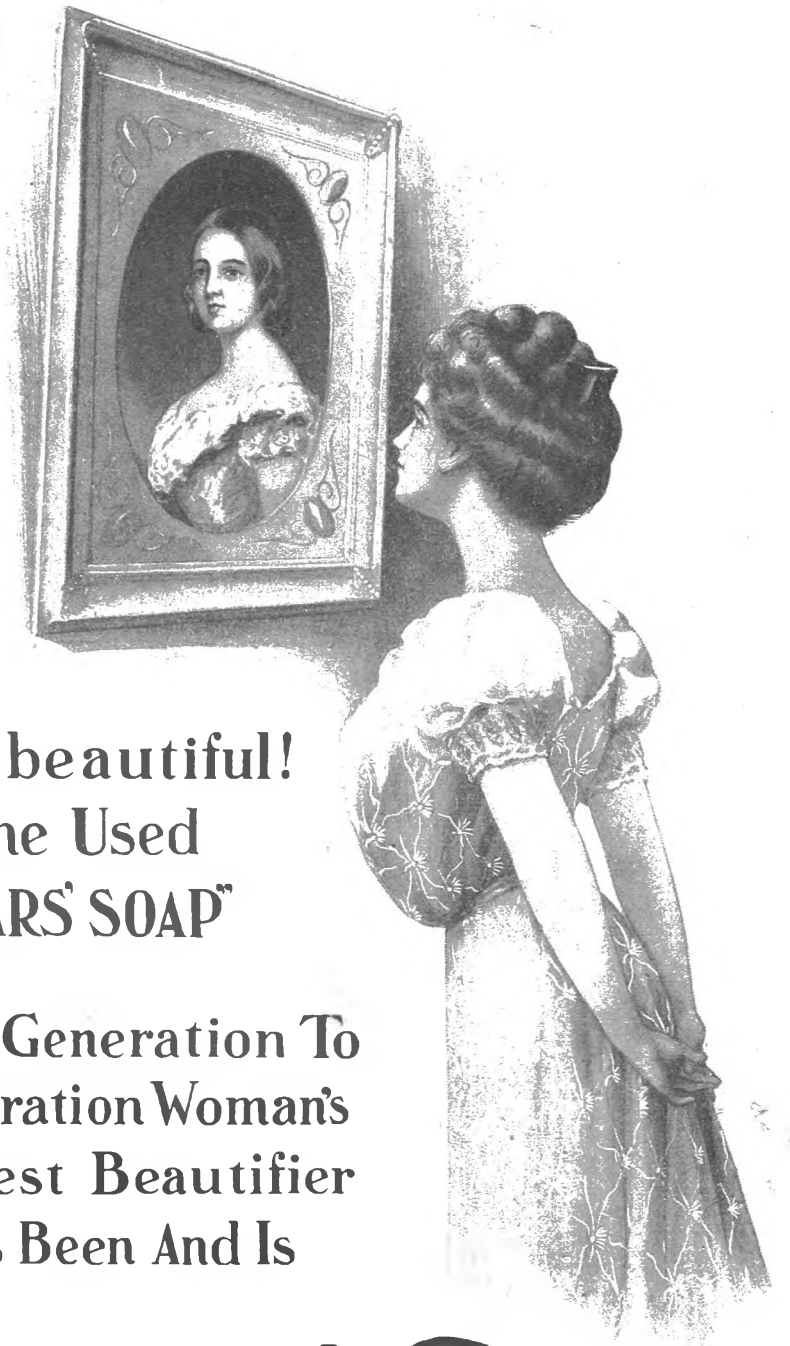

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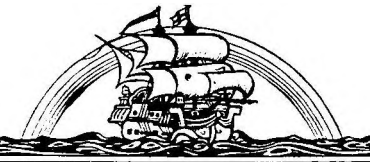

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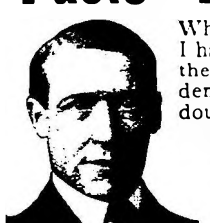

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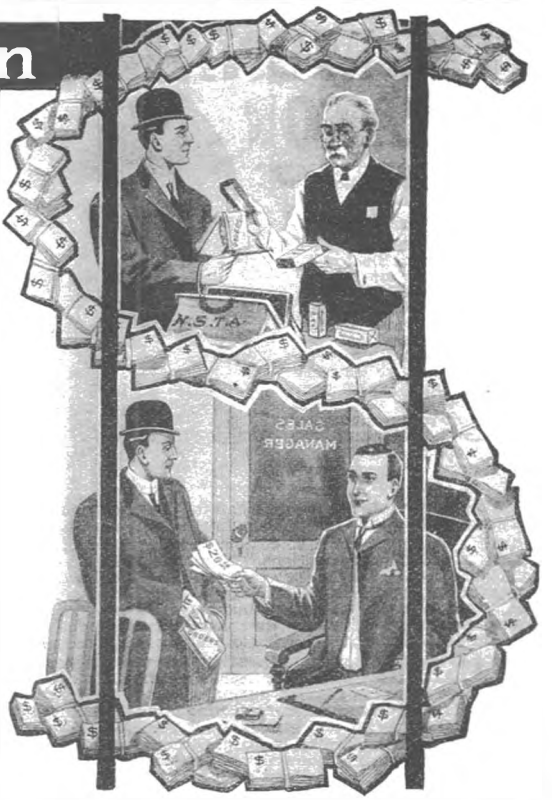

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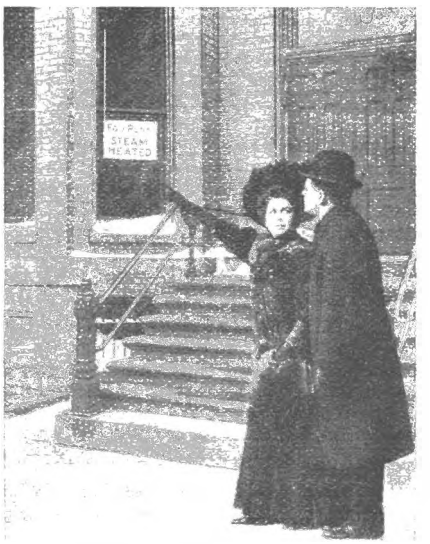

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LX APRIL, 1909. No. 1

Captain Kidd of the Tow-Path.

By GARRET SMITH,

Author of "Riches Thrust Upon Him."

The inglorious outcome of a quest for local color that should have in it a dash of the sea and the tang of ocean breezes.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

ENTER, THE CAPTAIN.

SEABURY lay huddled on the hard, narrow bunk where he had been thrown, shackled, gagged, and blindfolded, and tried in vain to comprehend this most unexpected turn of affairs.

There had been a low whistle in the apparently deserted street, a quick rush from a dark doorway. Two steel-bound arms pinned his own to his side. Two other hands at the same instant jammed a gag between his teeth and a bandage over his eyes.

"Rush it, Hank!" rasped a low voice at his ear.

Half-dragged, half-pushed, Seabury's fear-clogged feet stumbled a dozen steps over the asphalt, two dozen more over hollow timbers, the cleats of a swaying gangplank, the rounds of a short cabin-ladder, and then he struck the bunk.

A hatch slammed over his head. Hoarse, muffled laughter reached his ears, then retreating steps and silence.

Nice way to treat Mr. Walter Livingston Seabury. That scion of an ancient line and idol of wealthy parents tugged at his bonds and grunted with disgust. Besides, a plebeian odor emanated from the sodden blanket under him.

Devotion to literature had brought Walter to this horrid predicament. His mother, proud as she was of his efforts at playwriting and indignant at unappreciative managers, had decried his recent search for material in the byways. His friends, too, had made merry over his East Side excursions.

Perhaps this was a funny, practical joke by those same overfacetious friends. Seabury didn't doubt their capability of resorting to such genuine rudeness. At the thought he squirmed to a sitting posture and pondered over the incidents of the evening.

Now he remembered there had been a familiar sound about the tones at his elbow when he was captured. Could it have been one of his friends throwing his voice into his boots with a buzz-saw attachment for purposes of anonymity?

Freddie Kane had a yacht with a comfortable little cabin. It was somewhere in the river now preparing for a trip. Freddie had invited Seabury to join his party only yesterday.

Seabury might be a prisoner aboard that yacht at this moment. True, the smell of that blanket was against any such theory.

Besides, no one knew of his plan to spend the evening on the South Street water-front, in search of material for his great play to be entitled "A Modern Captain Kidd."

He had retired early to his own room, pleading a headache. Then, donning some old clothes and soiling his face and hands so as to look the Boweryite, he had sneaked out by the basement exit, unobserved, and by foot and surface-car, found himself about midnight in the

back-room of a saloon frequented by sailors and longshoremen, one of those noisome eddies in New York's great East Side sink-hole.

For a fruitless hour at a corner table he sipped slowly at a vile "tub of suds" and watched unattractive human drift come and go. Then entered "the captain."

Seabury's heart leaped for joy. The moment his eyes fell on this individual, he knew he had only to copy him in detail and "A Modern Captain Kidd" would stand before the footlights immortal.

As this unconscious subject of histrionic analysis, accompanied by a nondescript companion, settled himself at an opposite table, Seabury stealthily drew a small pad and pencil from his pocket and, under cover of the table-edge, noted down these specifications: Height, six feet; weight, one hundred and eighty; age, forty; build, wiry; hair, black and tangled; eyes, black and bloodshot, coatless; gray flannel shirt, patched overalls in cowhide boots, brown slouch hat.

Then Seabury settled down to strain his ears for the vernacular to be appropriated piping hot for dialogue.

"I tell ye, Hank, it's a cinch," said the captain. "One o' those fellers likes the change after he gets over bein' sore about our sudden way o' hirin' him. If he's decent, we kin give him a little present at the end o' the trip less'n wages would come to, of course. If he ain't, we kin kick him out when we're through with him, an' what's human garbage like that goin' to do about it against capitalists like us?"

"Mebbe you're right, Jud," agreed the other. "It's goin' some, though, even fer us. The police an' constable gents along the line have got a good deal on us already. Ye gotta have somebody, though, if ye start in the mornin'. Ye can't get these louts to leave the Bowery these days fer any kind o' money."

Seabury's heart jumped. Here was a suggestion of mystery and plot. To what this talk referred, he had no idea, but it was something delightfully illicit. If he could only follow the pair and find out for himself, that would indeed be a plot at first hand.

At this moment the man called Hank looked in the direction of Seabury, who at once pretended to be very drunk and unseeing. Hank nudged his companion. Both now looked at Seabury.

That young searcher for literary building-blocks was for a moment alarmed, but straightway reassured himself with the thought that the pair were merely fearful that he might have overheard them. That made it all the more delightful. Aha! A mystery—and all that.

The two whispered together now. Then, in a moment, they arose and went out through the bar after a word with the custodian of beverages.

A moment later Seabury, keyed to the concert pitch of excitement, started on the chase. He stepped out on a deserted scene. The dim light from two or three old rookeries and a solitary street-lamp showed a stretch of barren asphalt and the ghostly yards of the ships at their moorings beyond. A mile away hung the electric outline of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Seabury listened in vain for the footfalls of his retreating subjects of study. Then he started off on his investigation toward the Battery.

At that moment came the onslaught, and here lay the seeker for dramatic truths wondering what had happened and why.

Now that he thought it all over again, a little of it was clear.

He knew now why the voice of the man at his elbow when he was captured had sounded familiar. It was none other than the voice of the ideal "pirate captain" he had heard in the saloon back room.

He had found the hero of his drama, only to discover that as a typical modern pirate he was altogether too much of the real thing. Moreover, it looked as though he were going to have plenty of opportunity to work out the plot of that drama with himself as one of the principal characters.

But why had he been captured? What was to be done with him? How long was this to last?

These were some of the reflections of the now thoroughly unhappy Walter Livingston Seabury. And all the while

his bonds grew more uncomfortable and the odor of the musty bunk more vile.

CHAPTER II.

SOME STAGE SETTING.

SLOWLY the hours dragged by, burdened with Seabury's cramped and unsatisfactory mental gropings. At length he reviewed and summarized his reflections thus:

His friends, resolved to cure him of his slumming excursions, had hired these two alleged thugs to shanghai and scare him, or —

Aforesaid thugs, being the real thing, and seeing through his disguise, had taken him on speculation and would hold him for ransom.

In either case, he resolved to keep absolutely mum as to his identity. He would say nothing on the one hand that would add to the future gaiety of his friends, or, on the other, that would aid or abet his enemies.

He would lie low, make the most of the situation in the way of gathering material, and watch for a chance to escape. Spoiled and unsophisticated as Walter was in the ways of the world, he was a pretty good piece of physical machinery, in which lay dormant a lot of genuine spirit and a saving sense of humor.

Having resolved to be philosophical, he tried to sleep, but that proved useless. So hour after hour he lay and listened to the moan and churn of passing craft. The way his prison heaved on their wash told him she was not a large boat.

At length he heard steps aboard. There was a stir and shout of orders. Ropes were thrown about the deck. Windlasses creaked and the gangplank slid up.

Seabury felt a series of bumps and jars amid a rasping of steam-tugs. Then his bunk settled down to a slow, steady rise and fall that told him they were under motion.

It may have been two hours later that he heard the hatch raised over his head. Some one climbed down the ladder and slapped him on the back.

"Hist up there, sport, and let me unharness ye." It was the voice of the "Captain Kidd" of the saloon back room again.

Seabury stumbled to his feet. With a jerk that nearly knocked him over again, his rough captor removed his bandage and gag and then cut the cord that bound his wrists.

Seabury chafed his cramped hands and shook himself to stir his dammed-up blood, meanwhile eying the "captain," who was paying him the same compliment.

Yes, there he stood before him in the same picturesque outfit he had worn the night before in the saloon. Finally, the fellow, having finished his inspection of Seabury, turned to the ladder.

"Go forward, you, and git some grub," he said. "The mate's cookin' a mess now."

"Hold on, you!" shouted Seabury.

To be addressed as he had been just now by a common person, astonished and incensed Mr. Seabury not a little.

"Who are you, and what do you want of me?" he demanded.

The other was evidently equally astonished at being thus talked to by anybody, for he turned from the ladder and stared at Seabury.

"Me?" he asked. "Well, if ye must be inquisitive, I'm Captain Jud Billings, of the good ship Judson A. Billings, of New York, and what I want o' you is your sassiety an' able assistance fer a spell."

Seabury saw red. Before the surprised Billings could move he received a blow in the jaw that sent him up against the bulkhead. Seabury dashed up the ladder.

He leaped through the hatch, saw for a moment a patch of deck and dancing sunlit waves, then the sky seemed to fall on his head and the light went out.

Slowly Seabury returned to dizzy-headed consciousness.

"He's coming around all right, Hank," came a voice from somewhere over his head.

"I guv' him a good fancy swat with that boat-hook, Mike," replied another voice, "but he'd a ben overboard if I hadn't. Ha! ha! I'd er give a dollar to a seen the start o' that scrap with the ol' man. Cap owns up that punch in the jaw staggered him fer a minute."

Seabury opened his eyes. With feet

dangling from the edge of the cabin-roof near him sat Jud Billings's companion of the saloon, the man called Hank, a medium-sized, sandy-complexioned, bull-dog sort of fellow. Beside him squatted the fellow addressed as Mike, a little red-headed Irishman with an ill-favored face, but having a saving twinkle in his watery blue eyes.

