried to thank him, and eventually emotion got the better of her.

"You must excuse me a moment," she said. "Don't go. Sarah will be bringing in tea presently, but I—I want to take off my outdoor things." She fled from the room, leaving him a little bewildered.

But since Sarah did appear with the tea tray, he sat down philosophically to enjoy it. She told him he had a sooty smudge on his forehead, and he was endeavoring to remove this when there was the sound of some one arriving, and a moment later Carol strode into the studio.

Her eyes opened wide with amazement when she beheld Rathbone.

"You!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing here? I hadn't the least idea—"

There were few situations to which he was not equal.

"Oh, yes! Your mother and I are by way of being old friends," he said easily. "We first met—now let me think when it was—"

"My mother!"

"Yes. You see, I always knew her by

her professional name of 'Carey.' It's only quite recently I connected her with you. Say, she is a fine woman!"

Carol stood looking at him in such a curious way that he knew he must have blundered. What was wrong? What had he said that didn't fit in with the harmless little lie about being an old friend of Mrs. Carey's?

"You said—she is my *mother*. Did I hear you aright?"

Rathbone's angular jaw sagged unhappily. He dusted some crumbs of cake from his waistcoat and began a crabwise exit.

"Er—probably not. I guess I'd better be going. Will you tell your—er—Mrs. Carey I had to be off? I promised to meet Julie at the boarding house at six. We're going to be married next week. Thinking things over, it seemed better to be married at once and have done with it. Good afternoon, Mrs. Kennard."

"Good afternoon. And, oh, I do hope you'll both be very happy. Give Julie my love. I'll see her in a day or so."

Carol had collected her wits sufficiently to respond, but Rathbone knew there was something much amiss, and he left the little house in Chelsea with a distinctly guilty feeling. Was there a secret about Mrs. Kennard's maternal parentage? The old Cape Town papers had referred to Sybil Carey as Mrs. Francis Beaufort "in private life," and Mrs. Kennard appeared to be on very good terms with her mother. This was one mystery which Walter Rathbone never solved. Possibly he had the good sense to realize that it was none of his business.

Carol stood for some moments, outwardly calm, her brain in a turmoil. How blind she had been! Mrs. Carey was her mother, and everybody but herself had known—Uncle Jim, Aunt Pam, Father Dawley, perhaps even Carson.

Her memory flew back to the night before her wedding. Carson must have known who it was he more or less advised her to see. If only she herself had known—that night!

A feeling of childish helplessness came over her. She turned and ran down the studio, through the corridor and upstairs.

Sybil Carey sat at her dressing table, arranging her hair with hands that were none too steady.

"Oh, my dear child, I didn't expect you quite so soon. Why, what's the matter?"

Carol flung herself in a little heap at her feet.

"Mother—you're my *mother*! Oh, why didn't you tell me?" she cried.

She held out her arms, and Sybil clasped her in a passionate, tender embrace.

"My darling baby!" she crooned. "I've got you back again."

She said it many times: "I've got you back again!"

The empty years were bridged.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A MOTHER'S LOSS.

IT was the night before Jack Kennard was to sail for Cape Town, and he felt in a very bitter mood. He had taken legal advice, and found out what he already suspected: that his marriage to Carol was perfectly sound from the law's point of view. It could, however, be dissolved if one or both the parties desired. There was just enough of fraud in it and the fact that they had not lived together to make that possible. Jack had said to himself, all right, let Carol do as she pleased.

A disorder of luggage cluttered his rooms. Mr. Barnes called to say good-by and to assure him that the winding up of the Beaufort estate was progressing satisfactorily. He told Mr. Barnes that he was in a position to supplement his wife's slender income, but she had not taken kindly to the idea.

"The truth is, she doesn't realize how poor she is," the solicitor sympathized. He thought it rather odd that Mrs. Kennard was not accompanying her husband on his journey, but doubtless she had reasons. "Going to be away long?" he asked.

"It depends," Kennard replied vaguely. He was glad when the kindly old man had taken himself off.

To-morrow night he would be on the high seas and soon England would exist for him only as a memory. This afternoon

he had said good-by to Mrs. Carey, but she was so happy in her recognized mother rôle that he felt she did not greatly regret parting from him, despite the fact of their being such old friends and what they had suffered together recently.

He did not see Carol, who was out when he called, and Mrs. Carey did not press him to remain. She said Carol was going to Italy with her, and possibly in the spring they might pay a visit to Cape Town.

Jack pretended to be content with that. They both consciously avoided any reference to Carol's being his wife. And now he was here alone in the damask and gold hotel rooms, throwing things into trunks and bags, savagely lonely, utterly miserable.

"Say good-by to Carol for me," he had said to Mrs. Carey in parting, and she had replied brightly that she would do so. In the mother's wistfully eager face he carried away his memory of her daughter. His mind ranged back to that first afternoon when he had plucked up sufficient courage to call upon the Miss Beaufort his cousin was going to marry. How surprised he had been—how confused and awkward!

She was so different from what he had expected her to be; just a little kid all dressed up in lace and ermine with a great rope of pearls around her neck. The pearls were gone now. In effect, so was the house in Grosvenor Square, and that wonderful old place, Beaufort Priory. And Carol was setting forth in the footsteps of her mother, to live the vagabond life, as Mrs. Carey so often said.

It was a life that suited Sybil, but in his mad dreams Jack Kennard had conceived another sort of existence for Carol. When the havoc wrought by Uncle Jim's financial experiments was revealed, Jack had taken heart of grace.

He would have made love to his wife, but she gave him no chance, and little by little he realized that a man cannot, with decency, force his loverlike attentions where they are not wanted.

Sometimes he had caught her looking at him as if she was angry or hurt; but he was angry and hurt himself. Worst of all, he was so intolerably lonely.

Should he sit down and write to her? He might put on paper what he had not dared to say—that he had loved her from the very first moment he set eyes on her; that he was going away with a broken heart which could never be mended.

All these things of commingled love and bitterness were destroying him entirely. The world was a great arid desert in which one perished miserably of thirst and hunger while following a mirage.

He began his letter. A dozen times he tried to write it. Sometimes he found himself scolding and reproaching her; but that wouldn't do; and sometimes he was so abject that any self-respecting woman would be justified in kicking him.

It was difficult to strike the happy medium. He wanted it to be a love letter, yet dignified. In such circumstances as he had to contend with, could any love letter be dignified?

For the last three days there had been nothing but turkey dishes in the little house in Chelsea, and possibly that accounted for the depression which settled over the modest establishment after dinner that night. Sarah made no secret of her own feelings, and the fact that she was ruining what little digestion she had left simply for economy's sake.

"Oh, Sarah, throw out the rest of it," said Mrs. Carey.

But "the rest of it" was going to be soup. Sarah had never heard of such recklessness.

"You and I will dine at the Scarlet Pimpernel to-morrow," Sybil informed her daughter privately.

"Not there," Carol said, her voice a trifle sharp.

"Oh, I thought you rather liked it. Anywhere you please, but not even Sarah can ram anything remotely suggesting turkey down my throat for many days to come."

Carol sat by the fire staring wide-eyed at the glowing coals. She dared not blink. If she did, her eyes would run over.

"Aren't you feeling well, darling?" Sybil asked, looking up from the paint tubes and brushes she was packing.

"Quite well, mother, dear."

Mrs. Carey sighed.

"I don't know that I do. It will be heavenly to get away to the South. Oh, to see the sun again! The gray winter has cast a blight over my soul."

Carol said nothing. If she spoke her voice would betray her.

"And Jack sails to-morrow!" Sybil mused aloud. "He has to get up at dawn, I believe, and down to those ghastly Tilbury docks. Poor fellow! I do hope he'll get over it in time."

"Get over what?" a woebegone voice from the chimneyplace demanded, shakily indifferent.

"Why, you—my pet. He's about as miserable as they make 'em, now. But his loss is my gain, isn't it?"

"He doesn't care anything about me," Carol muttered.

Mrs. Carey laid down a handful of newly cleaned brushes. She couldn't see very well across the dim studio, and Carol's face was only half in profile. But she did notice a surreptitious movement with a handkerchief, and there was something that sounded suspiciously like a sniff.

"Carol, what can you mean? The man is head over heels in love with you. He's simply eating his heart out, and I hope, for his sake, that he forgets all about you and finds some other woman who will make him happy."

"He's already found her."

Carol's head went down and her shoulders heaved. There was no good in trying to keep it back any longer.