They were both watching Seabury curiously.

That young man raised his head and looked about him. He fairly shouted in his surprise.

He was on the deck of a little canal-boat. It was one of a big tow of a score or more which was slowly crawling after a sleepy old side-wheel steamer at the other end of a long tow-line.

About him was the familiar scenery of the Hudson River.

Shanghaied on a canal-boat! After the first surprise, the idea struck Seabury as immensely funny. So his romantic Captain Kidd was a canal-boat captain, and this sea-voyage in the clutches of a pirate that was to live afterward in immortal drama was to consist of a prosaic following of the dusty tow-path!

Despite his throbbing head, Seabury lay back on the deck and laughed aloud.

"Seems to tickle ye some," remarked the frowning Hank. "What d'ye see so funny about it?"

Seabury stopped laughing, then asked: "This is a canal-boat, isn't it?"

"It sure is," replied Hank. "Ye didn't take her fer the Lucytania, did ye?"

"You go to Buffalo by way of Albany and the Erie Canal, do you not?" pursued Seabury, ignoring the pleasant sarcasm of Hank.

"Yep. Ye seem to know the way. Been over it before? So much the better."

"I never have; but I know something of my State's geography."

Hank and Mike looked plainly surprised. They exchanged curious glances as Seabury went on.

"What I want to know is, do you people expect to keep me prisoner on this dinky boat in that narrow canal all the way to Buffalo, with villages and cities in shouting distance all the way? Do you know whom I am, anyhow?"

"No, Mr. Bones, who am you," mocked Mike.

"Well, either you do know and expect a good big sum out of this job in some way, or you've made a mistake," said Seabury.

Again the other men exchanged glances.

"Guess I'll go talk to the boss," announced Hank, and entered the cabin.

Seabury rose slowly to his feet under Mike's curious gaze.

Here and there a rough man or slovenly woman lolled about the neighboring decks. No one seemed concerned about affairs aboard the Billings.

Seabury turned to Mike again.

"Do any of these other boats belong with you people?" he asked.

Mike shook his head, and pulled solemnly at his clay pipe.

Not encouraged to talk, Seabury fell to studying his neighbors. Mike went below, after a moment, and apparently left him alone.

On the next boat a kindly looking old man was from time to time taking a few strokes at a pump that kept his leaky hold free of water. At one of these times Seabury ventured to address him across the gunwales.

"Do you know Jud Billings, the captain of this boat?" he asked.

The old man looked at him curiously for a moment, then replied: "No, never seen him till this mornin'!"

He left his pump and started for his cabin as though he did not wish to say more.

"Hold on!" said Seabury. "I want help. I've been kidnaped, I tell you. I must escape. I don't know these people. Let me come aboard with you. Protect me!"

The man was backing away, shaking his head in some alarm. A woman appeared in the companionway of the stranger's cabin, and listened.

At that moment Seabury felt a rough hand seize his collar. His neck was gripped till he choked. Then the ugly face of Billings, livid with rage, peered into his own.

"Listen to me, young fellow," he said. "Ye'll never get another chance to hit Jud Billings, an' I'll pay ye yet fer that swat this mornin' before I'm through

with ye. Make a move to escape, er blab a word to strangers, an' I'll kill ye in the night and drop ye overboard with a stone around yer neck. Now go to the kitchen an' eat as I told ye to."

He hurled Seabury stumbling down the companionway. As the captive sank at the foot of the stairs, he heard the woman on the other boat say to the old man of the pump: "Why do they treat that poor young man so cruel? It's a burnin' shame."

"Hush, Mary," cautioned the man. "It's all right. He's a dangerous lunatic, an' they have to watch him every minute. He tried to kill Captain Billings this mornin'! He's the captain's nephew, an' they're takin' him back to his home up the State. Billings told me all about him this mornin', so we'd understand anything strange that happened on the way up the river."

CHAPTER III.

A PLOT IS DEVELOPED.

SEABURY laughed again in spite of his new bruises.

So he was involuntarily posing as the crazy nephew of this Captain Kidd of the tow-path!

By this artifice Jud Billings evidently expected to carry out his shanghaing plans without interference. Captain Billings was an astute person in his own way.

As Seabury coaxed into his reluctant stomach the dubious ham and eggs and black coffee set before him by Hank, his sense of humor once more overcame him.

He had selected Jud Billings as the principal character in his little drama. Jud, all unconsciously, had retaliated by giving Seabury second place on the bill as *The Crazy Nephew*. So much for the cast.

Setting—Pirate craft sweeping—not the high seas, but the low canal.

Plot—Well, that was what was bothering Seabury. The thought of it again banished the humorous aspects of the case, and left him troubled in spirit.

That night, however, this part of the problem began to unfold, but in a manner that by no means lessened his worry or increased his chances of ever being in position to arrange his drama for real footlights.

All that day he had been allowed to go about the deck much as he pleased, but early in the evening Billings ordered him below. He found the cabin hot and stuffy. After a futile attempt to sleep he took up a position at the entrance to the companionway, where, unnoticed on deck, he could rest his head in the open air.

There were two cabins on the little boat. The forward one was a stable for the mules which were to tow them from Albany to Buffalo. The after-cabin was for the crew. This latter had a narrow galley at the front, where the men cooked and ate. The rest of it consisted of two tiny staterooms, one occupied by Billings and Hank, and the other by Mike and Seabury.

As Seabury peered from the hatchway he saw that Billings and his two men were squatting on the opposite deck, with their backs against the cabin. He could just make out their heads in the gloom.

The three were in animated conference, and their talk came to Seabury over the narrow cabin roof as distinctly as though he were sitting beside them. Evidently, from the first words they uttered, it would not be healthy for him to be caught listening.

"I tell ye, Jud, that boy's a white elephant on yer hands, one o' the biggest an' onlikeliest beasts ye ever see. It hain't what ye thought it was when ye got it; the Lord only knows jest what it is. It ain't no good fer what you got it fer; it's liable to kick holes all through ye if ye don't git rid of it, an' if ye do git rid of it, it'll come back an' kick holes through ye, anyhow. They's jest one way to do, an' that's to put that boy away where he won't never do no talkin' er botherin' agin."

It was the voice of Hank which spoke this parable and its direful moral.

"Are ye dead sure this chap don't belong to the Bowery set?" asked Jud. "He's kep' me so mad sence I had the first chance to squint at him by daylight, thet I ain't seen nothin' but red. He might look like a dook fer all I noticed."

"Sure's I want to be," returned Hank. "No hobo's got soft, white hands like

this feller's got under the dirt on him, an' no tramp don't sling English like hisn an' talk about knowin' his State's gee-og-raphy like a blamed schoolmarm. Thet rig o' his, too, rummy as it is now, wan't sold by no Hester Street Jew fer four ninety-nine to start with.

"When I first pipes the fact he's made up, I sez to myself: Here's where the ol' man's nussin' a detective in his buzzum.' But when the gup sets up with that 'haw! haw!' o' hisn, an' lets out he ain't no idee where he is nor who we be, an' puts it up to me thet we may have made a mistake, I was lost. If he's a detective, he's makin' a mighty smooth bluff fer a chap thet starts out like a amature bungler. Then he may be one o' those rich guys thet like to find out things fer themselves. 'Tany rate, yere be goin' ter hev trouble gettin' shet o' him without a muss. An' he ain't goin' to be any use ter yer if ye keep him—alive."

"Well boys, it's not fer me to be crowin'," spoke up Mike, "but I tould ye it were foolish to be stealin' a man just because ye was needin' another hand. Ye might better be waitin' over two days fer the next tow, and hire one dacint."

"Ye say ye think this feller's a rich one?" broke in Jud excitedly. "Then, by the roarin' Erie, we'll find out who he is, an' make his folks pony up a big chunk o' dough."

"Aw, chuck it!" protested Hank. "Hain't robbin' village post-offices an' stores risky enough, without playin' Arab bandit besides? Ye know we got two uncommon big an' ticklish jobs to pull off this trip too."

"Here I was plannin' to ketch a hobo who'd help me with these jobs," ruminated Jud. "Ye see, my plan wuz to git this feller good-natured without tellin' him too much. Then, after we pulled one o' these jobs, if the constables got too gay we'd let 'em catch this feller, an' he'd have to be the goat. Meanwhile, he'd make a good mule-driver, anyhow, an' we had to have that. But this feller, if he's what ye think, Hank, won't work in at all."

"Now take my advice, boys," again broke in Mike. "It don't look so bad to me. First, ye kin make this boy drive the mules all right in the daytime, when ye ain't in the towns, by keepin' the rifle by the wan of us at the tiller. We got to find out who he is first.

"Watch the papers. If he's a rich guy's son, they'll tell ye about it mighty soon. Then we kin work the ransom game, git enough to put us on Easy Street an' skip to Canada.

"If he's a detective, we'll tumble to that pretty quick, find out what he knows, an' make a get-away if we need to. But if he ain't rich, er a detective, then he's just one o' these no-account gentlemen-tramps, an' when we git to that first job beyond Rochester we kin jest dump him on the constables, and git a medal from the village fer helpin' catch the thief."

"That sounds good to me, Mike," approved the captain, after a few moments of silence. "Guess we'll settle on that, an' turn in fer the night."

Captain Billings rose, stretched himself, and prepared to enter the cabin. Seabury slipped down a little where he could easily crawl unnoticed to his bunk.

"Just one proposition, cap, fore ye turn in," said Hank, rising. "Ef I kin git rid o' this feller quiet, with no danger to any one, an' no questions asked, an' no disagreeable information troublin' you, kin I do it? Now, there's a gamble. You think mebbe he's a rich haul. You want to risk cashi' on him. Well, if I ain't able to git rid o' him we'll follow your plan. If my plan works we'll be just ez well off as when we started, an' well rid o' our white elephant. They may be one less 0 in the 400 when I git through, but that won't interfere with our business. It's a go, cap?"

"Go ez fer ez ye like, Hank," replied Billings magnificently, "only don't be too consarned bloody about it. Ye know I'm game fer anything, but I like to keep the decks clean."

And Captain Kidd of the tow-path sought his bunk.

On the other side of the partition lay the trembling "insane nephew."

The plot was developing with a vengeance.

CHAPTER IV.

A STAGE WITHOUT EXITS.

A SHOT rang out over the narrow belt of sun-beaten water, and reverberated

through the big wood lot across the canal. A puff of smoke was wafted from the deck of the canal-boat Judson A. Billings. A bullet spat in the dust of the tow-path just ahead of the sorry-looking figure that had paused for a moment, hesitatingly, beside the whipping tow-line.

The figure half sprang, half slouched forward again to its place behind the whiffletrees. There was fear in every cringing movement.

That spiritless individual looked little like the young playwright whose acquaintance we have made recently. A close inspection, however, revealed certain indubitable marks of identification.

Hour after hour Seabury had plodded along the trail of hot dust, footsore, sand-choked, begrimed and sweating. The monotonous creak of the whiffletrees, the slow *plop! plop!* of hoofs in the deep dust, and the lapping of the wavelets under the stone abutments were broken only by the occasional booming stamp of the mules fighting flies on the boat, or the long-drawn-out, but hardly lingeringly sweet, bray of one of those extensively eared quadrupeds.

Seabury had become a mule-driver.

Worse than that, he was the involuntary victim of that classical joke of the tow-path, the man who worked his passage by driving the mules.

But Seabury had long since lost the power to look upon it as a joke. Especially did the humor of it fade away when he glanced over his shoulder now and then into the evil face of Captain Jud by the boat's wheel.

Leaning against the cabin, convenient to the captain's right hand, was the reason why a wealthy young dramatist was willing to plod along mile after mile after a pair of unattractive canal mules. It was an excellent repeating rifle, and Captain Billings was a quick, sure shot.

He had proved that the day he first put Seabury to work with the mules and told him what would happen if he tried to bolt.

The captain, at that humiliating moment in Seabury's career had snatched the rifle from the deck, swung it to position, and fired; apparently with one swift move, and without stopping to aim. The glass insulator on a telegraph pole some two hundred feet away was shattered.

And this shot just now was evidently meant as a warning; just a gentle reminder that the captain could still shoot, and had not forgotten his driver.

Seabury had entertained no notion of running at the time. He had stopped simply to dig a painful pebble out of his shoe. The warning was ample, however. For days to come, Seabury's hair rose with horror at the thought that if the captain's hand had wavered a little his career, both as dramatist and mule-driver, would have come to a sudden end.

At any rate, it was perfectly evident that Captain Jud had no fears of shooting in the general direction of human targets. And so his driver, ever and anon looking back at the ugly visage by the wheel, and the equally ugly gun muzzle near it, had decided that there was no hope in the way of a dash for liberty.

Again and again, as he plodded along, he revolved in his mind all possible plans of escape.

When he had first discovered that his prison was only a tiny canal-boat, bound on a voyage along a little ditch with either bank only a few yards away, he had scoffed at the idea of being held a captive for very long. The captain's scheme of putting him in the light of an insane nephew had weakened his confidence.

Nevertheless, it had seemed impossible that even that clever ruse would be successful in the canal where they would be constantly within call of honest citizens. Certainly when he reached Albany his trouble would end. Why! he could call a policeman from the deck of the boat.

But, unfortunately, when they came in sight of that city Seabury was gagged again and locked in his cabin till they were far out in the open country.

Then followed several frantic, but abortive, attempts to escape.

He tried clambering on a bridge as they passed under, only to be dragged back by the heels and get horribly pummeled. The sharp eye of the captain seemed always upon him, ever reenforced by that terrible rifle.

Once, in an apparently favorable mo-

ment, he leaped overboard and swam to a group of fishermen on the heel-path. As he landed he saw the fishermen scurrying right and left as though he were the victim of plague.

He looked back at the boat, and there stood the imperturbable captain, gun in position, ready to fire at him pointblank. So Seabury had clung to the bank, shivering with fear, while Hank lowered away a skiff and came for him, explaining meanwhile to the fishermen the details of the "insane nephew" story.

That meant another drubbing, and apparently exhausted possibilities in the way of methods of escape.

Soon after this episode, the captain, believing his captive properly cowed, put him to driving the mules. At each village of any size Seabury was again locked in his cabin, and Mike, or Hank, who constituted the night-shift, were by turns routed out from their bunks to guide the mules past the danger-point.

So, hour after hour Seabury plodded on in growing blank despair. He had not even the consolation of thinking he would be missed at home.

The Seabury family kept little account of one another's movements during the summer season. His father and mother had planned to leave town for their cottage-home on the Sound the next day after his disappearance. He had not expected to join them for a month.

He had announced that he might accept Freddie Kane's invitation for his yachting trip, unless he decided to go up to the Delaware Water Gap and camp with two other literary friends who were pretending to do some writing in communion with nature.

His absence at breakfast that morning he made Captain Jud's acquaintance would not be unusual enough to excite comment in the household. He frequently breakfasted alone, and went away for days at a time without notice.

So his family would suppose he was either on the yacht or in camp. The yachting party would think he had decided on the camp, the campers that he had preferred the yacht. One of the eccentricities of Walter's budding genius was a failure to be punctilious about declining or accepting invitations.

So it looked as though a month would pass before any of his friends missed him. Hence, it would be a month before his captors would learn from the newspapers what particular jungle had produced their white elephant.

Undoubtedly before that time they would reach the conclusion that he was of strictly plebeian origin and unredeemable, and feel free to dispose of him as they saw fit.

And there was a whole month in which Hank could develop and carry out his evil plans to free the Judson A. Billings of its Jonah.

At any rate, it looked as though the stage were tightly fenced in and the play considerably more than a one-night stand.

In fact, many unpleasant things might occur on a month's cruise with Captain Kidd of the tow-path. At the thought though the thermometer on the shady side of the cabin registered ninety degrees, Walter Livingston Seabury suffered from a severe chill.

He closed his eyes to shut out the scene that had grown so hatefully familiar, and mechanically followed the guiding-lines in a kind of torpor. Then came to his dazed senses a mocking vision of the high seas he had fondly dreamed would furnish the setting for his great play.

There was the roll of the billows; the smell and sting of the salt spray; the spanking of canvas and snapping of sheets; and picturesque, swaggering villains chanting rakish pirate-songs.

But always, in spite of every effort of will, the pirate-captain was Jud Billings in every detail. That face, even by closing his eyes, Seabury could not lose.

He opened his eyes again with a despairing groan.

There was still his Captain Kidd. But the gay crew was gone. For the salt breeze was substituted the scent of decaying eel-grass, and the bounding billows became a dirty-brown, sluggish-flowing ditch. By no stretch of the imagination could the Judson A. Billings, of New York, leaky, old, prosaic tub, be made to play the part of a low, black, romantic pirate-ship.

But suddenly Seabury straightened up and shook off his fatigue.

What had he been thinking of? A month, indeed! Deliverance was right at hand.

He had forgotten till now that the route of Freddie Kane's yachting trip was to be through the canal to Buffalo, and thence into the Great Lakes.

Hence, while Seabury was despairing, a boat-load of his intimate friends was due to pass him at almost any time now. He would soon be able to bid defiance to his Captain Kidd.

Seabury's weariness and despair seemed to vanish. All the rest of that day he peered back continually, ever hoping to see the gleaming hull of Kane's little yacht, the White Wing.

That night he slept the sound sleep of hope and relief. The White Wing would travel only by day, so he could not miss her. She must inevitably pass within a week.

But day after day went by, and no White Wing. Time after time smoke far down the canal betokened an approaching steamer, only to disappoint him.

A week passed, and he was once more in despair. Nevertheless, he continued to watch over his shoulder for the much-desired little pleasure-boat.

At length, on the ninth day of his vigil, there swung around a curve, a quarter of a mile away, a cloud of smoke, showing a white hull beneath. The watcher's pulse jumped with hope. Nearer and nearer came the boat. He fairly shouted with joy.

It was the White Wing.

Seabury had just been allowed his begrudged half-hour for a noonday meal, and was about to enter the galley hatchway.

He glanced at Captain Jud. The pirate was lighting his pipe and had his back toward Seabury. The latter edged away toward the stable-cabin.

He could make a pretense of looking after the mules. With the boat's length between him and the captain he could safely hail the yacht.

The graceful little steamer glided swiftly alongside. Captain Billings was still struggling with refractory matches.

Yes, there they were lolling at ease under the canopy on the after-deck of the White Wing: Freddie Kane, Tommy Bragdon, Phil Langdon, and the rest. They were scarcely a rod away.

"Lord! Won't they be surprised to see me!" Seabury chuckled to himself.

They were looking at him now. Was it surprise kept them from saluting him?

"Hallo, Freddie! Want to take a tramp aboard?" he called cautiously.

Mr. Kane eyed him coolly and unrecognizingly.

"Who's your fresh friend, Freddie?" asked Tommy Bragdon.

"Freddie, don't you know me?" gasped Seabury, seized with sudden fear as the White Wing glided past. "Help me, for God's sake! Tommy! Phil! I'm Walt Seabury."

But his last words were lost.

"The canal-boat gentleman's bughouse," he heard Freddie remark pleasantly as the party passed out of hearing.

Seabury's best friends did not know him!

He stood for a moment in mingled astonishment and despair. Was he indeed crazy, in fulfilment of the captain's clever lie?

Then he looked down at his tattered clothing, begrimed and faded, ran his fingers over the three weeks' growth of beard on his sunburnt face—and understood.

"Hey, you!" came the rasping voice of the captain. "If I hear you chinnin' with passin' boats agin, I'll fill ye as full of holes as a leaky pail."

Seabury, without reply, descended to his dinner, sullen and disconsolate.

Of a truth, the stage on which he had perforce pitched his drama seemed to have no available exit.

CHAPTER V.

A DASH FOR THE WINGS.

SEABURY climbed on a bridge under which they were passing, and returned to his mules.

But it was a different Seabury from the one who, a short time before, had gleefully hailed his friends with expectations of immediate release. It was as though the discovery of his complete physical metamorphosis had suddenly wrought within him an equally great mental and spiritual transformation.

Hope completely crushed, strangely enough he had lost as completely, too, the overwhelming dejection that followed. The man who now took up the

reins smote the tow-path with a tread that expressed defiant desperation.

Escape seemed impossible. Death soon, at the best, awaited. It would not find him a craven. Nor would he longer submit abjectly to his brutal captor. At the next favorable moment he would make a dash for freedom and, if need be, die like a man.

That's the way the hero of a pirate-drama ought to feel! Only now Seabury was not thinking of dramatics.

He regretted only that he had not made this resolve while aboard the boat. Then, while white-hot, he might have attacked the pirate, and settled some old scores before the crew could interfere.

Two hours later Seabury had an opportunity to put into effect his desperate resolutions. The boat swung around a bend out of a deep cut, and beyond them, in a sweeping curve, the canal ran, banked high above the level of a broad valley. Through the center of the valley ran a tiny creek, and Seabury could see the end of the culvert, as they call the stone-arched tunnels through which the creeks flow under the canal. From the edge of the tow-path to the culvert mouth was a steep grassy slope of twenty feet, almost a sheer drop.

Here was Seabury's chance.

Once below the edge of the bank he would be out of range of Billings's rifle. Gradually he edged the mules toward the outer side of the path, and he himself walked nearer and nearer the grassy slope, making no sudden moves that might arouse the suspicions of Captain Billings.

As he approached the culvert, Seabury's heart almost stopped beating with a sudden return of fear. He dared not look back again, but he seemed to feel the captain's rifle muzzle boring his back. This feeling, however, lasted only an instant.

A moment later he reeled forward, as though stumbling, then dropped over the edge of the bank toward the culvert's mouth. At the same instant he heard the crack of the captain's rifle and the sing of a bullet over his head.

But Seabury had been too quick even for the expert Billings. In a few seconds he was plunging through the dark, dripping culvert up to his knees in water.

From the other end of the culvert he emerged in a wood-lot whose protection he had calculated would shield him from the bullets of the irate captain till he could get out of range. As he clambered to the creek's bank he heard over his head a wild outcry.

It was the voice of Billings, joined a moment later by Hank and Mike.

"Stop thief! Murder! Head off that madman!" came from the deck of the Judson A. Billings.

Then, again and again, the rifle spoke, and the fugitive, his heart pounding his breast-bone, heard the bullets zip and snap among the branches about him.

But for the moment he felt safe. It would take some minutes for the captain and his men to run the boat in and land. In that time he could cross the woodland, and seek refuge with the first farmer he met.

Refuge? At the thought he stopped irresolute. He had sought refuge before, and to what end? Each time Billings had told the prospective rescuers his story about the "crazy nephew," and Seabury's own true, but apparently improbable, tale had only strengthened the captain's position.

Could Seabury expect better luck this time? No. He would run no chances.

His best course, he decided, would be to avoid mankind as a pestilence, and keep in hiding till dark.

No sooner had he reached this conclusion than he was impressed with the need of haste.

On the far side of the woods halloos answered the wild cries of the boatmen. There was a sound of men forcing their way through the underbrush at several points. Then the shouts of the boatmen drew nearer. They had landed, and escape was cut off.

Hurriedly Seabury cast about him for a hiding-place. His first impulse was to climb a tree. In every direction big mast-like trunks, with their lowest limbs ten feet from the ground, vetoed this proposition.

Had he been able to climb them, there was not time to get up among their concealing branches before his pursuers came into view.

Nearer came the shouts and crashing of underbrush on both sides of him.

They were too near to attempt a dash for the open at either side of the woods.

At that instant his eyes fell on a big trunk a few feet away. It was that of a giant elm, whose broad, spreading limbs and thick foliage, far overtopping the surrounding trees, would have made an excellent hiding-place could he have reached them.

But what held his attention was a low opening decayed through the bark between two spreading roots at the foot of the tree. It was like a welcoming front portal to the home of a wood-nymph, just big enough for a full-grown mortal man to squeeze through.

The big trunk was hollow.

There flashed through Seabury's brain boyhood stories of men hiding in hollow trees. Without an instant's hesitation, he made a dash for the opening and forced himself through, taking pains to leave no more marks than necessary.

He had scarcely drawn his feet through the opening when the boatmen dashed through the underbrush within a rod of Seabury's hiding-place.

He found himself standing in a musty, upright cylinder, a little over two feet in diameter. It was infested by every variety of the bug creation that loves decayed wood. Far over his head he could see a little spot of light that told him the trunk was hollow all the way up.

But there was no time for deliberation. That conspicuous opening in the big trunk might be investigated at any moment. Bracing his elbows and back against the punk-like sides of the tree, he drew up his knees and in turn braced them against the side facing him.

Thus alternating, he hitched his body upward till it was all concealed in the dark above the opening. Then he heard muffled voices outside.

The boatmen and the strangers evidently had met, and were discussing the possible direction taken by their quarry. Seabury could make out a word now and then; enough to know that Jud was giving a harrowing account of the lunatic, of burglarious, arsonous, and murderous intent, who was roaming at large over their fields.

Then the voices receded, and Seabury knew his tree had been passed for the time being.

Still he dared not leave, and, as his present position was most uncomfortable, he decided to climb to the top.

It was a long, laborious operation. The dry rot of the wood powdered under his attack and filled his eyes and mouth with dust. Variegated insects ran handicap races over his sweating form.

The hollow grew constantly smaller, making climbing ever more difficult. He was filled with a fear that he would end his troubles by being stuck fast in the hollow trunk with no possibility of rescue.

At this thought he recalled a story, told him in camp one summer when he was a boy, about a woodsman who crawled into a hollow log to escape a shower. The rain, according to the veracious narrative, swelled the log and crushed the unlucky fellow.

But at length Seabury emerged from a small opening, and found himself on a broad limb high above the ground and well-screened from view below. Not far away he could hear the shouts of the men and the barking of dogs.

He mounted higher, and could look far over the tops of the surrounding trees at the country beyond. Here and there men were hurrying across the fields in answer to the halloos of the searchers. About a mile away lay a small village.

While Seabury looked in this direction, a crowd of men and boys emerged from the village along a country road that ran past the woods. They, too, were running and shouting in great excitement. Evidently some one had telephoned the village and raised a general hue and cry.

Fascinated, Seabury saw the men spread out through the fields, and sweep by the woods in the direction of the first party.

Then a happy thought struck the fugitive. In all probability the little village would be practically deserted. It would in that case be an easy matter to enter it from the other side, hide in the railroad-yards, and catch the next freight-train out.

He slowly and cautiously climbed back to the big limb at the opening, and peered down. He stopped right there.

At the foot of the tree, carefully inspecting the opening, was Captain Jud Billings.

Seabury scarcely dared breathe. Were

he discovered he feared that even the broad bough on which he was resting would not protect him from Billings's repeater. The leaves of some short branches near the base of the limb effectually hid him, however, and afforded chinks through which he could safely watch his foe.

Billings was alone. He had evidently sent his men on with the farmers and villagers, and had returned himself to seek the lost trail from the start.

"He come through this way, all right," Seabury heard the boatman mutter to himself, "and this is just the place the young whelp'd be likely to hide in. Well, we'll warm it up a little."

Billings thrust the rifle through the opening in the tree, set it upright, and fired several shots. One slug went straight up through the hollow and sang past Seabury's ear.

Then the captain fired several other shots from the outside among the branches about the quivering fugitive.

He dropped his gun, and waited to see if there were any results from his fusillade. Again Seabury held his breath.

The captain gazed long and thoughtfully up among the branches. Would he attempt to climb the tree? Seabury hoped he would. He thought longingly of the damage the heel of his shoe would do the captain's features if he tried to come out through that opening at the top.

But Billings had hit on another plan. He had evidently discovered tracks at the base of the tree and was still convinced that the man he wanted was somewhere among its branches.

Fascinated, Seabury watched the inland pirate gather a pile of twigs and dry leaves, and arrange it in and about the opening. Then Billings struck a match and lighted the heap.

Seabury was going to be smoked out or roasted alive. His wild attempt to make an exit from the stage and bring his drama to a close was going to end ignominiously in the wings.

CHAPTER VI.

A CHANGE OF RÔLE.

HIGHER and higher rose the flames around the trunk of the old tree. It became apparent to Seabury that his little drama was likely to come to an end right here, with a climax of very heavy business for the villains.

The hollow trunk, a splendid flue, was pouring around him a smoke-cloud. Below, the flames were leaping through the dry grass and underbrush. Soon he would be perched over a roaring forest fire. It could not be long before his support would give way and drop him into the blaze.

The captain, seeing how much mischief he had set on foot, disappeared before Seabury had made up his mind to appeal to him for mercy and help.

At last the counsel of Hank had prevailed, and the white elephant was to be safely eliminated.

Wider and wider spread the flames, and higher licked their red tongues. The smoke choked Seabury and the hot air singed his face. Despairingly he clung to the highest limb he could reach, and fought for breath.

Now he heard the shouts of the searchers drawing nearer again. Over all the tumult came the cry of "Fire!"

The forest-blaze had been discovered, and the men were returning to fight it. Seabury shouted loudly for help, but the roaring flames made his calls futile.

He wondered dazedly if the little village supported a fire company, and if he could hope for rescue from them. How comparatively pleasant it would be to lie once more shackled aboard the Judson A. Billings, or, after a pummeling by the captain, be again set to driving the mules!

But his senses were reeling. His gasping breath, smoke-saturated, refused longer to enter his lungs. Had he not been lodged in the crotch of a limb he must have fallen.

He was falling! Or was that a fantasy of semiconsciousness? He clutched for his supporting limb. It was still there. Yet, down, down he went.

Now he noticed it was not an orthodox fall. It was a slow, easy motion, yet irregular, like a sinking series of billows.

Branches snapped and split around him. Then flames licked and blistered his face. His clothing was afire. He was burned in a dozen places.

Down! Down! Then, splash! His

descent ended with a plunge into the water.

Gasping and sputtering, Seabury rose to his feet. He cleared his eyes and nose of water. His senses suddenly returned, and at a glance he saw what had happened.

He was standing up to his waist in the little creek once more. There was a free-air space at the water's surface, but on both sides of the creek the fire was raging. Shouts near by told him the men had reached the other side of the wall of flame that effectually separated pursuers and pursued.

The big, hollow tree-trunk had burned through. Slowly crashing its way among the smaller timbers around it, the huge elm had toppled over and thrown him into the creek. Beyond a few minor burns, he was little hurt.