Sybil flew to her and knelt, clasping the distressed child in her arms.

"Now tell me what you mean," she coaxed. "I can't understand it at all. It isn't too late, darling. Do you care for him?"

"Y-yes, I do," Carol sobbed.

"Well, of all the stupid girls I ever met, you are the—the limit!"

"It was that woman in the restaurant with the red hat," Carol explained, somewhat inadequately. "He was kissing her—or she was kissing him. I saw it with my own eyes. In his sitting room at the Savoy."

Bit by bit it dawned on Mrs. Carey what Carol was driving at.

"Why, you mean the Fordyce girl," she exclaimed. "My dear child, she was blackmailing him. She thought she knew something about his cousin's death, and to get rid of her he gave her some money. And then she threw her arms around his neck and embraced him by way of thanks. He told me all about it. He said he was never so disgusted and furious in his life. She simply walked up to his rooms. Do you mean to say you stumbled on that scene?"

"Yes, I did."

"Oh, poor Jack—poor wretch!"

"Mother, you—you wouldn't lie to me, would you? Just to save my feelings—"

"On my solemn word of honor, Carol, what I've told you is the truth. I have nothing to gain—" She was about to add "and everything to lose," but changed it to "except your happiness, and that wouldn't be brought about by pretending something which isn't true."

There was a little silence, then Carol said: "Mother, it makes a difference. I must see Jack—at least to say good-by to him. Don't you think so?"

Mrs. Carey softly kissed the wet cheek.

"You won't say good-by to him, my darling. You'll say good-by to me—for a little while. It's all right, dearest. He's your husband, and if you love him half as much as he loves you, then you'll both be very happy. Do you think I'd give you up to a man who didn't care for you? It's not easy, as it is."

"I don't know. I feel so—so queer about it. He mightn't be a bit pleased."

Mrs. Carey smiled wistfully.

"Go to him, my dear. Tell him he must take you home with him. If he doesn't understand, then I shall be greatly surprised. Now go upstairs, take off that gloomy black frock—you've mourned enough for James Beaufort—and put on the pretty going away dress. Sarah and I will pack the rest of your things and send them on after you. Do as I tell you—that's a good girl."

How empty the studio was. Sybil Carey mopped her eyes and tried to smile. In a few days she would be on the tramp again.

with her easel and paint pots. The sun was warm in Italy, and spring would soon come round.

Would Jack and Carol be glad to welcome the vagabond in the springtime? Or would she have passed out of their lives?

"Sarah," she called, "we must pack Mrs. Kennard's clothes. She's going abroad with her husband, after all."

A little later she said, when they were both busy at the task: "Sarah, I think I'll shut the house up while I'm away."

"What's to become of me, madam?" demanded Sarah.

"I'm going to take you with me," Sybil replied. "It'll be a nice change for you, and I'll have somebody to look after me. I'm beginning to feel I need—somebody."

For the first time on record Sarah's doomsday face broke into a smile, but all she said was: "It'll be a terrible expense for you."

CHAPTER XL.

A LOVER'S GAIN.

BY this time Jack Kennard had a waste-paper basket half filled with costly hotel stationery torn into small pieces.

"Come in," he said wearily in response to a feeble tap at the door.

The door opened and he jumped to his feet.

"You! This is—this is a surprise."

"I was afraid it might be," Carol said timidly. "Mother thought I ought to come. Mother thought—"

"That was very kind of your mother. So you came to bid me *bon voyage*, because your mother—"

"Because I wanted to. I—I'm so very unhappy."

The hand which he laid on her shoulder was by no means steady.

"Why are you unhappy, my dear?"

"Because you're going away."

"I have to go away. My business interests are all in the Transvaal. Carol! Look at me. Why, Carol, I do believe—I do believe you care for me a little."

The tired, sad lines in his face were smoothed out as though by a miracle. Youth was restored to him with the wild hope that pounded in his breast.

"I've cared for you, ever and ever so long. And I made a terrible fool of myself. Jack, will you take me 'home' with you? Mother told me to ask—"

"Will I? You are 'mother's girl.' It's a good thing she approves of me. I've got a mother-in-law worth having." Then his voice sank to a husky whisper as he gathered her into his arms. "My most precious—my wife. The world has come right; the home of dreams has come true. Carol, tell me you love me. Look at me."

She raised her eyes, those glorious, softly dark eyes, in whose depths tender and passionate adoration lurked shyly.

What he saw in them almost satisfied him. But it is a dull lover who is ever quite satisfied.

"Tell me, I want to hear you say it."

"I do," Carol whispered.

"That isn't enough. Say, 'I love you, my husband!'"

"Oh, I do—I do!"

She buried her face against his coat sleeve, wondering why it was such a difficult thing to say; a little shamed in a mysterious feminine way, but very, very happy.

THE END



WHA KENS?

WHA kens but the dog wi' his eyes o' love
Has a soul to save like our ain,
And 'll mak' his way till the realms above,
And just by the same narrow lane?

C. Florence Haire.



The Three Eyed Man

By RAY CUMMINGS

TUBBY raised himself up in the neat little hospital cot. The bandage covered his left eye completely, but his right one was unimpaired, and with it he stared at his friend aggressively. "That ain't so," he declared. "That ain't so now-how."

"I ain't sayin' it is—I'm tellin' you what *he* said. With one eye you can only see things in two dimensions. That's what he said."

"You're right, Jake," agreed the second man. "That's what he said."

Tubby relaxed hopelessly. "Well, it ain't so. Bunk. *Absolu-hute-ly* bunk!"

The first man was unabashed. "Well, that's what he said. A one eyed man sees everything flat. Length an' breadth, but no thickness. A world of only two dimensions." He rolled this statement off his tongue impressively.

"Bunk!" muttered Tubby. Then abruptly he sat up again—so abruptly that a red hot pain darted through his injured eye under the bandage and made his head swim.

His twisted ankle and his shoulder also hurt him badly, but he ignored them all.

"Ain't I got only one eye now?" he demanded.

The first man nodded reluctantly.

Tubby persisted: "An' if *you* put your hand over your left eye, then ain't you a one eyed man?"

The second man essayed this experiment. "He's right, Jake. That makes us one eyed."

"What you gettin' at?" the first man demanded.

Tubby's single eye gleamed with anticipatory triumph. "Keep that left eye covered." His two friends followed the command. "Now listen here. You see that table?"

Even with only one eye working, the thing was perfectly visible.

Tubby's two friends nodded.

"How long is that table, Jake?"

"Bout four feet," the first man estimated promptly.

"An' how wide?"

" 'Bout three feet."

" An' how high?"

" 'Bout three—maybe three an' a half."

" Take a look with two eyes, Jake. How big does it look now?"

Quite evidently the first man saw no remarkable change. He shrugged.

" I ain't sayin' it's exactly that big," he stated cautiously, obviously fearing a trap.

" What you gettin' at?"

Tubby's fat little forefinger shot out suddenly, pointing accusingly directly into his friend's face.

" You was only lookin' with one eye, but you give me *three* dimensions! Ain't that proof what you said was bunk? Ain't it, or is it? That's all I ask."

He leaned back on his pillows, exhausted but victorious.

" He's right, Jake," agreed the second man. " You give three dimensions. It must be bunk."

A white robed nurse glided noiselessly into the room.

" Are you ready, Mr. McGuire?"

Tubby sat up with alarm. " Yeh, I guess so. Where'm I goin'?"

A dapper little interne was pulling forward an invalid's wheel chair.

" The operation takes place up-stairs—in the operating room," said the nurse sweetly. " Dr. Blake, will you take him up? They're ready for him now." She left the room.

Tubby, thoroughly frightened, was bundled into the wheel chair with a blanket wrapped about him. The chair started to roll away.

" Come on, Jake," he said weakly. " Come on, Pete. Stick around—we're goin' upstairs."

The young doctor laughed; and in the hall outside he waved Tubby's friends away.

" You can see him back in the ward in about an hour. It's not a serious operation. We've only kept him in bed because of his other injuries. You wait downstairs—I'll send for you."

An elevator door opened smoothly.

" But them's my pals," Tubby protested faintly. There was a little bump as his chair rolled into the elevator—a bump like

a coffin hitting the bottom of a grave.

" Listen here, doctor—them's my pals—"

The elevator door slid closed. It was all inexorable—as death. The elevator shot noiselessly upward.

" S'long, Tubby." The first man's voice floated faintly upward from far below. " S'long, Tubby. You ain't goin' to die. See you later."

II.