Just before him yawned the mouth of the culvert through which he had fled from Billings's bullets. Now it afforded an avenue of escape in the opposite direction. Seabury bent over and headed for it along the creek-bed.

In a few minutes he was back in the open fields, the other side of the canal, just below the point where he had made his jump for liberty. The little forest fire had come to his aid, and not a soul was left to interfere with his escape.

Half a mile off was a bridge, and toward this the fugitive made his way, keeping down in the fields well behind the canal-bank. He cautiously crossed the bridge. There found himself on the road along which he had seen the villagers starting in his pursuit.

Beyond the highway he came to the railroad. A short walk brought him to the village freight-yards. Here he climbed into an empty box car without further adventure.

Evening was drawing on. It would be easy to sneak aboard the first freight that stopped in the village after dusk. Catching freights was not in the young dramatist's line, but he had treasured up hints as to the method from stories of juvenile adventure.

Two hours passed, and still Seabury heard no stir around the station. That blaze of Billings's must have proved a great success. At length, just at dusk, a man passed his hiding-place. He, apparently, was the station-agent. A few minutes later the evening train arrived and departed.

The fugitive heard the agent tell an alighting passenger all about the runaway madman who had set the woods afire. The conflagration had passed beyond control, it seemed, and the men were having a hard fight to keep it from spreading through the grass into the neighboring farms.

The agent locked up the station and went away, and again all was deserted.

At length, just as darkness was finally settling down, a big freight roared through the cut and stopped for water at the tank just below the village, with the rear cars opposite Seabury. Cautiously he climbed from his present retreat and felt his way along the train in the semidarkness, looking for a good place to get aboard.

In stories, he remembered, men rode the bumpers; but it was not clear to him in just what part of a car's anatomy the bumpers were located.

He had just discovered a car-step and ladder leading to the roof, and decided to climb to the top and lie flat on his face for the present, when he heard a wild cry in the direction of the station.

"Stop thief! Burglars!" smote the evening air.

Then there was a scurrying of feet; a dark form sprang out past the station and ran toward him between the tracks. After him, in wild chase, several others sprang into view.

Before the surprised young man could move, the fugitive ran at him full speed.

The stranger sprang back, dropped a package he held in one hand, and threw to position a rifle he carried in the other. The end of the barrel pressed Seabury's breast.

Then, with an oath of surprise, the stranger peered forward into Seabury's face.

"What—you again!" he exclaimed in a familiar voice.

It was Captain Billings.

What followed was done so quickly that it took Seabury some moments fully to realize it. Then he was forced once more to admire the quick wit of the pirate captain.

Billings, resting the gun in one hand

for an instant, swung Seabury around with the other so that he stood between Billings and his pursuers. Then, the gun still in position, he shouted:

"All right, boys. I got him. If he moves, I'll pepper him."

The next moment two young men seized Seabury. After them trailed a panting old man with white whiskers and bald head, who looked Seabury over, and then peered into the captain's face.

"Why, you're the boatman that lost the lunatic," said the old man to the latter.

"Yes, and there's the lunatic," calmly answered Billings; "the fellow who burned the woods up and made you people a lot o' trouble. And I guess he's been up to something else by the way yer yellin'. I figured he'd be sneakin' back here to catch a freight. He's cunnin' 'if he is bughouse. So, when I see they wa'n't no chance o' puttin' out the fire, I run back here an' lay fer him. There's somethin' he dropped just now."

The captain indicated the package he himself had just thrown down. One of the young men had at that moment hit it with his foot and stooped to pick it up.

With a cry, like a mother recovering a lost child, the old man swooped for the package.

"That's the money out o' the safe at my store. This feller swiped it, and might 'a' got away if 'twa'n't fer you. Crazy er not, he'll suffer fer the scare he giv me."

Truly, Seabury had for the time been forced to change rôles with the villain of the drama.

CHAPTER VII.

A CLIMAX.

THE canal-boat Judson A. Billings was not the only place where Seabury was viewed in the light of a white elephant.

In all the public career of the bucolic justice of the peace before whom the young dramatist was now arraigned, that official had never before been called upon to deal with an alleged lunatic. His most complicated cases hitherto had been visiting tramps and local drunks.

There were no insane institutions in Kimball's Basin, and the court evidently doubted the constitutionality of imprisoning a maniac in the ordinary jail.

Captain Billings, on the other hand, was manifestly anxious to leave his charge in the clutches of the law. He had become convinced that the young man had no influence of wealth behind him, and did not think any tale Seabury might tell would do himself and his crew any harm. In the meantime, the boatmen could get far away and well rid of their intractable driver.

But, unfortunately for this plan, several witnesses remembered that when the hue and cry had started that afternoon Billings had excitedly referred to the runaway as his nephew. This decided the justice.

He ruled that Billings, as the nearest relative of the prisoner, was his natural guardian, and ordered the captain to put Seabury aboard his boat and get out of town immediately under penalty of arrest himself for the trouble his ward had caused.

Here the man whose wood-lot had been burned over objected that Billings should be held responsible for the fire and be made to pay damages. Billings loudly demurred that no evidence had been brought forward to show that his nephew had fired the woods. The court declared this point well taken.

Among the villagers the only strong objector to the discharge of the prisoner was the storekeeper whose safe had been robbed. His story to the court made clear to the captive the mysterious turn of events that had brought him into the clutches of the law.

It seemed that when the hue and cry was raised the merchant had left his place in charge of his only clerk, a callow and unreliable youth to whom the witness appended several more picturesque and vigorous epithets in the course of his testimony. This wicked and altogether unprofitable servant, when no customers came, all who had been able to walk having joined the general chase, chafed exceedingly at being so unjustly compelled to restrain his own curious impulses.

At length flesh and blood could no longer stand the strain. The youth forgot duty and joined the rest of the town,

leaving the safe unlocked, and barely remembering to shut the door of the store.

Then, enter the villain.

The captain, leaving his driver, as he believed, treed and roasted, and having provided more entertainment for the merry villagers in the shape of a baby forest fire, sought out the deserted village to see what he might pick up while the inhabitants were out hunting lunatics and fighting blazes.

The lone store had looked like easy money. He pried open a rear window, found the open safe, and in it, to his joy, discovered a goodly sum of money that had been left with the merchant for safe-keeping by the paymaster of a near-by stone quarry.

This the pirate had hastily wrapped up, and departed again by way of the window.

Now, at this critical moment the store's proprietor and two young men of the village were returning from the chase. They passed the rear of the store by a side street just in time to see a shadowy form jump from the window.

They gave chase, but the good-fortune of Billings in bumping into Seabury, and his quick wit in substituting positions in the friendly dusk, had established for him a complete alibi.

No doubt existed in the minds of his latest captors that it was Seabury they saw leap from the store-window.

As the storekeeper unfolded his tale of wo he made a vehement appeal for vengeance, declaring a man sane enough to break into a store was sufficiently lucid to be justly punished.

Here the accused young man tried an excited and indignant explanation of the real facts, but was promptly shut off, having merely convinced his hearers that there was no manner of doubt about his insanity.

So "the pirate" and his "nephew" were escorted back to the boat by the town constable, who stood on the canal bank warningly till the captain had safely locked his prisoner in his cabin, and the Judson A. Billings was once more under way.

To Seabury, return to his prison was at first a relief. He was not used to playing fugitive, and it got on his nerves.

Nevertheless, his new-found spirit had not deserted him, exhausted as he was by his trying experiences. And as he thought it all over, he saw the need of immediate action. He was more than ever filled with apprehension over the possibility of the carrying out of Hank's murderous designs.

The more he thought of it the more ominous became his reflections.

Here he was in a trap. He would have no chance after all to end his career in a spirited battle, as the hero of a pirate play should make his exit. Even if nothing was done this very night he would undoubtedly be held a close prisoner to the end. After his late escapade the captain would not trust him to drive the mules again.

Then the attempt by Billings to roast him alive showed that all ideas of holding him for ransom had been abandoned. Even now they might be planning the method by which all too literally he might be made to walk the plank.

Seabury could hear the indistinct voices of Billings and Hank in long and earnest conversation at the wheel. At length they ceased, and the captain went to his bunk.

But weariness at last overcame worry, and the captive fell into a deep though troubled sleep.

He awoke again suddenly, to find himself cramped and suffocated. He was being dragged from his berth. He tried to struggle, but his hands and feet were bound.

A rough gag held his tongue silent. He was hauled up the ladder, and a moment later lay helpless on his back beside the wheel.

His assailant was truing up the course of the momentarily neglected boat. By the light of the deck-lantern Seabury saw, as he expected, that it was Hank.

He was alone. Mike was driving the mules, and the captain was asleep.

Seabury recalled again the murderous proposition Hank had made to the captain that first night on the Hudson, in which it was stipulated that Billings was to have no disagreeable knowledge of ways and means used in ridding the boat of its involuntary Jonah.

For several minutes the Jonah lay trembling with helpless horror while

Hank guided the boat around a bend. The grizzly pilot of the Flying Dutchman could have looked no more terrible to the passing mariner than did the evil figure exposed to Seabury's straining eyes by the dim lantern.

The deliberation with which he shifted the spokes of the wheel was a refinement of torture. Seabury longed to shout to him to hurry. At length the bend was passed, and Hank had the course trimmed to his satisfaction.

He left the wheel, and stood with folded arms looking down at his victim, a grim satisfaction in his horrible, fiendish face.

"Now, I guess we'll end all bother with you," he said at length.

That was all. A torrent of vituperation would have been a relief to the condemned man.

Then the executioner stooped and picked up a heavy object from the deck. It was a short piece of rusty railroad iron.

Squatting before Seabury's fascinated eyes, Hank laid the iron across his knee and, with the utmost deliberation, tied a piece of stout cord about its middle, leaving long loose ends.

Then he laid the iron beside Seabury's head. The ends of the cords he bound tightly around his victim's neck and, rising, viewed him once more with fiendish satisfaction.

Seabury was to be weighted and drowned like a sick stray cat!

For a strangely fantastic, half-hysterical moment the young dramatist thought of the approved pirate method of execution, and his artistic soul rebelled against this forcible departure from conventional models.

Slowly Hank stooped toward him. The movement seemed to occupy hours. Then Seabury was seized and dragged to the edge of the boat.

He felt his feet go over. Then his body dragged along the gunwale. At length Hank released his hold on Seabury's armpits, and as he fell he felt the back of his head strike sharply against the edge of the boat.

Then for an instant the supreme horror of impending death overcame him, and he scarcely felt the waters close about him.

The Judson A. Billings inched on into the night.

Seabury's drama had reached a climax.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DÉNOUEMENT FAILS.

SEABURY had apparently gone to certain death over the side of the pirate boat. When, after an appreciable lapse of time he found himself still alive, to say that he was astounded is putting it feebly.

It was like a wild nightmare in which one falls a tremendous distance and then awakes with a cry of terror in a soft and comfortable bed.

But when it came to the soft bed part, this was different. Seabury was alive all right, but the horror and imminence of death was still too real and present to admit of any only-an-awful-dream-after-all feeling.

He had struck the water, and vaguely felt it close around him. Then an instant later the acuteness of his senses returned and he realized that in some strange manner his fall had been checked. Moreover, his head was still above water.

He felt the dead weight of the railroad iron tugging at his neck. He was being slowly dragged through the canal hung to the side of the boat. The water buoyed him just enough to prevent strangling.

In his bound condition he could not make out what had happened. Anyhow, he reflected, it would not last long. He had been caught accidentally on some projection on the boat's side. It would soon give way and the murderer's work would complete itself.

If not, Hank would eventually discover the temporary thwarting of his designs and remedy the defect immediately.

With renewed desperation Seabury wrenched at the bonds that held his hands. To his joy they loosened a little and at length he wrenched one hand free.

Slowly and with great difficulty he untied the cords about him and dropped the weight from his neck.

Then investigation showed how simple had been the miracle that had saved him.

Around the blunt nose of the Billings,

for strengthening purposes, were spiked several parallel and horizontal flat strips of iron. In the course of the old tub's career of bumping about the docks one of these strips had got bent and turned out a little at the end. This projection, scarcely an inch out from the side of the boat, had, by lucky chance, caught under the cords about the arms of the falling man.

Seabury debated his next move. It would be a simple matter to swim ashore, find the railroad, then the nearest station and catch a freight. By daylight he would be far out of the reach of the captain and his pirate crew.

Right now he would execute the dénouement of his play and return once more to the life of a young millionaire.

He pushed off from the side of the boat and took a stroke toward the bank.

But at that moment came to his ears the sound of a step on the deck. It was Hank pacing back and forth by the wheel. At the thought of that able murderer and his cold-blooded methods of execution, overwhelming rage seized the swimmer and obliterated for the time his desire to escape.

Before going he would make the dénouement more complete by paying his respects to one member of the pirate crew at least. Then, as his rage grew, a wild ambition possessed him.

He would knock out Hank and throw him overboard. Then he would do up the captain before he could escape from his cabin, and be ready for a single-handed combat with Mike on the tow-path.

If he reasoned for an instant over the ethics of this procedure, it was only to reach the wrathful conclusion that the deed constituted justifiable homicide.

The boat had nearly passed him. A few swift strokes, however, brought Seabury back to her just in time to catch the end of the big rudder. In an instant he had climbed aboard and was advancing stealthily along the narrow side-deck toward the unsuspecting man at the wheel.

Hank's back was turned and Seabury got to within six feet of him undiscovered. The boatman probably would never have known what struck him had not Seabury, just as he came within the light of the deck-lantern, stumbled over a coil of rope.

Hank turned and looked into the face of the man he supposed was lying in the bottom of the canal, dead by his hands.

For a moment the mate stood stunned with horror. Then Seabury sprang like an enraged mountain lion.

The moment their bodies struck, Hank realized that he was dealing with firm flesh and blood and not with an immaterial ghost. The two clinched, swayed for a moment, then fell and rolled over and over on the deck in a deadly struggle.

Again and again the fighting forms hung poised at the gunwales, then worked back again. At length, locked in each other's arms as though bound by chains, they rolled to the edge and, still fighting wildly for the throat-clutch, went into the canal.

Down, down they sank, it seemed an hour before they struck the soft bottom and began slowly to rise again. Trained at diving by many summers at the seashore, the young millionaire had for once the physical advantage over the boatman. Yet, despite his efforts, his struggles were forcing him to choke and swallow water in an effort to breathe.

For a moment they again gulped in the free air. As the two men came up, each at the same instant made an involuntary move to free himself from the other. Then each realized the advantage the other might take, and both renewed their viselike grips.

So they sank once more. Seabury's lungs seemed about to burst. His head whirled. His muscles were paralyzed.

Then he felt a new spasmodic grip in the arms of his antagonist. It was the clutch of a drowning man. Seabury made a last desperate effort to free himself. It was no use.

Locked in their death embrace the two foemen sank to the muddy canal bottom and sensation ceased.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ANTICLIMAX.

Yes. This was Walter Livingston Seabury himself who once more lived and had his being. When it came to moving, however, the line was drawn. Beyond slowly fluttering his eyelids open, that

young gentleman was incapable of demonstrating his existence.

The eyes behind those fluttering lids looked into strange faces. Moreover, Seabury realized that the waters of the Erie Canal no longer engulfed him.