THE little cone over Tubby's face was horribly sinister. They told him to draw a deep breath, and he did. He had decided now that this operation was all bunk. He'd tell them so in a minute. He guessed he wouldn't bother about having the operation to-day anyway. Some other time—to-morrow, maybe.

He drew a second breath. Somebody had an arm across his knees. He kicked tentatively, and the arm tightened. His head was ringing. Funny how loud it was getting! *Was* the ringing in his head? It sounded more like a great, clanging gong away off in the distance and coming nearer and ringing clearer.

There were fingers on his wrists. He tried to raise his arm, but somebody was holding him too tightly. The operation would be starting soon. No, it wouldn't. To-morrow, not to-day. It was all bunk anyway. The doctor had said he'd lose his eye without an operation. What difference? One eye—or two eyes—or three eyes.

With a great effort Tubby squirmed loose from the restraining clutches on his arms and legs and sat bolt upright on the operating table.

" I ain't goin' to have no operation," he said vehemently.

The hands that had been holding him dropped away. His head was ringing fearfully, but not so loud as a moment before. The bandage over his left eye was still there. He jerked it off and opened both his eyes upon a most astounding tableau.

The surgeon and his assistant were cowering over against the wall. Facing them threateningly was a very tall, very thin man. He had on a black frock coat and under one arm a somewhat battered plug hat was jammed. The other arm was out-

stretched, a finger pointing angrily at the trembling surgeon.

"You let him alone," commanded the stranger. His voice was deep, as though it came up from the depths of his insides. "You can't operate on *him*. He's a friend of mine."

The surgeon and his assistant were edging toward the door. The stranger waved his hand scornfully; and like frightened rabbits they slid through the doorway and down the hall. Tubby could hear their footsteps dying away in the distance.

"Much obliged," he said to the stranger. His head felt better now, and he could see out of both eyes quite as well as before the accident. He turned to his new friend. The stranger's face was very kindly, now that the anger had gone from it. But nevertheless it was the most extraordinary face Tubby had ever seen—so extraordinary, in fact, that Tubby nearly fell off the operating table in surprise as he regarded it.

The face was very thin and wrinkled, with a sharp beaklike nose turning down, and a very long, sharp chin turning up. But the most extraordinary part was that the man had three eyes—two where human eyes belonged, and another directly in the middle, over the nose. The two outside eyes were smiling in friendly fashion as they stared at Tubby; the middle eye was closed, as though that much of its owner were asleep.

"You—I'm much obliged for what you done," Tubby gasped. The stranger had been kind in scaring away that surgeon—it wouldn't be fair to notice he was deformed. Tubby decided to be wholly gentlemanly and ignore the third eye.

"I didn't want no operation, anyway," he added. "My eye's all right. See?" He blinked it rapidly to confirm the fact.

"Of course," said the stranger. He laid his tall hat carefully on a chair and helped Tubby down to the floor. Tubby, in his bare feet and long white nightgown, stood slightly embarrassed. He raised one foot and hooked it under his other knee.

"Let's get acquainted," he suggested. "You're a friend of mine, ain't you?"

"I am, indeed," rejoined the stranger

warmly. "And soon I shall be more than that—your business partner. You and I are going to make millions of dollars."

Tubby blinked both eyes. "Right," he said. "We're goin' to get rich. What's your name? We got to get acquainted first."

"My name is Professor Seer," said the stranger with dignity.

"Mine's Tubby. Pleased to meet you, professor."

They shook hands.

"What are you professor of?" Tubby asked, after a short but awkward silence. The professor had been regarding Tubby thoughtfully with his two opened eyes. He pulled himself out of his reverie at the question.

"I'm a professor of optics," he said impressively. "The science of human sight. I know all about it—all there is to know."

Tubby shook hands again. "That's fine, professor. We're goin' to get rich? Tell me how."

"Not here," the professor objected. "My laboratory is right down the street. Get dressed and come along." He was poking about the room. Tubby saw his own clothes lying on a chair.

Tubby took only a moment to dress. The professor put on his high plug hat—he was more than two feet taller than Tubby with it on—and led the way down the corridor with huge strides that made Tubby almost run to keep up. The hospital was very silent—there seemed to be nobody in it.

They walked down nine flights of stairs and came into the lower hall. As they passed the reception room Tubby looked for Jake and Pete; but there was not a single person in sight.

Half a block down the street the professor turned into a dingy hallway, unlocked a door, and ushered Tubby into his laboratory. It was a long, dim room without windows, and lighted by two narrow beams of white light—like small searchlights. Each of these horizontal beams struck the farther wall about six feet from the floor; and in the brilliant circles of illumination two cards were hanging on the wall—cards printed with letters of the alphabet in rows of different size type.

A large table occupied the center of the room. It was littered with a mass of scientific apparatus, none of which Tubby had ever seen before. But scattered in a heap at the nearer end of the table he saw many little magnifying glasses, and a tremendous variety of eyeglasses. Even with his first hasty glance he noticed monocles, ordinary two eyed glasses and many spectacles which obviously were made for three eyes.

Over against the wall was a large glass cabinet, filled with what looked like surgical instruments. There was an operating table there also, and other paraphernalia such as Tubby had noticed in the operating room of the hospital. He shuddered and looked away. The professor closed the door behind them and lighted a small electric bulb. It was red; it threw a weird reddish glare over the lower part of the room beneath the horizontal beams of the white searchlights. Simultaneously, two little violet beams of light darted out from the wall and slanted upward to the ceiling.

"This is my workshop," explained the professor, casting an appreciative glance about the room. "There is only one absolutely complete and modern optical laboratory in the world. This is it. Sit down, Tubby."

Tubby sat down in a chair near at hand. He wanted to ask about those three eyed glasses, but decided it would not be gentlemanly. And didn't the professor ever open that third eye?

"You said we're goin' to get rich, professor," he ventured. "Tell me how."

The professor stood before him with folded arms, regarding him thoughtfully with his two opened eyes.

"I have selected you," he began slowly, "because of your wonderfully clever scientific mind. You have a scientific mind, haven't you?"

"No—yes," answered Tubby.

"So have I," said the professor. "But I have been studying optics so many years I have neglected everything else. It is *your* knowledge in the other departments of science that I need now. Together we will become rich, marvelously, fabulously rich."

"Right," assented Tubby. "Tell me how."

The professor sat down. "I have made a wonderful discovery," he went on after a moment. His voice was deeper than ever; he seemed awe-struck by what he was about to say. "I have made the most wonderful optical discovery since the beginning of the world."

"Right," said Tubby. "It's a big discovery. Ain't I right? Tell me what it is."

The professor drew a long breath. "I have located more than a hundred tons of twenty dollar gold pieces! I can see them. I'm going to let *you* see them in a moment."

Tubby's heart leaped into his throat; he swallowed it hastily.

"Fine," he declared. "Let's see 'em."

The professor sighed. "First I shall have to tell you how I found them, so that you will understand our problem." He sighed again, more heavily. "It is a terrible, scientific problem. I hope you can solve it."

Tubby stood up. "You give me a look at them twenty dollar gold pieces. That's all I ask—just give me a look."

The professor smiled sorrowfully. "I will. I'll show them to you right here. I'll let you stand right among them. But sit down now. I have much to tell you first."

Tubby sat down reluctantly.

"You do not understand the theory of stereoscopic vision, I assume?" the professor asked.

"Yes—no," said Tubby.

"Stereoscopic vision means what you see by using two eyes simultaneously. Now—"

"Oh," said Tubby. "Jake says—"

The professor paid no attention to the interruption. "I must explain about dimensions first. We are living, you understand, in a world of three dimensions."

"Length, breadth, an' thickness," Tubby elaborated promptly.

The professor beamed. "Precisely. You *have* a scientific mind. I knew you had. Now to proceed. What is it has *location*, but no dimensions?"

"Search me," said Tubby.

"A point. And what has one dimension?"

Tubby wrinkled his forehead, struggling to think. "I give it up," he declared finally. "You tell."

"A line," said the professor. "A line has only one dimension—length."

"So has time," suggested Tubby.

The professor smiled. "You will have your little joke, I see. You're a clever man. I like clever men."

"Right," said Tubby. "Go on to two dimensions."

"A square has two dimensions—or any plane figure. Also a shadow. And you and I have three dimensions—also almost everything else in the world about us."

Tubby nodded. "A table, for instance."

"Yes—a table. Now that brings us to the theory of stereoscopic vision. You understand that with one eye we can see only two dimensions—length and breadth, but no thickness. To put it more technically, with one eye there is no depth to the field of vision. The scene might just as well be painted on a piece of canvas. It is a little difficult to distinguish the difference at first, because if you painted a scene in perfect perspective, life size and in full natural colors, even on a flat canvas it would look very realistic. There is a very great difference, however. Would you like a demonstration?"

"Sure," said Tubby. "Give me a demonstration."

The professor rose to his feet. "I have here two lead pencils. I am going to hang them in that beam of white light a few feet from you. Don't look now."

Tubby covered his face. At the professor's command he looked up with one eye, his hand holding the other closed. Hanging in the white light by invisible wires, were two lead pencils.

"How far away are they?" the professor asked.

"Bout ten feet," Tubby estimated.

"And which one is nearer to you?"

Tubby indicated the right hand one, which was apparently about a foot in front of the other.

The professor laughed. "Look with two eyes."

Tubby opened his other eye, and was amazed. He had assumed the lead pencils were of usual size. They weren't. They were very much larger, and they were hanging at least twenty feet away from

him. He had also assumed they were equal in size. But in that he was also mistaken. The right hand one was larger than its mate, and instead of being in front was exactly beside it.

"You see," said the professor, "everything looks flat. There is no depth to your field of vision with one eye. You were instinctively trying to guess the depth by judging the apparent size of things. If you had known how big those pencils were you could have guessed their position."

Tubby was looking with one eye again. "I can give you three dimensions of that table," he declared.

"Of course, you can," laughed the professor. "Because you are judging by how much smaller the back of the table looks than the front. The mind acts subconsciously on that, of course. But you don't see any depth—any thickness—to that table—you only guess at it. The laws of perspective make you think you see the third dimension, but you don't see it."

So Jake was right! "Tell me how it works," urged Tubby with interest.

"It is very simple," said the professor. "And yet, in a way, it is very complicated."

He held a little cube of sugar a few inches from Tubby's eyes. "When you look at that with only your right eye, you see the front face and part of the right side. Is that so?"

Tubby tried it, and nodded.

"And with the left eye alone, you also see the front face, but instead of the right side you now see part of the left side. Do you?"

"No—yes," said Tubby. "Sure I do."

"Very well. Now, with *two* eyes you combine both of those images. Your eyes see the object from different view points. Look now with both eyes. Now you see the front face of the cube and partially around *both* its sides. *That* is what gives you the third dimension—it is what makes that cube look solid. With one eye it merely looks like a picture of a lump of sugar—a flat picture, printed on a flat page. Do you follow me?"

"Yes—no," said Tubby. "Tell me more. Tell me about them tons of twenty dollar gold pieces."

The professor nodded. "In a few moments I'll show them to you."

Tubby resigned himself to wait. The professor continued:

"It is the *combination in your brain* of the different images your left and right eyes see that gives you a perception of our world of three dimensions. Is that clear?"

"*Abso-lute-ly*," declared Tubby.

"Very well. Now listen carefully. One eye gives two dimensions. Two eyes give three dimensions. And then *three eyes*—" The professor paused expectantly.

"*Three eyes*—" prompted Tubby breathlessly.

"Why, three eyes give four dimensions," said the professor triumphantly. "With three eyes rightly equipped you can see that other world lying all about us—that other world science has been trying for so long to discover—the world of the Fourth Dimension! *That* is the world that holds our tons of twenty dollar gold pieces!"

Tubby gasped. So that was why the professor had three eyes. He could see into another world, where there were a hundred tons of twenty dollar gold pieces lying all about!

"That is my discovery," the professor reiterated. "The most remarkable optical discovery since the beginning of the world. *I* made it. You observe my third eye?"

"Yes—no," replied Tubby. "It ain't so very noticeable," he added deprecatingly.

"I am an expert surgeon also," continued the professor. "I have to be. I gave myself that third eye. It's a very delicate operation, but I can perform it easily. I'm am going to give you one in a moment."

Tubby was frightened. "You needn't bother," he declared. "I ain't interested. I—"

"Oh, it won't hurt you," laughed the professor. "I am a modern surgeon—I never hurt anybody." He unrolled his long length from the chair and stood up briskly. "Come over here and pick out the kind of eye you'd like."

Tubby remembered the tons of gold pieces; he stifled his fear and followed the professor across the room. A long, nar-

row shelf ran along the wall. On it stood a row of little glass bottles all filled with a colorless liquid. And in each bottle floated a single eyeball.

Tubby walked down the length of shelf. The eyeballs stared at him unwaveringly.

"You'd better take a blue one," said the professor. "Your other eyes are blue. Medium size—light blue. Here, this one is a good match." He selected a bottle.

Tuby lay back in what looked like a dentist's chair. The professor opened the surgical cabinet and selected several wicked looking instruments. He touched a switch, and a narrow little beam of rich yellow light sprang from the cabinet and focused itself on the bridge of Tubby's nose.

"You—ain't goin' to hurt me?" Tubby quavered.

The professor answered reassuringly: "No. This yellow light will deaden all pain. It's a wonderful light. *I* discovered it. Close your eyes now. I won't take long."

Tubby gripped the arm of his chair and closed his eyes. For five minutes the professor hammered, chisled and sawed—cutting a hole in his forehead. It felt extremely unpleasant, but it did not hurt. When the hole was ready, the professor fitted in the eyeball.

"Just a moment now," he murmured. "Very delicate—this joining the optic nerve. Just a moment—hold still."

Five minutes more and the eyelid, with its lashes all complete, was in place. The professor tied a bandage over the new eye—a wet, hot bandage.

"All right," he exclaimed cheerfully. "Now you can sit up."

Tubby sat up, opening his two original eyes and feeling the bandage dubiously. He had three eyes! Now he could see tons of twenty dollar gold pieces!

"Right," he said. "That wasn't hard. What do we do next?"

The professor replaced his instruments, and then led Tubby back across the room to their former chairs.

"It is now only a question of lights," he said. "You understand that this Fourth Dimension is a different kind of matter. It occupies the same space as our world, be-

cause it is matter in a totally different state—a state where the molecules are very widely separated, and are in very rapid vibration. In order to make it visible to us—in addition to needing the view points of three eyes simultaneously, we must use lights of a much faster vibration than the range of the solar spectrum. These are my own lights—I invented them."

He turned off the red light and the two white searchlights. At once many other tiny beams sprang from hidden orifices—deep violet beams—several of very pale indigo—and others that seemed to be almost phosphorescent. These beams of light were all oscillating rapidly back and forth. The room was a confused riot of weird color—like the darkened stage of a comic opera with a score of whirling, colored spotlights upon it. Tubby grew dizzy staring at it.

"There," said the professor. "I think I have everything adjusted correctly. Now we need colored eyeglasses."

From the table he carefully selected two spectacles each with three different colored lenses. "Take the bandage off, Tubby—but be careful to keep your new eye closed."

Tubby followed directions, and fitted a pair of the three-eyed spectacles to his nose.

"Now," said the professor. His voice trembled with emotion, though he seemed trying to speak calmly. "Sit down again—you may feel dizzy at first. Now—open all three eyes."

Tubby opened his three eyes. All he saw at first was a dim grayness, as though he were in the midst of a heavy fog. The room with its myriad colors had evaporated.

The professor's voice came from behind him. "Hold steady a moment—your eyes will be adjusted to it soon."

Tubby sat staring into the fog. It seemed shifting and crawling upon itself. Then, in the distance, gray shapes began forming. Were they in the distance? He couldn't seem to tell how far away they were. Perhaps they were close at hand? Of course they were. There was no doubt about it now. He made out an angle of wall—a shadowy, white wall, with a ceiling above and a floor below.

The professor's voice said: "We are

looking now at a room in the world of the Fourth Dimension. We are in it—it occupies almost the same space as my laboratory. Now—do you see the gold?"

Tubby saw it, indeed. The fog was lifting rapidly. He was sitting in a huge, bare, windowless room whose outlines were all blurred and quivering, but now plainly discernible. There was no way of guessing the size of the room. It might have been half a mile long—or twenty feet. And curiously enough, the back part of it looked larger than the front! Things got larger farther away, instead of smaller. Tubby was not concerned with this anomaly, however; he was feasting all three of his eyes on the gold. It was heaped in profusion all over the room—great piles of shining yellow gold pieces!

"For ten years I have searched for this spot," said the professor, triumphantly. "I found it, and that's why I built my laboratory right here. We are inside the mint of the world of the Fourth Dimension!"