He was surprised at that. It had seemed only an instant that he had lost consciousness. Not that it appeared at all strange to be still alive. So absorbed had he been in his struggle with the boatman that he had not realized he was drowning.

Gradually came more strength and clear-headedness. He looked around him.

He was lying on the deck of a strange boat, a steamer, moored to the bank along which stood several houses dim in the half light of dawn. Near him Seabury saw, in the glow of a lantern, the bedraggled form of Hank.

He, too, was slowly recovering consciousness under the ministrations of a serious-faced man whom Seabury took to be a doctor.

The young man struggled to his elbow.

"Where am I?" he asked feebly.

"You're on the steamer Peter Hollings, at Kimball's Basin," answered the doctor, eying him keenly. "You and your friend were pulled out of the canal by the steamer's crew pretty well all in. They dropped their tow and hustled you here just in time. They say you fell off a boat that had just passed them. They hailed your boat, and your friends will be here before long, probably. You're all right now. This man here tells me you are the chap we had all the trouble over yesterday."

The doctor pointed to a sleepy villager who had been aroused by the boatman to find the doctor.

So Seabury was back again in the little town from the authorities of which he had so recently escaped. A strange turn fate was taking! This time, he thought, he would surely be able to appeal to justice.

Indeed, Captain Billings seemed disposed to aid in this getaway, for when he came up half an hour later, having moored the boat and left it in Mike's care, he and Hank formally charged Seabury with attempt at murder and refused to leave the village till he was taken off their hands. He added to this the threat to appeal to the county authorities.

It was evident the captain was banking on making his escape before the case came to actual trial. Seabury being a mere adventurer, as Billings now felt sure, the case would soon go by default and in a few weeks Billings and his crew would be forgotten.

Meanwhile, a few days more would grant them the safety of the Great Lakes.

So at nine in the morning the justice of the peace held Seabury, and he was thrust into the little village jail to await the grand jury. This time the prisoner was allowed to tell his own tale, but so fixed was the impression of his insanity in the minds of rural justice that the improbability of his story only strengthened the idea implanted by Billings.

Seabury, of course, kept back his name and family prominence. He did not deem it wise to reveal to Billings the value of his prisoner.

So the captain departed, leaving behind an alleged list of points where he could be found along the canal when wanted as a witness. He carefully concealed the fact, however, that he was to join a tow in the Great Lakes.

So at last the dramatist and the villain of the play parted, the former feeling sure that he would soon be able to communicate with his relatives, for with the captain safely away he would divulge his real identity. The pirate, on the other hand, was satisfied to get rid of his white elephant, the crazy nephew of the piece.

So for the rest of the day our playwright sat and dozed in the tiny jail, which consisted of one bare and musty room in the basement of the town hall. The furniture included only a hard bunk and harder chair. On the floor was the dust of months. Flies, bugs, and other vermin infested the place.

All day long village children and loafers studied him through the barred window and freely discussed him as though he were some strange animal. He was greatly relieved when at length darkness fell and he had eaten the frugal supper brought him by the neighboring blacksmith, who was also janitor of the town hall and official jailkeeper.

Then he was at last left to himself. He had given up all thought of escape after examining the heavy bars and stout door of his cell.

Overcome by long lack of rest, he threw himself on the bunk and, despite its discomforts, fell immediately into a deep sleep.

He was awakened by a low, steady "*clink, clink,*" as of iron on stone. For some time he heard it in the half-dazed way of a man just waking. Then he realized that the sound was at the jail window. As he listened, the steady clicking ceased and was followed by a wrenching, grinding sound.

Seabury slid noiselessly from his bunk and felt his way in the blackness across to the window.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"Shut up!", returned a gruff whisper. "I'm making noise enough myself. I'm a friend all right. I'll have you out o' there in a second."

Seabury felt along the window bars. One had already been pried loose and another was giving way. A moment later he heard the other bar go.

"Crawl through now," ordered the whisper again.

Seabury felt his way cautiously forward and found he was just able to squeeze through the opening made by his unknown friend.

Half way through he was seized by the shoulder and dragged over the sill with another whispered caution to be quiet. The window of the jail was on the side of the building away from the street and some distance from any house, so there was little chance of their being heard, anyhow.

But who could this mysterious rescuer be? The man was completely hidden by the absolute blackness of a cloudy, moonless night.

Slowly they felt their way across the field in the rear of the jail, the mysterious one leading over a route he evidently knew none too well himself. At length they came to a steep bank, up which they stumbled.

Then it dawned on Seabury that they were following the canal. He could hear the lapping of the wavelets and feel the cooler air that comes from even so small a body of water.

On they stumbled for what seemed two or three miles. His companion spoke never a word. Impressed by this mysterious silence, Seabury made no attempt to draw him out.

Finally they stopped and the young jailbird's straining eyes could make out over the water a vague bulk. His companion whistled softly. There was an answering whistle, and a dark-lantern flashed in their faces.

In its rays lay a gangplank. The dim object was evidently a canal-boat.

Was he never to escape canal-boats?

The lantern's rays disappeared as quickly as they came, the holder apparently satisfied as to the identity of his visitors.

Slowly Seabury was led up the gangway and across the deck, then down into a dark cabin. The hatch was closed and again the dark-lantern flashed.

The young man staggered back against the wall dumfounded.

His mysterious attendant was Captain Jud Billings!

He was once more aboard the pirate craft, rescued by his Captain Kidd from the jail to which that worthy had a few hours before been so anxious to consign him.

A strange anticlimax, indeed!

CHAPTER X.

A MIX-UP IN SCENES.

THIS was indeed the strangest turn of events yet, among all the weird mishaps that had befallen the hero of this pirate tale.

That long-suffering young man lay on the familiar, ill-smelling cabin-cot and speculated long but fruitlessly on what this move of the pirate could mean. Billings had locked him in and left him without vouchsafing any explanation.

Seabury heard the boat get under way and then again came sleep, and he knew nothing more till he was aroused at broad daylight by the reentrance of Captain Billings. Every joint in his body creaked and ached from his recent exposure and exertions as he rose to a sitting posture and blinked at the captain.

There was a new and strange air about Billings, something almost deferential as

he stood looking alternately at his captive and at a newspaper in his hand. At length he seemed satisfied.

"You're the man all right," he said, dropping the paper in Seabury's lap.

Staring the young man in the face was a two column cut of himself.

The paper was a sensational Buffalo journal. In the most lurid language known to the yellow press, Seabury read an account of the disappearance of the eccentric young New York millionaire.

It seemed something of importance had come up in the Seabury family the week before and his mother had tried to communicate with him. The camp in the Water Gap had not seen him, and when the yachting party had been traced by wire they knew nothing of him. Subsequent inquiry revealed his absolute disappearance and a general alarm was sent out for him.

"There ye are," said Billings when Seabury had read the account through. "Ye see why I went to all that trouble to git ye out o' jail. We got this paper after I left ye yesterday, and me and Hank decided we'd let a rich one through our fingers. So we roped ye in ag'in.

"I reckon yer folks'll pay something to git ye back ag'in safe. Keep quiet now fer a spell an' we'll treat ye decent. We're goin' to run this ol' tub to Cleveland an' leave her. Then we'll take a little summer trip up to Canada. I reckon you'll write to yer folks when we git there an' we kin arrange a deal."

So Seabury was to be held for ransom after all! Rage filled him at the thought, and for a moment he was seized with the impulse to fly at the throat of the sardonic villain before him.

But in that same instant wisdom, born of bitter experience, prevailed. He would appear to acquiesce and might yet outwit his captors. He dropped his clenched fist. He even tried to grin good-naturedly.

"All right, captain," he replied. "Now that we understand each other things will run smoother. My folks won't mind a reasonable sum, and now I'm in no more danger of being murdered, I'll behave myself."

"That's talk," approved Billings. "I'll have to keep ye close till we git on the lake. I got a nice little extra cabin ye ain't seen yit. I'll hev to put yer in it while we go through this village we're comin' to. I reckon the folks in that town below we left so sudden like'll hev a man here to search fer you an' some other little trifles I picked up there."

At that Captain Billings drew back the bunk from the wall, after prying out some pins that had before looked like nails. Under the bunk was a trap-door. This the captain raised and ordered his prisoner through.

Seabury found himself in absolute blackness next to the wet bottom of the boat, with a space of about two feet between it and the flooring which he had previously supposed was the real keel of the craft. Evidently the good ship Billings, had a false bottom with a good-sized hiding-place for the use of her free-booting owner.

Seabury felt his way aft on hands and knees. He came across several packages and boxes which reminded him of the package of booty Billings had been obliged to surrender when the store-keeper got after him.

Evidently this space under the false bottom was the pirate captain's treasure-trove.

This lower hold extended the whole length of the boat. Seabury had now crawled back to a point where he heard the tread of the mules in the after-cabin, directly over his head. He traced above him a thin line of light. It was a crack between the planks.

Shifting a little, he found a similar parallel crack a foot and a half away, the other side of the plank. If he could only pry this plank up, he thought, he would be able to get into the stable cabin, and escape would be possible.

More for amusement than with any hope of success, he placed his back under the plank and braced his hands and knees. Suddenly some rusty spikes gave way and the plank sprang up.

There was a burst of daylight, accompanied by a cloud of chaff and straw. The mule over him gave a snort and plunge of surprise.

Seabury lowered the plank again and backed away exultantly. Evidently the crew of the Billings knew nothing of this loose board. He had only to wait till dark, when he could make a quiet get-

away that would give him plenty of start before discovery.

He crawled back to the other end of the boat, and in a few minutes Billings opened the trap again and restored him to the comparatively luxurious cabin.

The captain gave him some dinner and went out, carefully locking the cabin hatch, a precaution that made Seabury grin to himself.

"Just wait till dark!" he gloated.

He did wait. It was just beginning to show twilight through the shutters of the little cabin window when Billings reappeared.

"Sorry to annoy ye, Mr. Seabury," he said with half-serious, half-mocking concern, "but I ain't takin' no chances in the dark. I'll just put these trinkets on ye night times when it ain't so handy keepin' track of our star boarder."

To Seabury's dismay, the pirate produced shackles and bound the unlucky youth's wrists and ankles. His discovery of the loose plank was, after all, of no avail.

He passed the night in bitter disappointment, his thoughts reverting again and again to the secret compartment in the boat's bottom in a vain hope that in some way he could make it serve him for escape.

His thoughts were beginning to wander into the foolish discords that come with approaching sleep when he remembered, drowsily, that among the many objects against which he had bumped in the boat's bottom was a big tin pail.

In an instant he was wide awake with an inspiration.

He could escape by daylight after all!

He was too excited to sleep the rest of the night. At last came dawn and with it breakfast and release from his shackles.

They were entering Lockport, the captain deigned to tell him, but did not deem it necessary to put his prisoner in the hold again, as the injured villagers back at Kimball's Basin did not seem anxious to bother the Billings again.

It was noon before they had passed Lockport's series of locks from which it derives its name. Just after they left the last one, Seabury, peering through the half-closed shutters, saw a white-cabined yacht glide by. It was the White Wing again with Freddie Kane's party. Traveling only by daylight, they had made no more net progress than the old steady-going Billings, another case of the hare and the tortoise.

A half-hour later the Billings passed the White Wing moored near a meadow, where the party were having luncheon under the trees just outside the city.

Here was luck! Seabury would escape at the first favorable moment and join his friends, confident of being able to establish his identity when given a real opportunity.

A half-hour later came his chance. By the sounds on deck he knew the noon shift of mules and drivers had been made and dinners eaten, and that the crew had settled down for the drowsiness of the afternoon.

He waited till Billings peered into his cabin again, as he did every five minutes or so, to see that all was well. Then Seabury quickly drew off his shoes, coat, and trousers and rolled them into a tight bundle. He pulled back the bunk, lifted the trap-door and replaced both from below.

He knew his absence would be discovered in less than five minutes and he must act quickly.

He felt along in the dark, and in a moment found the old pail. Into the bottom of this he firmly wedged his clothes.

Next he carefully raised the loose plank in the stable-floor and crept out with the pail on his arm, quieting the alarmed mule, whose squeal and jump was not an unusual sound where two animals are stabled together.

Seabury covered the planking with straw again and a close observer would never suspect that it had been moved. Then he peered out of the stable-hatch.

Billings was still facing ahead, smoking calmly. They were at a lone point with no one on the bank to notice his move.

Seabury made a quick, noiseless dash for the stern. In less time than it takes to tell it, he was over the rail on top of the big rudder. From this he slid quietly into the water and inverted the pail over his head like a diving-bell, thus keeping his clothes dry and giving him a chance to breathe without exposing his head.

He pushed off from the rudder and, gently treading water, drifted slowly down the canal.

Billings, missing him and looking overboard, would see nothing but an old pail floating down-stream, bottom up.

After a few minutes Seabury realized he was moving faster. His feet dragged swiftly through some eel-grass. Then a giant power suddenly snatched the pail from over his head and out of his hands.

His body was seized and hurled over and over. He came sputtering to the surface for an instant to see a broken section of bank hurtle past him at express-train speed. Then he sank in a whirl of muddy water.

CHAPTER XI.

MORE SCENE-SHIFTING.

AGAIN Seabury's skill as a swimmer was tested. Buffeted as he was by that unexpected and mysterious rush of water, he had no time even to guess at what had happened.

But after a while the current became steadier. He was able to hold himself at the surface, clear his eyes, and look around him.

All about was a broad expanse of muddy, rushing water. Every imaginable variety of débris swirled past, from brushwood to outbuildings, and even a small dwelling-house that, as nearly as the swimmer could make out, contained no human beings.

Here was a drifting hen-house, with a dozen squawking chickens on its roof, there a floating collection of hay-cocks from some denuded field.

Back of him he heard a roar of falling water and, facing about, saw the cause of all the trouble.

The high canal bank had given way, and through the broad breach was pouring all the water in the long level between Lockport and Buffalo. It would continue to pour out till the gates were closed and the water in that section drained.

Breaks in the canal bank were not uncommon. Mike had told him one evening several tales of this kind of catastrophe.

Already all the broad valley opposite the break was flooded. Fortunately it was a thinly settled farming district, and there would be little danger to human life.

Now, the first rush of the water was over, and the current was growing sluggish. Swimming would have been comparatively easy were not Seabury becoming exhausted. Then, a few hundred yards away, he saw men, women, and children gathered on the higher ground watching the spectacle.

His first impulse was to swim toward them and shout for help. Then he remembered his nude condition and, with his little remaining strength, struck off in the opposite direction toward a patch of woodland that seemed to be above water.

It was a hard struggle, but at length he touched bottom. Slowly he waded forward, now in the mud of a cultivated field, now in the deep grass of a pasture, and again over the sharp prickly stubble of a new-mown hay or grain field.

By the time he reached the woods the bottom of his feet felt raw.

Seabury hid his unclad person among the trees to await the coming of friendly darkness. It was only mid-afternoon when he landed, and to the weary watcher it seemed an endless time before night came and it was late enough for one in the garb of innocent Adam to venture forth in safety.

The woods in which he had hidden were isolated by the lower flooded land on all sides, so no one came within hailing distance during the afternoon.

When he finally judged the coast to be clear and dark, there seemed to be only one thing to do—hunt out his friends on the White Wing, which must be stuck in the mud somewhere in the bed of the canal, not far from the break in the bank.