Tubby stood up, trembling with excitement. He felt very dizzy and nauseated, but he forgot it in the excitement. The mint of the Fourth Dimension! A hundred tons of gleaming yellow gold pieces—and he was standing right among them!

He looked down at his feet. The coins were piled all around him. The floor was strewn thick with them everywhere. He kicked one foot into them. Nothing happened! There was no sound; his foot seemed to touch nothing but empty air. Where was his foot? He couldn't see it. Or his leg. Or his hand, which he held before him!

Panic seized Tubby. Was he a ghost? Couldn't he even see his own feet?

The professor answered his thoughts. "Your body is still in your own world, Tubby—the world of three dimensions. Only your vision has penetrated into the Fourth Dimension. You can see that gold, but—" A sob choked the professor's voice at the pathos of it—"but Tubby, you—we cannot touch that gold—we can do nothing with it except look at it!"

Tubby stooped down frantically to gather up a handful of the coins. He felt his fingers scraping along the bare boards of

the professor's laboratory. He touched his foot. But he could not see his hands. Or his feet. He could only see the heaps of glistening coins that lay there undisturbed!

The professor's voice wailed dismally: "The gold is right there, Tubby. Your fingers are going right through it. But you cannot feel it—you cannot touch it. You can only look at it—only look at it—"

The words trailed away into silence. Tubby climbed to his feet, and then sat down in his chair, nonplussed. What a horrible thing! You could see the gold, but you couldn't touch it! That was all wrong. The professor would have to figure some way of getting that gold out of the Fourth Dimension. They'd figure it together. The professor would—

Where was the professor? The room was quite silent. Tubby felt suddenly very weak and sick. He lay back at full length

in the chair and closed his eyes. His new eye hurt him. Or was it his new eye? Wasn't that pain shooting through his left eye? It must be his left eye—there seemed to be a bandage over it.

There was a dim murmur of voices in the room—familiar voices. They seemed to have been there a long time, but Tubby just noticed them. He opened one eye—his right eye—and saw a swaying expanse of white sheet, with the white enamel foot of a hospital cot just beyond his toes. The scene stopped swaying and grew clearer. A hand touched his forearm. He turned his head weakly, and stared with his one eye into the anxious faces of his two friends who were sitting beside the bed.

"Hello, Tubby!" exclaimed the first man with relief. "You didn't die, did you? I knew you wouldn't."

"You're right, Jake," agreed the second man. "He didn't die, did he?"



A NAME IN THE SAND

ALONE I walked the ocean strand;
A pearly shell was in my hand;
I stooped and wrote upon the sand
 My name—the year—the day.
As onward from the spot I passed,
One lingering look behind I cast;
A wave came rolling high and fast,
 And washed my lines away.

And so, methought, 'twill shortly be
With every mark on earth from me;
A wave of dark oblivion's sea
 Will sweep across the place
Where I have trod the sandy shore
Of time, and been, to be no more
Of me—my day—the name I bore,
 To leave nor track nor trace.

Hannah Flagg Gould.



When Frighthood Was in Flower

By **THOMAS THURSDAY**

THE other day a professor of high art and litterchoor takes a extra swig of hip syrup, puts his feet on the desk, presses the buzzer for one of his beauteous stenographers, then dictates the following bit of keen wisdom: "A bride and groom is always funny without any slap-sticks."

I read that gem in *The Daily Applesauce*—which I get for nothing, seeing that the family in the next flat sleep late—and when I finish the entire essay I am convinced that the professor gets that dope from peeking into one of our flat windows while me and Lulu—that's the name of my charming one year bride—is enjoying one of our numerous debates. Otherwise I fail to see how he could think up such a wise crack, even if he reads everything from Cicero to "The Life of Riley," right down to the latest dictionary.

Not that I ain't tickled silly at the mere thought that I have married such a complete set of absolute beauty like Lulu. I am! And when I think of the bevy of rich flippers that she has passed up—she told me this herself—why, I believe that I am the luckiest dumb-bell in the world. Of course, when I innocently remark that she is pretty I don't mean that Lulu is stuck on herself, or anything like that, but nevertheless if she had ever foxtrotted in front of Mark Antony he would have chased Cleopatra back into the kitchen to clean up the dishes.

However, there ain't no such thing as perfect happiness, no matter what the female pen pushers say on the ladies' page of the papers, and although we have now been married a full year and blessed with little Alexander—the prize winning baby of the universe—the joy is somewhat wrecked by

the constant attendance of Lulu's clown relative, known as brother Joseph Robin-son.

This nine day shirt wearer ain't had any use for common restaurants since me and the missus has taken up housekeeping together, and if meal time ever comes around when he fails to come around with it, why, I'll do a few handsprings from pure joy. As far as I know, Joseph ain't never toiled in his life, and to prove it he is now supposed to be a sleuth with the Sherlock Detective Agency, and before that happens he was a floor walker at a race track; and after that he falls into a cinch as a cheese inspector in a hotel.

However, I will quit the autobiography stuff, and tell you how my baby Alexander near scares me to a triple death by being kidnaped while yet so young, the same being a mere three months.

It is Sunday, which is supposed to be a day of rest, according to all the butchers' calendars I have ever read, and me and Lulu is in our four-room-and-cigar-box-kitchen flat, in the land of the Bronx, doing nothing more unlawful than arguing to and fro about the weather, what we shall eat next Christmas for dinner, and most of all, what our Alexander will be when he grows up to man's real estate.

I am for making him President of the entire United States, having read that the job gives you a swell chance to swing a nifty niblick on the golf course in sunny Florida; but Lulu says that maybe he won't be constitutionally fitted for that sort of portfolio; and then I suggest that maybe he would look slick in a Senatorial toga draped around his manly shoulders, or perhaps bricklaying may be his forte, *et cetera*. At that witty crack Lulu goes up in the air for a few moments, and says Alexander will never do anything where he has to soil his hands or wear a suit of overalls. She comes back to earth when the bell rings, and I can tell by the sound alone that it can be none other than dear brother Joseph, who has called for dinner and to pester me in general.

"I think it would be a great little idea to put a muffler on the bell, and, while I am at it, it won't do much harm to install

a rubber door. Then we can't hear that bright brother of yours when he knocks."

This naturally makes a big hit with Mrs. Wife.

"William," she says, raising her eye attracting eyebrows, "if you do not stop passing those vulgar remarks about my brother Joseph, I shall find a way to make you. Many people would be only too glad to have him around to cheer them up. For one thing, he is very gay and jolly, and for another, he certainly isn't an old grouch like you. And, anyway, would it be too much for you to take Alexander out in his new carriage for a little air? Of course, I do not wish to disturb you from sitting there and doping out how the Giants will win the pennant, or anything like that." And she puts an icicle on each and every word.

"I don't happen to be doping out anything about the Giants," I replies. "I am merely trying to figure how and the hell Spareribs beat out Checkerboard in the fifth race at—"

"William!" she bellers. "When will you cease your common manner of speaking? Have you ever heard brother Joseph swearing?"

"He's too lazy to even do that much!" I slam back. But that don't arouse a weak smile, although Lulu has a great sense of humor, like most wives. One day I happen to slip on a chunk of soup meat; that was a little out of place, and I take a nose dive right into the kitchen sink with my entire face. She don't stop giggling for a week.

She opens the door, and the world's premier food consumer enters our love nest.

"Hello, folks!" he opens up soon as he gets his fat face inside. "How's dear little Alexander? Fine, I hope; but he should be out in the air on a bright day like this. Really, it's a shame to keep him cooped up in this terrible flat. What kinda husband is Bill getting to be, anyways?"

You get that sucker's number right away, don't you? As for me, I get it the first day I marry his charming sister, and ever since we have been getting along like a tomcat and a mouse in the bottom of a barrel. And the thing that makes a terrific hit with me

WHEN FRIGHTHOOD WAS IN FLOWER.

is the way he spends his money. He's so tight that he ain't spent a nickel since General Grant was a baby; and if all the restaurants closed up forever, why, it wouldn't worry that ape at all. He takes all his meals with us. I say he "takes"—and I mean exactly that.

"How are you, Joseph?" I greets, trying to be pleasant under extreme difficulties. "It's a mighty fine day, and it's too bad that we ain't gonna have much to eat for dinner, eh, Lulu?"

"Joseph will be satisfied with turkey, won't you, Joseph?" she beams, opening the oven door and showing the big wimp the largest turkey that ever got soaked with an ax.

He takes a couple of tentative sniffs of the appetizing aroma, then removes his hat, coat and vest—showing a set of suspenders that must have been cast off by Charles the First. Then he sticks his fingers into the turk.

"Pretty soft, ain't it?" he says.

"Pretty soft for some people," I answer. "However, when we decide to take in boarders, why, I will drop you a line."

"William," puts in the much better half of the family, "Joseph is *my* guest at all times." Then she gives me a wicked look.

I could have mentioned the odd fact that I am the gent who is obliged to appease the grocer and butcher, and also the sapolio who scares the landlord away when he calls with aggravating promptness each and every month—but what's the use of starting another argument?

Joseph comes over to Alexander, cooing in his new Chubby Six Sedan—with Frisk tires—which has set me back a whole week's salary, at the rate of five bucks down and two bell rings per weekly, not that anything is too good for my baby, and when Alexander gets a look at dear Joseph, why, he laughs right in his face. I don't blame 'm!

"Ootsiewootsie!" cackles Joseph to the little dear—"dear" is right, if you know what I mean—and proceeds to get himself in solid by tickling the kid on his chubby chin, which part even Lulu admits reminds her of the father.

"Take your face away from his nose!"

I snort. "D'yer want him to catch the flu or something?"

"Who's got any flu?" he comes back. "If you was only half as healthy as me, you'd take your own child for a walk, instead of reading there like a regular big flatfoot. What did you buy a carriage for? To clutter up the kitchen with? Believe me, you are a fierce boob, when it comes to having any brains. You let poor Lulu cook around a hot oven all day, and you are too lazy even to take Alexander out for a stroll. If I was Lulu I would bawl you out good and proper. Why, the poor little baby is acthelly getting pale and—er—anæmic."

"That's right, Joseph," agrees Lulu as she jabs a fork into the turkey's leg—"Alexander doesn't get any air at all. But what can I do with a man like William?"

"Never mind, sister," says Joseph; "I'll take the little fella out myself. If his own father don't think enough of his child to give 'im a little airing, *I'll* do it!" He starts to put on his hat and coat.

"Mind your own business," I says, snapping up from the chair. "Any time I need a nurse boy, I will let you know. Meantime, drop dead. Me and my baby is now going out for a long stroll, and I hope by the time we get back you will be somewheres in spice scented Arabia. Thanks for listening."

I grab my last year's hat, second hand coat, then give Joseph a glare that would have goaled King Tuttyankamen's entire army if he had any, not that I know anything about Egyptian grave digging.

"Now, *do* be careful, William," admonishes the missus, as I start to push Alexander's chariot through everything but the ice box. "You know how careless you are. Don't you think it would be better to have Joseph go along with you and—"

By this time I am at the door, give the coupé a shove out into the hall, then slam the door behind me. Joseph has to come with me, eh? Bah, beans and blooey! Ain't I the kid's pop, what? Then where in the Sam Hell does that big three-alarm simp get off to show me how to take care of my own baby? I'll show 'im! However, had I known that I was headed for

the biggest shock of my life— But we'll get to that pulse quickening scene of the drama later.

With the help of the good Lord and plenty of dumb luck, I manage to get the carriage down the five flights of stairs that has more twists than a quarter's worth of pretzels, and safely land Alexander on the sidewalks of New York, as the old song would remark. I take a few inhalations of the passing ozone, thank the stars that I have at last got out of hearing distance of Lulu's once a week beard shaver—meaning that dear brother Joseph—then I decide I will call in on Tony, the jovial barber, and get a shave for myself.

I park Alexander outside, next to the pole, make sure that he is covered up better than a bootlegger's conscience, then go in and take a seat in the first chair, operated by Tony himself.

"All I want is a shave," I says, as he surrounds me with a funny smelling towel. "And don't ask me if I want anything else. Get me? I ain't interested in a crème de suds shampoo; a Pharaoh massage with ointment; a Swede hair singe; a French wrinkle remover; or even a Yiddish eyebrow grower. Just want a plain shave, see? Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha," says Tony with a bored grin. "Er—d'yer mind if I use a razor?"

"Pick up the dice, Antonio," I says, "you win!"

Well, while Tony races the steely blade over my tender flesh, I take side glances out of the door to see if my Alexander is still safe. He is, and I finish my shave in pure peace, which is just as it should be. I slip Tony full payment, put on my hat and coat, then breeze out to Alexander. I untie the sedanette from the pole, and start for a stroll down the avenue, with the main idea in my mind to get as far away from the flat as I can get without requiring a passport to another country.

Then I happen to think that there is always a nifty game of ball going on in an empty lot, five blocks up the line, between the snappiest bunch of kids in the city, so I decide to push the roadster to the game and see what takes place. The last time I was there the game was settled *via* the aid

of a score of cops, and a good time was had by all.

Two blocks from the lot I run into a bevy of kind ladies who are just emerging from church, and when they see such a strange sight as a mere husband wheeling his own infant carriage, why, they promptly clutter up the way to see what it is all about, if anything.

"Oh, what a sweet baby!" starts off one dear old lady. "I can't see him—he's all bundled up, but I'm sure he's a real sweet child. Toodle-oo!"

"Can't we see the little darling?" demands another interested maiden.

"Sorry," I says, "but there's a lotta this here flu and measles floating around—that's why I keep him covered like that. But you can take my word for it, ladies, he's a bear, when it comes to looks. In fact, they all say he resembles his daddy. Ha, ha!"

After that I step on the gas and plow through the whole bunch of females and make good time up to the ball field. I note that there is a game in progress and so I park Alexander's sedan near the left field and then walk up near the home plate to get a better look at the game. I find that the Gas House Red Socks is engaged with no less than the Mulligan Robins, and just as I reach the home plate, about nineteen players are amusing themselves by firing tin cans, *et cetera*, at the humble umpire. This bird don't trouble to argue back, but beats it off the field with much speed.

The next minute the captain of the Mulligans comes up to me and says that I have been elected to take the departed umpire's place. I reply with fatherly dignity that I have my baby Alexander over in yon left field, and that I can't stay with 'em very long. So I get behind the stub nosed and freckled faced pitcher and start to show 'em how good I can call the balls and strikes.

"Mister," says the pitcher, turning to me, "you wanna keep yer eye on me curve, see? I only pitch strikes!"

"Play ball!" I bellers.

The kid unwinds a Christy Mathewson, let's it go, and it wallops the batter right on the bean.

"Take yer base!" I shout.

The next batter up has a wicked way of standing at the plate, and I can tell from the jovial shouts of his boy friends that he is the Babe Ruth of the team.

He slams the first ball pitched a mile up in the air and I watch it sail toward left field. Then my heart stops ticking. The ball lands plumb in my baby's carriage! Right away I am sure that poor Alexander is no doubt killed or maybe worse, and so I race to left field a shade faster than Joey Ray ever dared run. Then I get a worse shock. I feverishly look into the carriage to see what is left of the infant—and he ain't even in sight!

Alexander has been kidnaped!

For a minute I can't talk in *any* language, then I calm down a little, collect what passes for my mind in polite society, and ask the kids if they have seen any blackhanders in the vicinity, and if so, I will take keen pleasure in murdering them at once! The kids all claim that they ain't seen or heard anything, and so I grab the kidambulator, dash around to the police station, rouse the desk sergeant, and beller to him to send out a general alarm for one Alexander Pinkney, the same being the full name of my missing baby.

The sergeant looks at me like I was remarking to him what a fine day it was, or something, and acts like my baby was of no more importance than a flea on an elephant's tail. Then I give him a description of poor little Alexander, which the dumbbell manages to write down on the blotter, and then he tells me that I should go home and not to worry.

Bon soir—not to worry! Can you imagine a fathead like that? Sweet paprika—what am I to tell Lulu? I can already vision her ruining me with a rolling pin and having brother Joseph assist her in the assault and battery, no fooling. Ladies and gentlemun, I'm dazed! All I can think of is that dear Alexander is gone, kidnaped by some gang of ruthless rascals who will either kill him outright or hold him for a large ransom. And where in the dickens can a poor sucker of a pocketbook salesman get even enough jack together to ransom a tin goldfish? What a fine mess!

I hail a passing taxi, shove the coupé into the front with the driver, and tell him to go like red, white and blue blazes to the flat. As the cab races over the pavement—not missing a single rut or hole—I begin to get past thoughts of Alexander, from the day he was born down to the time he upset the bowl of goldfish in a playful mood. And when I think he is the only child I have—me and Lulu have only been married a year, you know—why, I just break down entirely. And Lulu! How will *she* take it?