Accordingly, Seabury waded across the swampy fields to higher ground, and thence made his way to the canal bank. But to find the White Wing in that unknown darkness was a good deal of a game of chance.

Hour after hour he searched, walking what seemed like miles up and down the canal, every now and then dodging behind the bank to avoid belated passers. Time after time he saw in the empty

canal-bed the dim deck lights of a stranded craft, but close examination showed the hulk of a canal-boat instead of the trim lines of the yacht he sought.

The searcher always got away quickly from such a locality, for fear the canal-boat might turn out to be the Judson A. Billings. He had no desire to return again to that hoodoo craft.

After a long, fruitless search he saw a deck-lamp that lay lower than the rest and, looking across to the sky-line, he could make out a steamer's funnel.

That seemed worth a closer inspection. He clambered down the canal bank and waded through the mud and shallow water of the nearly empty bottom, and had nearly reached the side of the boat when there came from the deck a hoarse hail of "Who's there?"

Then a tiny searchlight flashed in his face.

"It's—it's—a friend—Walt Seabury," came from the scantily clad and rather embarrassed visitor.

Perhaps it wasn't the White Wing after all.

"I say, Bill, come and look who's here," said the voice on deck.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" came a moment later from another deck person, evidently "Bill."

"Isn't this the White Wing?" faltered the object of this surprised inspection.

"It sure is," replied voice number two. "What kin we do fer ye, sir, an' who's yer tailor?"

"Frederick Kane's White Wing? Is Mr. Kane aboard?" pursued Seabury, ignoring the pleasantry aimed at his embarrassing physical exposure.

"No. Mr. Kane an' his friends ain't aboard. They're in a Lockport hotel waitin' fer their ocean to come back home. We're the crew. You want—whew!" the man broke off suddenly.

There was an excited undertone of conversation on the yacht. A moment later the men swung over the side, clambered down the ladder, and one of them, swinging a lantern in his face, they looked him over carefully.

"Hope you like my appearance?" snapped Seabury, with growing irritation.

"Now, don't mind us, sir," replied one of the men, in a tone which betrayed pretended deference, mingled with anxiety. "We hev to be careful, ye know."

The other man had clambered back on the yacht. He returned immediately. Before the surprised young man could move there was a simultaneous spring by the two. Seabury's arms were pinioned to his sides, a rope was passed around them, and he was a prisoner.

"Now, don't git excited," one captor told him soothingly. "Ye come off the Judson A. Billings, didn't ye? We both seen ye on her three weeks ago, when ye sung out to us. Captain Billings wuz around here this afternoon inquiring fer ye. Said ye giv him the slip when the bank broke. Well, yer better off with yer folks. Jest don't fret. We'll see ye back all right."

All Seabury's cajoleries, offers of bribes and attempts to explain, and finally threats, were met merely with pitying smiles. He was hoisted aboard the yacht with rough gentleness and placed on a comfortable bunk, with the advice to get some sleep.

After hours of restlessness she was just beginning to take this advice, when he was aroused by his new captors. They gave him a pair of overalls, a jumper-jacket, and some old shoes that were very bad fits, and released his arms long enough for him to dress. Then he was bound again, and between the two men was led away from the White Wing and down the tow-path.

The men had chosen the earliest moment of dawn, evidently wishing to avoid publicity. In less than fifteen minutes' walk the recaptured prisoner recognized the hulk of the Billings almost in the great breach in the bank. There was the captain himself on watch.

Seabury's guards hailed the pirate, and in a moment the young man was back in his old prison. After a passage of good-sized greenbacks between the delighted captain and the men of the White Wing the latter departed.

Billings then glared hard at his runaway prisoner. The latter returned the look with interest. He no longer feared personal violence, for since his identity had been established the pirate had given him no ground for complaint on that score.

"So ye giv me the slip again, did ye?" thundered the villain at last. "This trouble'll all cost yer ol' man something. Every time ye duck I raise the ante. Well, I got a new lock on this cabin hatch. Ye must 'a' moved blamed quick to git by me. I wuz so flustered by thet bust in the bank, a steam-engine could 'a' passed me and I wouldn't 'a' seen it."

The captain's words puzzled Seabury at first. Then light dawned, and his blood tingled with another burst of hope.

Billings did not know how his prisoner had escaped, evidently thinking he had burst out of the cabin-hatch in the confusion following the break in the bank. Seabury judged he suspected the hatchway lock of not working properly.

So the plank in the stable floor might still be loose and unguarded, and Seabury would yet make an effectual escape that way.

CHAPTER XII.

EXIT THE VILLAINS.

FOR a week the Judson A. Billings, like an ancient mud-turtle in winter quarters, lay fast in the mud while the bank was being repaired.

Seabury half hoped that this delay would enable the detectives searching for him to locate him aboard the boat. If not, there was still a chance that the authorities of Kimball's Basin, from which he had escaped, might want to examine the Billings. But neither event occurred, and neither possibility seemed to bother the captain. He watched his captive closely, and apparently had perfect confidence in the safety of his secret hold as an emergency hiding-place for both prisoner and booty in case of a sudden search.

It mattered little to the captive, however, for his loophole of escape was still undiscovered, and he was confident of his ability to make a sure getaway when they reached Buffalo.

But, alas, for the best-laid plans of mice and men, including shanghaied dramatists! On the day that the old hulk once more felt the sluggish movement of water along the place where her keel ought to be, Seabury was taken violently ill with an attack of indigestion.

Billings was alarmed to the extent of calling a country doctor to attend him, after first explaining to the physician the young man's "unfortunate bughouse state of mind."

Seabury was too ill to make any attempt to appeal to the doctor to help him escape, even if it had been possible under the close watchfulness of Billings.

The doctor pronounced the case severe, but not serious, and said he would be all right again in a few days.

However, it was not till the prisoner's bunk rose and fell on the heaving waters of Lake Erie that he was again able to take interest in his surroundings.

Then he was allowed to crawl on deck and sit with his back to the cabin and watch the shore of his native State fade away over the shifting green and blue water.

At last, thought the dramatist, with bitter irony, the setting of his pirate play was a little truer to his original intentions. Yet now all hope of a thrilling escape was cut off.

The young man sighed with regret as he looked ahead over the long string of canal-boats, of which the Billings was the tail, in tow of a big, churning tug. And still, perhaps it was better after all.

When they reached the captain's retreat in Canada it would be simple enough to write home for a ransom, which would be no hardship for his wealthy parents. Then he could produce a glorious drama from his strenuous experiences, and supply the romantic escape as a grand climax out of his own imagination.

He fell to pondering dreamily over this climax. It wasn't so bad lying there in the wind-swept sunshine, sprayed occasionally by the white tip of a wave as it slapped against the boat's side.

Billings was almost civil on the few occasions in which he addressed his prisoner at all. Mike was inclined to be friendly, but the sullen Hank kept away from him altogether.

Seabury retired to his bunk that night unshackled and was soon lulled to sleep by the rocking of the gentle waves.

His rest was disturbed by dreams. At first they were fantastic, but not unpleasant.

He seemed to be at home introducing the gallant pirate and his crew to his

gracious parents. Then the scene shifted, and his parents, no longer gracious, appeared to be imprisoned with him on the Judson A. Billings.

Suddenly Hank strode into the scene and began, in the dream, to beat Seabury over the head with an ax.

Blow after blow fell on his unprotected head, and he wondered vaguely how he managed to live so long under such a vicious attack. Then he awoke to realize that the blows were real.

Instead of Hank with an ax, however, they were caused by his being pitched repeatedly back and forth in his bunk, his head striking violently against the partition.

In uncomprehending terror he tried to rise, and was hurled to the floor into a tiny, swirling pool of water. A dash of spray struck his face. Then the floor seemed to jump up under him, and he was thrown back across the bunk.

Lake Erie was in the throes of one of those sudden and violent storms that are the terror of navigators on that broad and comparatively shallow expanse of water.

Slowly, and with great difficulty, Seabury felt about the pitching cabin, in an attempt to find the hatchway. He was tossed like a large grain of salt in a shaker. At every pitch of the boat more water poured through the cabin window.

At length he was hurled against the ladder, and there he clung. He beat on the locked hatch and shouted. His only answer was the roar and pound of the waves.

He sank back against the ladder, exhausted. The water was now a foot deep in the cabin, and increasing momentarily. Was he to be drowned like a rat in a cage?

Again and again he beat on the hatch and shouted, but in vain. Perhaps the crew had deserted the boat for the larger and safer tug, and left him to perish alone. Or maybe they had been washed away by the waves.

Dawn was beginning to show through the battered window. There was no abatement of the storm, however. If anything the shock of the waves was fiercer than before.

It was nearly light when Seabury heard a sound at the hatchway other than that of the waves. In a moment, to his great relief, the hatch was raised, and the ugly face of Captain Billings, now a thrice-welcome sight, appeared in the opening.

Then a wave struck the hatch and forced it back. Several times they tried together before they were able to make the hatch stay open.

Seabury thrust his head and shoulders through. Billings grasped him by the collar and jerked him out sprawling.

"Catch that rope!" the captain yelled, and then slammed and locked the hatch again, just as a huge wave buried the cabin.

A rope had been tied at its middle to the wheel-post. To one end Hank and Mike clung to prevent being washed overboard, and at the other end were Seabury and the captain.

"Ye were better off in there as long ez we were floatin' all right," roared Billings in his ear; "but looks now ez though she wuz goin' down. Git ready to swim fer it. The other fellers ahead got aboard the tug, but we waited too long."

Seabury, looking forward, saw that the rest of the boats seemed deserted.

Now, no man could make his way alive over the string of bare, wave-washed decks, even had there been any means of bridging the gap between the front boat and the tug.

Her life-boat must have picked the others up early in the morning, but now such a trip would be practically impossible. The tug herself was having a hard battle for life.

Even as Seabury noted these facts one of the middle boats foundered and sank, the cables binding her to the others broke, and the tail-boats, including the Billings, were adrift.

The four men on the canal-boat's deck rose together and shouted at the receding steamer. Were they seen on the tug? For a moment it seemed that her crew had not even noticed the loss of her tow. Then, to her great peril, she slowed down.

The remainder of the tow came pounding toward her like a great, jointed battering-ram. Then the anxious watchers saw a man crawl out of the tug's wheel-house.

Slowly he felt his way along the rail. When he reached the stern he swung an ax and severed the big towline. The tug leaped ahead just as the boats were hurled at her.

Then the steamer came about, lying for a perilous moment in the trough of the sea. But she slowly shook herself free of the waves that engulfed her and came riding bow on toward the helpless Judson A. Billings.

A few yards away, as near as they dared come, the tug stopped. They were going to lower the life-boat! It was a desperate undertaking.

But at length the little craft was afloat, with a crew of four men. Slowly battling the waves, they struggled on toward the Billings. Now she was within two yards.

The man in the bow threw a rope. After several attempts Billings caught it. He jumped, and two of the life-boat's crew hauled him aboard. So, slowly, Hank and Mike followed.

But the little craft was swamping. The men were bailing swiftly, but the waves were swifter. Twice they tried to get a rope to Seabury and failed. Then the boatswain glanced back and shook his head.

The life-boat backed off toward the tug. Fascinated, Seabury watched her progress, for the moment forgetting that he was deserted to die.

Now they were half-way to the tug. A man stood at the latter's bows, ready to throw them a rope.

Slower and slower was her progress. Frantically the men bailed.

Then the little cockleshell seemed to rise on the summit of a wave and dive headlong into the trough. When the wave fell again Seabury could see no trace of the boat or men.

The villains had been swept off the stage!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

SEVERAL times the tug, turning with great difficulty and peril in the battering waves, steamed back and forth past the spot where the boat had gone down. Two men lashed to the tug's rail threw life-belts overboard and stood ready with ropes to aid the drowning men, but to no avail. They never reappeared.

Then as many times the tug tried to get near enough to aid Seabury, but she was now shipping water heavily herself and was in momentary danger of foundering.

So at length she staggered about once more and steamed away.

The lone man, clinging to a rope on the water-logged canal-boat, had watched all this in a sort of breathless trance, more as an idle spectator than as one of the chief actors in a tragedy.

But as he saw the nearly helpless steamer, his last hope of rescue, receding over the wild tumult of waters, he realized his situation.

The Billings was now completely awash. Had she been heavily laden, like some of the others of the tow, she would have sunk long before. Clinging desperately to his rope on the half-submerged deck, Seabury saw the other remaining canal-boats break up or go down, expecting that each swelling sea would be the signal for his own exit.

But slowly the day passed and night drew on, and with it, despite his despair, Seabury imagined that there came a little abatement of the storm's fury. He began to hope his craft might keep afloat till he was picked up by some passing vessel.

True, her two cabins were long since flooded, but the big covered space between, separated from the cabins by rude bulkheads, had been battened tight by the cautious Billings after unloading at Buffalo, and so far this compartment had resisted the onrush of the waves and kept the boat half-afloat.

Several times before sunset the anxious watcher saw a vessel scud by, low down on the horizon, but too far away to heed his feeble hails of distress.

At length the absolute blackness of a stormy night settled over the lake. To Seabury, clinging with slowly ebbing strength to that whipping rope, again and again nearly strangled by the waves, no night had ever seemed so long.

Yet at last he was sure of the subsidence of the waves. It was no longer imagination. Though the decks were still awash, the Billings rode more stead-

ily and Seabury was not so often submerged.

At length he dared release his hold on the rope, and, clinging to the edge of the cabin, felt his way to the pump. For hours he pumped and was at last rewarded by finding that the slowly subsiding billows no longer broke over the boat.

He was now in high hopes of weathering the remainder of the gale, and with daylight he could not fail to be picked up by a passing vessel.

Once, as he looked up from the pump for a moment, he gave a shout of joy. There, off the port bows, a myriad of lights were beginning to peep up from the waters.

He was near land, and a good sized city at that!

The town might be any one of a score that dot the shores of the end of the lake from which the tow had sailed only two days before. In what direction he had been drifting Seabury had no idea.

With mingled hope and fear, he watched the lights grow brighter. To be dashed ashore in the dark might be worse than drifting all night in the storm. Yet there was comfort in knowing he was near land.

But after an hour or so the lights passed around and disappeared over the stern. He had drifted by the city, yet the boat might still be driving ashore.

Now, however, the wind had so far died down that he hoped to ground easily and be able to lie there till dawn, which could not be far off, should reveal the shore.

Even as the last of the city's lights faded away there appeared over the water a faint flush of coming daylight. In a little while, before his straining eyes there arose a low shore-line not over half a mile away.

Then he could discern here and there groups of houses. There were stretches of green country and woodland, growing momentarily more distinct as the light became brighter.

The shipwrecked youth took a few more strokes at the pump for luck, then settled back on the cabin roof to gloat over that pleasant shore line. Hope now amounted to a certainty of safety.

There was only a little choppy sea running, and the remaining wind was rapidly dying as the sun rose. He could easily keep the old boat afloat by pretty steady work at the pump. For that matter, let the thing sink if she wanted to. That distance to the shore didn't look like a very formidable swim.

However, he was weakened by his recent illness and exposure, and lack of food and sleep. So unless it became necessary he would not try a swim. He could afford to wait.

So he relaxed and sat idly watching the land.

Curious how fast the old tub seemed to be sliding along past that shore-line. She was about the same distance off as when he had first been able to distinguish objects on land, but since then he now realized the scene had shifted several times.