Well, at the end of about two weeks or so, the driver finally pulls up in front of the flat house. I toss 'im a buck, yank off the carriage, then walk weakly up the five flights of stairs. When I reach the love nest, I don't take time to use the key—I bang on the door like a wild man. What's more, when I think of facing Lulu with the terrible news, I actually shiver.

She comes to the door herself and give me a wicked look.

"Well," she says with her marvelous eyes flashing like hot coals, "what's all the commotion about?"

"Alexander—our baby—kidnaped—" was all I could get out. Then I lounge into the hall, and wait for the riot which I expect will follow immediately.

"You stupid thing!" I hear her say. "You're a fine husband. What *you* need is a keeper!"

I don't know what this is all about. Then I get it—good!

Joseph comes ambling out of the living room with Alexander dangling on his shoulders.

"Wum goo—da da—gugle wah!" remarks Alexander, tapping Joseph on the skull with his rattle.

"Yeah—you're one fine fish head!" flares Joseph. "The idea going into a barber shop and leaving poor little Alexander outside all by hisself. If Lulu hadn't of sent me to the delicatessen for a pound of butter, I might not have seen the poor baby, and somebody might of swiped him. Lucky I come along and took 'im home, believe me!"

Er—excuse me whilst I roll up my sleeves!

Origin of Sport

PRIZE FIGHTING

By W. O. McGEEHAN

PRIZE fighting as an organized sport appeared first in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Nero, to whom is extended the credit of being the first of the fight promoters. The first prize fighters received no purses of any sort, and the widow of the loser paid the funeral expenses out of her own pocket.

During the early period of the prize fight game there was absolutely no future for a fighter. The boxing gloves were crude affairs, constructed of steel and rawhide. One punch usually decided a bout, and the absence of purses kept the more ambitious young Romans from indulging in the manly art.

The Emperor Nero used to gather together a group of Christian martyrs and give them their choice of putting on the gloves or feeding the lions. Sometimes a martyr would annoy and perplex the sporting emperor by saying: "I'll take both."

While some modern sport writers might criticize the customs of the Roman prize ring, there was one redeeming feature about the game. The vanquished fighter had no alibi. He had nothing but the best funeral his folks could afford. It never has been shown that the loser of a Roman prize fight ever turned up with an excuse or demanded a return match.

While Nero must be given full credit for his share in the development of prize fighting, there is plenty of evidence to the effect that the manly art of self-defense flourished long before the days of the Cæsars. Professor Rudolph Pretzelbender, the celebrated archæologist of Heidelberg, in his work "The Origin of the Cauliflower," declares that there are traces of the manly art among the ancient Chaldeans.

Signor Giuseppe Ravioli, of the University of Milan, while excavating at the site of ancient Babylon, unhesitatingly stated that the Babylonians were ardent patrons of the ring. One set of Babylonian hieroglyphics in the possession of this great Italian antiquarian appears to establish this fact beyond a doubt. The hieroglyphics are of the period of King Boob of Babylon and are signed Um Boob, which freely translated means "Some Boob." The king, who was inordinately vain, had this title carved upon many buildings and also upon his tombstone.

Not only does Signor Ravioli prove that



THE ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERY OF THE
SOLAR PLEXUS BLOW
(From a Persian tablet.)

boxing flourished during the reign of King Boob, but that it was the direct cause of the fall of that great city. It is shown that sky high purses were offered for boxing bouts in the days of Boob. This caused all of the subjects of Babylon to train their male offspring to become prize fighters. In the meantime King Boob continued to increase the size of the purses.

The result was inevitable. The Babylonians eventually all became prize fighters, and at a final tournament given by King Boob they unanimously knocked one another out until none remained but the monarch himself. King Boob is believed to have burst a blood vessel trying to count the gate receipts from the lady spectators.

There also is evidence that there was prize fighting among the ancient Persians. This is deduced from the fact that the Persians produced the first rugs unquestionably for the purpose of giving their heavyweight fighters something soft to fall upon. Unlike the heavyweights of to-day who are content to flop onto a piece of bare canvas the luxurious Persian white hopes demanded that they must have something soothing to lie upon when they assumed that horizontal position which appears to come natural to many heavyweight prize fighters.

While the ancient Greeks did not seem inclined toward prize fighting they did show inclinations toward Delsarte, which is the basis of modern pugilism. Professor Henri De Lys in his excellent brochure, "Pieces of Cheese," explains how like the ancient Greek dances the antics of some of the modern lightweights can be. This is the strongest volume ever written on the subject of cheese.

The first business arrangement between prize fighters was detected during the reign of the Emperor Nero shortly after the establishment of the game at Rome. A light heavyweight named Sockus Chinibus held the title for three days, and the Roman boxing commission started to investigate. It was discovered that four of Sockus's opponents had agreed to lay down for a price and that he had shares in a Roman pool room, where big bets were made on events in the amphitheater.

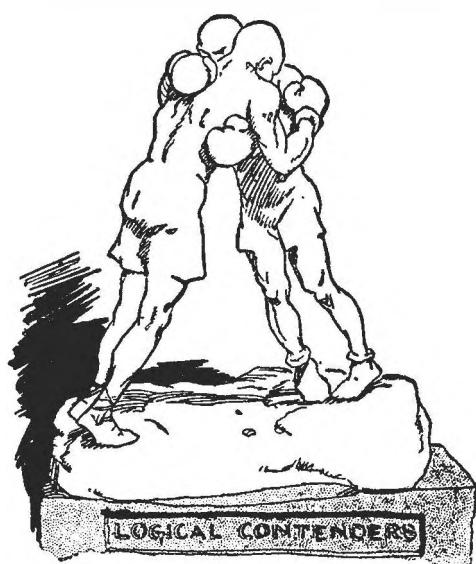
This gambling ring had even fixed the contests where gladiators opposed the larger beasts of prey. Through an arrangement with the ring attendants at the amphitheater the pool was able to substitute pagan Goths for Romans. One of the best lions in the zoo broke a fang and quit cold after tackling a supposed Roman who in reality was a tough old Goth. The betting that afternoon was three to one that Leo could finish four gladiators, consequently the pool cleaned up.

The betting ring finally was abolished by the simple process of throwing all the gamblers to the lions. Sockus Chinibus protested to the last. His final words as he marched by the emperor's seat were: "Say, Caesar, ain't there a chance for a business man in Rome? Take it from me, if you would kill off all the smart fellows there would be no more prize fight game."

To which Nero replied only by turning down his imperial thumb. As the lions were crunching merrily on Sockus Chinibus, Nero was heard to say: "He can see now



A STUDENT.



FROM AN EARLY GREEK STATUE.

that I dislike business in sport." It was at this point that Cicero, the sport writer, made the crack: "O tempora! O mores!" This was taken to mean that Cicero did not think that the conduct of Sockus Chinibus had been for the best interests of the prize fighting game.

Despite the efforts of Nero to continue and develop the sport it fell into disrepute with the incident of Sockus Chinibus's passing. Business at the amphitheater fell away and it came to be a saying that even the lions of Rome were not eating on the level any more.

With the corruption of the prize fight game things turned from bad to worse in Rome. Nero's creditors began to press him so hard that it is believed that he set the arena on fire to get the insurance. Later he was the victim of a political switch, and Rome never was the same afterward.

Next to Nero the man who wielded the greatest influence on the prize fight game was the late Marquis of Queensberry, who propagated the set of rules under which prize fighters do business today. The new rules provided that the contestants should wear padded gloves. Also they were allowed a minute's

rest between rounds in order that they might have a chance to count the customers.

The custom of charging admission to a bout is considered the real turning point of the game, yet historians are rather vague as to when the first spectators were forced to yield their money at the gate or who devised this modern improvement. It is doubtful if even the influence of the Marquis of Queensberry could have induced so many young men to embark upon prize fighting as a career if the customers had not been discovered and the institution of gate receipts established.

From the time of the Marquis of Queensberry the development of prize fighting is easy enough to trace. John L. Sullivan was the first prize fighter to open and close a saloon. James J. Corbett was the first prize fighter to appear as an actor. Yet they were merely pioneers in the development of prize fighting to the vast industry it has become to-day.

Benny Leonard, the present lightweight champion, was the first prize fighter to use the cash register and the adding machine. Since these two mechanical devices have been introduced to the manly art no pugilist of any standing is without them.

Thanks to the Marquis of Queensberry, who first made prize fighting safe for fighters, the industry has grown to such an extent in the United States that million-dollar houses promise to become common. Just what influence this will have upon future generations is hard to foresee. Some political economists are pointing to the time when all the able bodied citizens of the United States will become prize fighters.

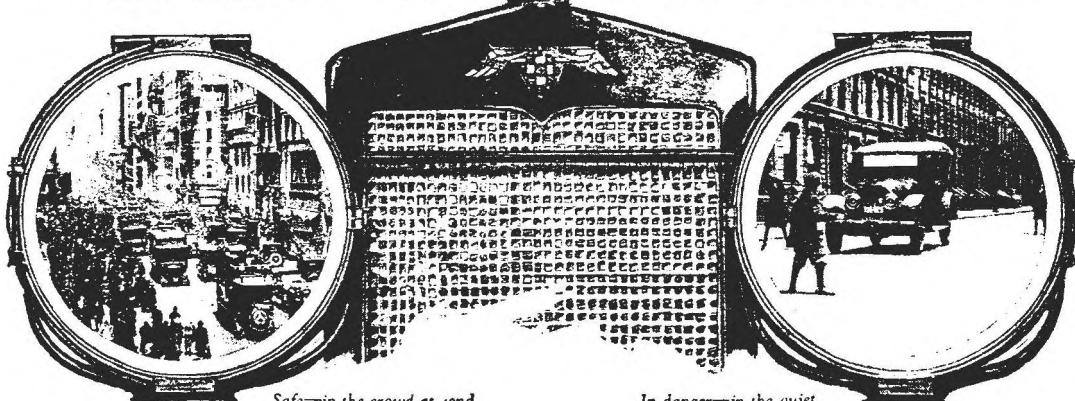
Already the trend toward the prize ring has created a serious labor shortage throughout the country. The fact that the rings are well padded has attracted many potential stevedores and piano movers to the prize fight game. Students of economics declare that the prospect of dropping upon a nice, smooth canvas, and recovering consciousness with a thousand-dollar bill clutched firmly in one hand, appeals more to the laborer than eight hours' monotonous work at something constructive.



THE FIRST STAGE IN THE MANUFACTURE OF A CAULIFLOWER EAR.

(From a Roman coin.)

“...from...sudden death...”



Safe—in the crowd at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue

In danger—in the quiet home neighborhood

The Titanic Sank—and a world was stunned with the horror of it. **The Lusitania was torpedoed**—people who were apathetic before said: “We won’t stand it!”

The Iroquois Theatre burned in Chicago—and laws were passed all over the country forcing theatres to install asbestos curtains.

The Knickerbocker Theatre collapsed in Washington—there was immediate Government investigation.

The Galveston flood—and millions were spent for a great sea wall. Because these disasters were spectacular—because great numbers of people died by accident at one time—the shock stirred the soul of the nation.

And yet, added together, the total deaths from these never-to-be forgotten tragedies—plus three more that the world will always remember, the terrible Johnstown Flood, the burning of the Slocum and the San Francisco fire, were less than the number of persons killed last year in the United States by automobiles.

14,000 Killed in 1922

The great majority of these fatalities occurred in large cities; 60% in home neighborhoods—on the “side streets”—and most tragic of all, one-third of them were little children.

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On 5th Avenue, New York, between 14th and 59th Streets, where traffic is governed by the Tower System, not a single death was

reported by the police in 1922. At 42nd Street and 5th Avenue, one of the busiest corners in the world, you and your children are safer than on your own street.

But at this corner policemen rigidly enforce wise traffic laws and compel people to take care of themselves.

Accidents happen in the flash of an eye. Caution is constantly necessary. Where you think you are safe—in some quiet street—danger is most likely to strike you.

Be Your Own Policeman

At unguarded corners pedestrians and automobilists have equal rights on the roadway. Both must use caution. Drivers must be watchful and walkers heedful. Not only must our safety conscience be awake downtown, but also on our uptown streets.

If we wish to stop this rising tide of accidental death, all must work together and obey the rules of the road. If we do not, the number of automobile fatalities may reach 15,000 this year and more thereafter as added machines take the road.

In 1922, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company disbursed over \$867,000 in automobile death claims. In the same year it disbursed a total of \$4,753,000 for all accidents.

These insurance policies represented a wise investment—necessary life insurance. But something beyond a payment for deaths is necessary. We need and must have better protection against preventable accidents.

We must insist that drunken or careless drivers be punished. We must use the most extreme caution ourselves. We must help the careless and protect the absent-minded. The small child does not know the danger of the street. Here the automobilist must take the responsibility. The younger the child, the greater the driver's need for care.

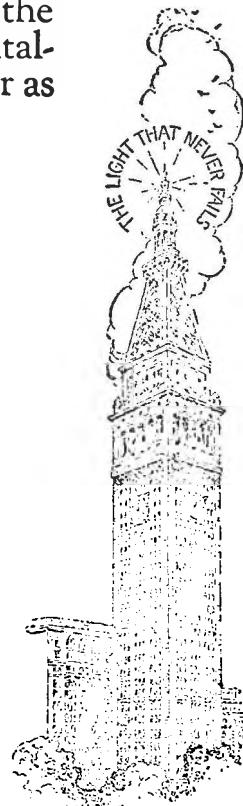
Safe play places must be provided

for the children; isles of safety, for the pedestrian; traffic signs and beacons, which will make the careless heedful.

Last year about 19,000 fatalities were recorded in the United States which occurred in or about the home—burns, falls from stepladders, chairs, stairs, etc. We must carry always in mind that where danger is most apparent, it can be most intelligently guarded against and that where we seem to be safest carelessness may carry a heavy penalty.

The Metropolitan will be glad to send its own information on automobile accidents, as well as "The Trend of Public Accidents", published by the National Safety Council, to any one who wants to help in the conservation of life.

HALEY FISKE, President



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You Can't Fool Them

Don't try to make excuses. You should have knobs on your arms like a baseball. A fine protector you would make, when you can't even fight your own battles. What are you going to do? She is going to find you out.

Look Your Best

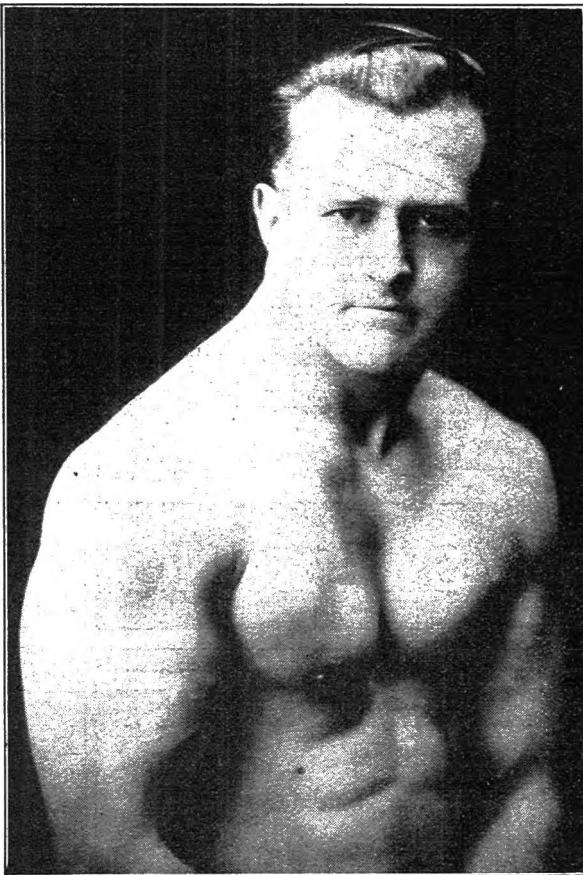
It's not too late. I can save you yet. It means hard work and plenty of it, but think of the results. In just 30 days I am going to add one full inch to your biceps. Yes, and two inches on your chest in the same length of time. But that's only a starter. I am going to broaden out those shoulders and put real pep into your old backbone. You will have a spring to your step and a flash to your eye, showing you to be a real, live man. Before summer is past you won't recognize your former self. You will have a physique to be really proud of. This is no idle talk, fellows. I don't promise these things. I guarantee them. Come on and make me prove it.

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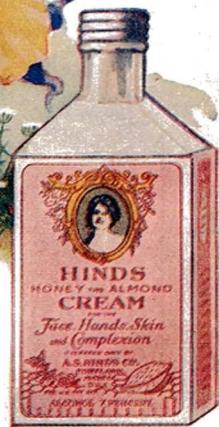
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