The little remaining breeze couldn't drive his low-lying craft at that rate. There must be a swift current at this point. But, he reflected, Lake Erie was not a tidewater. Whence came that current?

Curiously he rose to his feet and looked around. He nearly fell overboard in his surprise.

There, off the opposite side of the boat, likewise less than half a mile distant, lay another swiftly passing shore. Twice, in a dazed way, he looked from one shore to the other.

Could it be a mirage? Had his troubles driven him insane? He seemed no longer to be in a lake, but gliding down a swift stream less than a mile wide. What stream?

Then the truth dawned on him, and with it again complete despair.

It was the Niagara!

To any one who has visited that mighty stream and its world-famed cataract, the horror of Seabury's position is at once apparent.

The fury of the westerly storm had driven him down the lake in the night past Buffalo, whose lights he had seen through the darkness and into the entrance of the river channel, in which are concentrated the waters of four great inland seas, to plunge over that awful precipice into the boiling gorge below, a leap which no human being had ever taken alive.

For some distance below the city this great river flows steadily and smoothly, its treacherous current hidden in the calm blue water. Strong steamers ply back and forth with impunity. Every year many lighter craft are lured across the dead line of safety to destruction.

Had Seabury realized at first sight of land what a predicament he was in, a swim might have saved him. Then, too, had it been broad daylight, there would have been many craft about, and rescue would have been practically sure.

But now the Billings was well past the dead line and being hurled at tremendous speed toward the cataract a few miles below. Here and there the surface of the river was already breaking into angry little riffles.

The strongest swimmer could not make the shore across that current. Not even a stout steamer could venture after the speeding death-craft on which the young man stood.

Tensely he listened for the expected roar of the falls and strained his eyes along shore, half expecting some miraculous rescue.

The river had narrowed down a little, and the boat had drifted within futile hailing distance of the land. One human being Seabury saw, an early riser on the veranda of a cottage past which he sped.

The man saw him, gave a shout, waved his arms, and disappeared around the corner of the cottage.

"Going to spread the alarm so he and his neighbors can enjoy the spectacle of a human being plunging to picturesque destruction," thought Seabury bitterly.

The water about him was beginning to toss and swirl. Here and there it foamed over half-hidden rocks.

Now he noticed groups of excited people on the shore. Some stood watching him tensely. Others were running and shouting. The news had evidently been wired down the river.

Then he heard the distant roar of the falls, and forgot all else as he waited with tense muscles for the final plunge.

Louder and louder grew the sound of the cataract. Now the old boat was pitching and tossing like a frightened runaway horse.

Half mechanically he caught the rope again that was still tied to the wheel-post and wound it round his wrist to keep himself from pitching overboard.

As though it mattered!

Now the roar of the great fall overwhelmed everything. Confusedly he realized that only a few yards away was the safe shore flashing by him. There he saw a crowd of excited men, but he could not hear their voices.

Then under him came a rending crash, which he felt rather than heard. The shore suddenly stopped moving. He felt the deck heave up, then split.

He was out in the air, still clinging to the rope. He fell over the side of the boat; and his body, half submerged, shot straight out in the swift current. Still the rope held.

Then he knew that the swift flight of the old boat had been suddenly stopped short by one of those jagged rocks. And he was in the Niagara current, held to life by a frail line that might at any moment slip from the shattered wreck.

Then something fell across his body. Scarcely noticing it, he felt it slip over him like a snake. Then he turned his eyes and realized what was happening.

The men on shore had thrown a rope to him. With a frenzied movement he caught the sliding line as its very end was slipping off his body. Convulsively he wound it around his wrist.

Then he let go the rope to the wreck and felt himself hurled like a shot out into the current.

For an instant he was swept downstream; then the rope tightened, and he was hauled toward the shore.

An age it seemed; but, in fact, it was only a moment before he felt several pairs of sturdy hands grasp his shoulders, and found himself lying high and dry on the shore of Goat Island, gasping for breath and clearing his lungs of river water.

One masterful person was chafing his hands and breast, and waving the rest back to give him air.

"He can talk all right," the rescued one heard an eager voice protest, and a young man in the forefront of the crowd pushed forward and knelt beside him.

"I'm a reporter for the *Gazette*," he said. "Tell me who you are, please, and how your boat got in the river."

Seabury, between fits of coughing, gasped out his name.

The newspaper person jumped up and shouted a wild yell of excitement to those standing around.

Then he knelt again and went on feverishly:

"Why, Mr. Seabury, you've got the whole country looking for you! They've traced you as far as Buffalo, and we heard last night that your father is there now. We'll have him here in two hours, and the *Gazette* will beat the whole blamed State. What a story!"

Seabury sank back, exhausted with coughing; but there was a peaceful smile on his face as he whispered to the puzzled newspaper man:

"Well, I guess you can ring down the curtain."

THE END.

CARUSO ON THE WIRE.

By CHARLES CAREY.

How a sleepy village came to be waked up, and the indignation of the magnate who was credited with the feat.

I.

CONCERNING DASHED HOPES.

THE leading citizens of Vanceport were gathered in Isaiah Bender's general store.

It was a tempestuous night without, the rain slanting down in sheets and a stiff "nor'easter" whipping the bay into whitecaps; but not a man of the familiar coterie was absent.

Each one, too, as he stumped in to inquire for his mail, and then drift to his accustomed perch on a cracker-barrel or one of the back-tilted chairs about the stove, bore himself with a certain accentuated and impressive dignity; for this was late in the fall, and such a "spell o' weather" plainly betokened the departure of the most belated and persistent summer visitor—those eagerly welcomed but none the less despised invaders who usurped the life of the little village from June to October of each year.

In other words, the leading citizens of Vanceport felt themselves restored to a position of authority, able once more to play the oracle without having some "Smart Aleck from the city" cut in to challenge their dogmatic utterances. With so intoxicating a sense of freedom from restraint, not one of them would have missed coming to the store that night had the storm been twice as bad.

Captain Asa Ketchum was the last to arrive.

"Whoopee!" he boomed exultantly, as he sent a spatter of raindrops about him with a wave of his sou'wester. "Haow's this fer dirty weather, mates? Black outside ez the inside of a black cat.

"Them 'lectric lights o' your'n, Isaiah," with a quizzical glance at the storekeeper, "don't seem to be workin' none too well to-night."

An appreciative "Haw-haw!" from the circle greeted this sally; for Bender had been advocating such an improvement in the village for the past five years, but with scant encouragement.

It was not that the Vanceporters did not realize the advantages of a better illumination; they balked at the increase of taxes it involved.

Uncle Billy Gale expressed something of the general sentiment now, when, after the laugh at Isaiah's expense had subsided, he remarked, glancing pensively toward the darkness outside:

"Ef we had many sech nights ez this, I'd almost be ready ter come to 'Saiah's way o' thinkin' myself, ef it didn't cost so all-fired much."

"Yes, that's the way with all o' yew," jeered Bender, rallying finely. "Yew're the sort that sez: 'Ef we only had some ham, we'd have some ham an' eggs—ef we only had some eggs.'

"Naow, look at the propersition," launching forth upon his favorite hobby. "The hull thing can be put in fer three thousand dollars — power-house, poles, wires, dannymo, an' all; an', figgerin' on the lowest basis, it's bound ter pay fer

itself, together with cost o' maintenance, intrust on investment, repairs, incidentals, an' et cet'ry inside o' ten years, which means—"

"Hol' on, hol' on thar, 'Saiah!" interrupted Captain Asa, repentant of the pleasantry which had stirred up this ebullition. "That may all be. I ain't a disputin' yer figgers none; but yew 'pear ter fergit we're all gittin' on in years. We mayn't none of us be here by the time that thar lightin'-plant is paid fer; an' in the meanwhiles look at the burden we'd have to carry. Taxes is sure high enough ez it is."

He glanced about him with the triumphant air of one who has evolved an unanswerable argument, and was rewarded with slow nods of approval from most of the circle.

"It's all on account of that air pesky tariff," piped up Seth Gentry, a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat, who never could resist an opportunity to switch the conversation into politics. "Ef 'twa'n't fer that a' eternally takin' toll on every scrap o' clo'es a body wears, an' every bite o' vittles he puts inter his mouth, mebbe we could see our way cl'ar ter—"

"Shucks!" disclaimed Eph Fanshaw, an equally uncompromising Republican. "Yew ole fool, cain't you reelize that pertection to 'Merican industries is all that keeps this country a goin'? We'd be like the downtrodden masses o' Europe ef—"

But Bender put a stop to the discussion by banging his fist down on the counter and declaring that unless the disputants ceased he would close up.

"'Lection's over," he grumbled, "an' yew don't s'pose I'm goin' ter stay up an' burn ker'sene ter hear that sort o' guff. What we was a talkin' about was the lightin' question, somep'n that vitally interests every man, woman, an' child.

"Naow," he went on, assuming an oratorical pose, "Cap'n Asa here has advanced a objection which seems ter have some meat in it. He says ten year' is a long time, an' we might all be in our graves 'fore the plant is paid fer, an' we're free of the burden."

"Well, ain't it so?" demanded Captain Ketchum sharply. "Didn't yew say yerself that it'd be ten year' afore the debt was cl'ared off?"

"Yes," assented Mr. Bender, "I did; but that, ez I told yer, was figgerin' on the lowest possible basis; whereas, thar's skursely any doubt but what the plant would make three, four, or five times the amount I say.

"By gorry," he concluded enthusiastically, "ef we do what's right an' stick the summer people double what we do the home folks, thar ain't no reason why we can't make the thing pay fer itself in one year."

"If it's as good as all that, why don't you put the scheme through yourself, Mr. Bender? I heard you tell a traveling man only yesterday that you could sell out the business here any time you wanted to for five thousand dollars."

The voice which propounded this query came from without the charmed circle, and had not hitherto been heard. A different voice it was, too, from the lazy drawl of the leading citizens — quick, alert, inquisitive.

Its owner matched with it, a youth of twenty or thereabouts, grown so fast that the legs of his patched trousers did not reach to his shoe-tops and the wristlets of his calico shirt were half-way up to his elbows. Rather a grotesque figure, reminding one of a half-reared setter-pup with his shock of red hair, and his hands and feet too big for his lanky limbs; yet, as with the setter-pup, his face wore a look of keen intelligence, which promised a shrewd and capable maturity.

Vanceport, however, held him in slight esteem. He was entirely too knowing, according to their ideas—too given to asking inconvenient questions, such as that which he had just put to Bender.

The circle turned as one man to regard him with stern rebuke; and the storekeeper, a trifle flushed, snapped tartly:

"S'pos'n yew keep yer lip out'n things what don't consarn yew, Ike Somers, an' at the same time yer fingers out'n my cracker-bar'l."

He crossed over to slam down the lid, beneath which the other's hand had been exploring.

"But why doesn't the electric-light question concern me?" persisted the offender, unabashed. "Ain't I a property owner just the same as any of the rest of you?"

"Oh, I know," with sudden passion, as a titter ran through the group, "you call it a patch of scrub-oak back on the rise, and think that it's worthless.

"Of course, it's worthless now, and always will be so long as a lot of old stick-in-the-muds like you run this village. But show a sign or two of life here, put in some modern conveniences like this electric light to attract people to the place, and you'd soon find home sites, no matter where located, commanding a good price.

"Concerned?" he finished hotly. "Seems to me, I'm more concerned than any of the rest of you."

The others sat silent for a moment, frowning at the effrontery which dared to arraign them, but unable to find a suitably crushing reply.

They could not gainsay the young fellow's argument, for they had seen neighboring villages bloom and blossom into prosperity under the adoption of similar improvements; but they were unwilling to grant the logic of such a "shallow-pate."

Even Bender repudiated Ike as an ally, and somewhat hastily brought forth a revelation which he had intended to reserve as a surprise.

"Ahem," quoth the storekeeper, clearing his throat. "Whether the 'lectric light would increase the vally of some of the old medder an' scrub-oak land around here is, I guess, gents, a doubtful question. What we was a discussin' was whether it would conduce enough to the gin'ral comfort an' well-bein' of the village for us to afford it.

"Cap'n Asa, here, says no. He says taxes is high enough as they is; an' I guess nobody in the main ain't a disagreein' with him."

A mutter of unanimous assent rose from the tight-fisted company.

"But," resumed Isaiah, "what ef we could get the light without a penny's wuth o' cost to us, or a single dollar added to the burdens of this here community?"

They gaped up at him incredulously, the slow thought coming to some of them that possibly his overweening interest in the scheme had turned his brain.

"Oh, yew needn't look so s'prised," he chuckled. "I've got a plan, all right, an' a plum good one it is, tew. Who'd git the most benefit out'n 'lectric lights, let me as't yer? Who is it 't allus does the most kickin' on our dark streets, an' on havin' ter use ker'sene lamps in their houses? Yew all know without me a havin' to tell yer.

"Well," he went on, "I was a settin' stewin' some o' them things over in my mind the other day, when all of a sudden it come to me jest like a inspiration: Why not make the summer people foot the bill?"

"Inspiration?" excitedly broke in Ike Somers, who had been following the narration with gradually widening eyes. "Why, I asked you that question myself after I heard you tell the drummer that you'd given over all hope of ever getting these old tightwads here to take up with the proposition."

Bender turned angrily at the interruption. It was all he could do to restrain himself from flinging a scale-weight.

"Shut up, thar," he snarled, "or, by gum, out that door yew go, an' yew don't never come in ag'in neither. Yew're wuss 'n a pesky 'skeeter, buzzin' 'round with what yew said an' what yew done. Whoever'd pay any 'tention to what yew say, I'd like ter know?"

He would probably have continued on in the same strain at length; but at that moment there came a shrill hail from outside, and the Bellville stage splashed by without stopping.

Isaiah hastened to the door, and came back with a limp mail-sack which the driver had flung upon his steps.

"Don't gin'rally disterbute this bunch till mornin'," he observed, opening the bag and drawing out the handful of letters it contained, "but seein' 's were all here, an' thar might be some answers from the city folks to the epistles I wrote 'em on the stren'th o' that there inspiration of mine, guess 't won't do no harm ter take a peep naow.

"Yes, by gosh," he ejaculated a second later. "Five on 'em. All what I wrote to. An' nothin' else," tossing the empty bag into a corner. "'cept'n a rheumatism circular fer Ezra Durkee, an' a picter post-card fer 'Nervy Davis from her beau. Wait till I see whether he says he'll be down next Sunday."

His curiosity relieved upon this point,

he returned to the stove and the eagerly waiting company.

"'M-m-m," he mumbled, as he opened and ran through one after another of the letters. "Dr. Butts says no. Well, I didn't expect nothin' much from him. Nor from Eversley Perkins, neither, who likewise 'begs to decline.'

"Gee, here's a reg'lar book from Mis' Harriott—four pages of it—but I see she ends up with 'regretfully yours,' so I guess thar ain't no use wadin' through the rest of it.

"Colonel Carson don't bite, nuther. Wal, naow, that's some kind of a surprise to me. I counted sorter confident on him comin' in with a fair conterbution.

"But, here," and he held up the last letter, "here is one I'm willin' to bet on 'fore I open it. 'Twenty-Third Street National Bank, Ramsay Grant, president.' Purty near smells of money, don't it? An' him the so-called king of the Vanceport summer colony. Yew kin all go bail he's come down handsome."

While the others waited with bated breath, Bender opened the letter and glanced through it; then sank back in his chair with a gasp, the typewritten sheet fluttering from his nerveless fingers to the floor.

Ike Somers picked it up and read it aloud:

"DEAR SIR:

"In reply to yours of the 15th instant, I beg to state most emphatically that I will not do for you, or assist in doing what you should long ago have done for yourselves. In fact, I have become so disgusted with the antiquated and dilatory methods in vogue in Vanceport, that I have about made up my mind to abandon my summer residence there and remove to some other place of more enlightened standards.

"It will do no good to communicate further with me on this subject, or attempt to change my decision, as my purpose is unalterably fixed. Anyway, I leave for Europe to-morrow to be gone until late next spring.

"Very truly yours,

"RAMSAY GRANT."

The reader's voice was trembling as he came to the end of the letter, and when he had finished he paused a second, then turned upon his audience with an explosion of wrath.

"Now see what you old mossbanks have done with your penny-wise-and-pound-foolish policies," he raged. "You've driven Ramsay Grant out, and every one knows that if he leaves all the others will follow suit. In two years from now Vanceport will be too dead to skin. Oh, you clams, you lobsters, you short-sighted idiots, you—!"

But this was too much for Bender to stand. Overwhelmed though he was by the downfall of his cherished hopes, and appalled at the bank president's threat of removal, he yet could not permit himself and his friends to be thus assailed by the village pariah.

With outraged dignity, he sprang to his feet.

"Ike Somers," he roared, "yew git out o' my store, and don't yew never das't so much as poke yer nose inside ag'in. I've said it afore, but this time I mean it. Noaw, git!"

And thus driven forth, Ike Somers missed the subsequent event, which turned the gloomy assemblage into one of rejoicing and festivity.

Instead, sore and desperate, seeing nothing ahead for him but penury and hardship, he plunged forth into forbidden paths.

II.

THE SWINGING SHUTTER.

IKE SOMERS'S home was on the outer edge of the village, about a mile away from Isaiah Bender's store.

His father, an invalid student, advised by his physicians to seek country air, had been inveigled by a rascally land-shark into paying an exorbitant price for twenty or thirty acres of scrub-oak and sand. He died soon thereafter, and this property had been left as the sole patrimony for his widow and only son, a lad then of only ten years.

They had held onto it. Indeed, they could do nothing else; for no one would buy it, and they had nowhere else to go.

How the two managed to live, Providence alone knows. The place produced little or nothing, and work which either of them were capable of doing was

scarce in Vanceport. Yet, somehow they managed to eke out a precarious existence, keep a roof over their heads, and scrape up annually the few dollars required for taxes on their land.

Moreover, the hard-worked, busy mother found time to carry on the education of her boy, the foundations of which had been laid by the student father; and Ike, naturally bright and precocious, was as far advanced for his years as many a lad with much better advantages.

He had an ambition to make something of himself, and almost from the time he had discarded pinafores had declared that some day he would be a lawyer; but he began to realize now that such an aim could not be attained without going through college and law-school, and this seemed impossible.

Had he been foot-loose, he would have tackled the proposition as many another young man has done, and worked his way through the institutions; but he felt that at present he could not leave his mother.

Her health was markedly failing under the long strain she had borne, and he was being more and more called upon every day to assume the burden of their joint maintenance.

True, it was but little he could earn at the odd jobs which came his way—opportunities for employment were scarce in Vanceport, and his sharp tongue and superior attainments rendered him anything but popular in the village. Yet he also knew that if it were not for what he was able to contribute, their meager larder would often have been entirely bare.

The one hope on which he fed his soul was that, by some rejuvenation of the sleepy community, their land back on the "rise" might be sold for enough to support his mother while he was preparing for his profession; and with this idea in mind, he had been ardently interested in Bender's efforts to secure electric lights.

With city conveniences to back up the natural advantages, and beauty of the locality, he reasoned that a largely increased number of summer visitors would be attracted to the place; and he was shrewd enough to see that his despised "patch of scrub-oak," being just beyond Ramsay Grant's villa, would then become the most available site for bungalows and cottages.

And now all his fond dreams were knocked on the head; for, with the final and decisive refusal of the city people to take up the project, it was hopeless. The Vanceporters themselves, he well knew, could be trusted to maintain a masterly inactivity.

Then, to cap the climax, he had, by his own impulsive outbreak at the store, worked himself out of the sole source of income, little as it was, upon which he had been banking for the coming winter.

In return for such assistance as he could render about the place, Isaiah Bender had allowed him to maintain a picture post-card stand on the premises; but Ike had noticed that the proprietor was daily regarding the scant profits of the innovation with a more and more covetous eye, merely seeking an excuse to take it over himself; and hence he had no doubt that the dismissal of that evening would stand.

What he could do now to provide the necessaries of life for himself and mother the young man was at a loss to decide.

Turning over these problems in his mind, and with a deeper and deeper sinking at his heart, Ike plodded sullenly homeward through the mud and rain along the dark country road.

He was sore at the world in general, sore at Isaiah Bender and the circle of "leading citizens," but especially resentful against Ramsay Grant, upon whom he had pinned his highest hopes, and whose letter he blamed more or less unjustly for his present misfortunes.

He stopped now, while passing the banker's dark house, showing dimly back among the trees, to shake a vengeful fist toward it.

"Why couldn't he have given the money?" he muttered bitterly. "He'd pay three thousand dollars for an automobile for his own pleasure, and think nothing of it. Yet, when it comes to something which would benefit other people, he closes up tighter than an oyster. By George! if they called me the 'king' of a place, I'd try to do something to deserve the title."

The sound of a loose shutter banging to and fro in the wind against the unoccupied house attracted his attention.

"That's the one on the pantry window that I fixed for him last winter," he commented; "and small thanks I ever got for it. It can bang itself off, for all I'll ever touch it again. Serve him no more than right if a tramp should come along and carry off everything he's got inside."

He drew his ragged hat-brim down over his eyes and trudged on a few steps farther up the road; but the persistent clang of the shutter rang out after him like a call and once more brought him to a halt.

"There's a lot of valuable things Grant leaves there," he thought. "I'll bet a chap could scrape up a hundred dollars' worth in a small parcel and sell them in the city with no trouble at all. And a hundred dollars would carry mother and me over the winter in fine shape."

He caught himself sharply together as he realized whither his thoughts were leading him.

"No," he muttered between set teeth, "I'm no thief."

And thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, he again started off.

In order to divert his mind from temptation, he tried to dismiss Ramsay Grant from consideration and center his spleen on the sluggish Vanceporters; but he could not shut out the sound of the discordant shutter from his ears.

The wind was rising, and the reverberating clang followed him ever louder and more compulsory.

"I wish I could think up some plan to soak Bender and that gang of old lobsters," he communed with himself, striving to close his ears to the shutter's din. "If only—"

He stopped suddenly and turned about, either at the prompting of some new suggestion, or because the lure of easy entrance to the untenanted house had finally grown too strong for him.

Evidently the latter, it appeared; for after a moment's wavering, he retraced his steps to Grant's place, and, leaping the fence, stole up through the shrubbery to the side of the house.

It was as he had anticipated. The shutter upon the pantry window, working loose in the storm, had rendered access to the villa easy. All one had to do was to break a pane of glass, manipulate the catch upon the sash, raise it, and step inside.

There was no need of caution. The road, out this way, was a lonely one at the best, and certainly, on such a night as this, no one would be abroad.

Nevertheless, Ike carefully muffled the stone which he had chosen for a burglar tool, and upon the faint jingle of the breaking glass, dodged hurriedly back into the bushes.

Satisfied at length, though, that his operations had been unheard, he emerged again, completed his work and, having secured the clattering shutter so that it would attract no one else to the scene, disappeared inside.

It was about an hour later that Ike, weary and wet, reached home. He did not seem pleased that his mother had waited up for him, and rather avoided her eye as he mumbled something about being tired and wanting to go straight to bed; but she called him to her side.

"What is the matter, my son?" she questioned. "There is something wrong, I know."

He tried to evade and put her off; but was finally forced to tell that the electric-light scheme was a "dead cock in the pit," and also to confess that his unruly tongue had lost him his position at Bender's.

She paled a little after she took in the full force of his disclosures, and was silent for a moment; then she spoke up resolutely:

"Well, that apparently settles it. There is nothing left for us here. We shall have to go to the city."

He gazed at her with slowly dilating eyes.

"Do you really mean it?" he burst out.

More than once he had urged this course upon his mother, and tried to convince her that in a wider field of activity they could do better; but hitherto she had always resisted, clinging with a woman's conservatism to the hope of ultimately selling their land, and thus providing revenue for his education.

She was afraid that if he should take

up some other means of livelihood, and follow it for a year or two, he might become weaned away from his early choice of a profession; and she was even more ambitious than he to see him a lawyer.

Now it seemed, however, as though the option were taken from her hands. They were being literally driven out of the narrow little community which, with its different ideas and different standards, had never done more than tolerate them.

Mrs. Somers realized at last the force of the old saying: "Who can pit himself against destiny?" and so resigned herself to the inevitable.

"Yes," she sighed, "I mean it Ike;" and repeated, "there is nothing else to do."

"And when shall we go?" he demanded.

His eyes were shining now; his whole manner had changed.

"When? Oh, at once, I suppose. There is really no reason why we cannot leave to-morrow, except for the doubtful chance of getting somebody to take this place off our hands for a few dollars."

"Oh, no," he urged, "don't let's wait for anything. We couldn't get ten cents for the old place if we waited a year, and we'd simply be eating up the little money we've managed to lay by."

"But remember how little that is, Ike," she cautioned. "It will be barely sufficient to take us to the city and pay our board there for a few days. Suppose you are unable to get work at once? What will we do then?"

His face clouded for a minute; then he slowly raised his head with a dogged, obstinate expression.

"I'll chance it," he said curtly. "Don't you worry, mom. Even if I don't catch on right away you sha'n't suffer. I'll—I'll take care of you some way."

III.

BLESSINGS BY WIRE.

MEANWHILE the flow of comment and criticism at the village store was running at full tide.

Isaiah Bender, it is true, after rousing up to eject Ike, had sunk into a state of pessimistic depression and sat morosely silent; but the tongues of the others, as though the youth's departure had removed a clog, wagged more vigorously than ever.

All of them were secretly terrified at Ramsay Grant's threat of leaving, but, with a sort of bravado, they pretended to regard it in a philosophic light.

"Wal"—Uncle Billy Gale paused to expectorate, and hit the small orifice in the door of the stove with the precision of a sharpshooter.—"Wal, mates, Vanceport was here afore Ramsay Grant ever come, an' I guess it'll stay here, whether he goes or stays."

"Aw, he ain't goin'," blustered Captain Asa. "It's my private opinion he's jest makin' a bluff ter try an' skeer us inter puttin' in the 'lectric light ourselves."

"Yes, that's the way with them pesky plutocrats," warmly assented Eph Fanshaw. "They're always a tryin' to make the poor folks grind their axes fer 'em. I wouldn't vote fer no electric light now, jest to spite him."

"No, nor me, nuther." Uncle Billy's quavering voice was raised again. "What good is 'lectric lights anyhow, 'cept'n as a excuse, an' temptation fer young folks to be out frolicadin' round at night when they ought ter be safe in their beds? Lanterns was all my father an' my gran'father had; an' what done fer them I guess 'll do fer me. 'Sides I doubt if t'other thing is Scriptooral."

Cap'n Asa caught at the point and embellished upon it.

"By heck, Uncle Billy, I don't know but what you're right. Look what their 'lectricity has done fer 'em up thar on Broadway in Noo York. How'd we like ter see our main street here turned inter a 'Great White Way,' with play-houses an' all kinds of dens of iniquity all along it? No, sir; I say let's write a letter hot an' heavy to Ramsay Grant, an' tell him that sooner 'n put up our good money fer such deviltry we'd ruther have him go."

Isaiah Bender broke his moody silence with a bitter laugh.

"I didn't hear of no such scruples when you thought Grant might foot the bill," said he.

"But don't yew see," contended Captain Asa, "that was different. In that case, the sin would have been on his

shoulders, not on our'n. I say, let's write him the letter, anyhow, jest to show him that we can't be skeered or bluffed; an' then if he chooses to go, let him go."

"An' at the same time yew might as well hang up the bankrupt sign over all Vanceport," Isaiah snapped, "'cause that's what it'll mean ef Grant does git out. Howsomever, thank Heaven yer letter won't have no chance of reachin' him, since he plainly says he's leaving fer Europe ter-morrer; so that settles that.

"An', naow," rising to his feet, "git out, all o' ye, 'cause I'm goin' to close up. I've heerd about as strong a mess o' fool-talk as I can stand fer one evenin'."

They arose slowly to their feet at his behest and, struggling into their oil-skins, started for the door; but at that moment the telephone bell rang, and they lingered with natural curiosity to see what it might portend.

"Fer the land's sake," grumbled Isaiah, circumnavigating the counter to reach the instrument, "who's callin' me up naow? I'll bet Almiry Cooper's Uncle Sol has driv' over from Bellville unexpected ag'in, an' she wants some bacon fer breakfast. Well, ef she thinks I'm goin' to pack it clear up to her house sech a night as this, she'll git fooled. I'll be out of every livin' thing she wants."

By this time, though, he had taken down the receiver and was gruffly bellowing "Hallo!" into the mouthpiece; then, as though by a miracle, his tone suddenly became as suave and smooth as oil.

"Why, Mr. Grant!" he cooed. "This *is* a s'prise party. I didn't know you was in town at all. Yew, sure, didn't come on the stage to-night, did yer?

"What?" with lively astonishment. "Yew ain't in Vanceport at all? Yew're in Noo York, a talkin' to me from the Metropolitan Op'ry House! An' yer voice as cl'ar as ef yew was standin' right at my very elbow. Wal, wal, now, ain't that wonderful?

"What's that yew say, Mr. Grant? Not to pay no 'tention ter that letter yew wrote me? 'Twas all a mistake of yer secketary?"

Isaiah had fairly to clutch at the instrument for support, and the listening group eagerly tiptoed nearer, involuntarily bending their hands behind their ears as hoping to catch the cheering message coming over the wire.

"Yew're a tellin' me, then, that yew *will* stand fer the 'lectric-light proposition, an' pay all the cost yerself?" gasped Isaiah breathlessly. "Wal, naow, that is cert'nly han'some, Mr. Grant. Vanceport'll sure remember yew in its prayers.

"Eh?" he interrupted himself. "What's that? C'ruso is jest erbout to sing; an' ef I listen, I kin hear him over the wire?

"Hi, fellers," and he turned excitedly to the others, "what d'yew think of that? He says he's goin' to stand away from the telephone, an' let me hear—"

He stopped suddenly, and over his fat, complacent face, with the short chin-beard, spread an expression of startled awe, of amazed delight.

"By glory, boys," he shouted, "it sounds like the gates of Heaven had been pried open, an' yew could hear the angels singin'! Here, Uncle Billy, jest listen to him."

He thrust the receiver into the hands of the patriarch, who became almost equally enchanted, and gave way only reluctantly to the insistence of Captain Asa Ketchum that he, too, should hear.

And now arose a veritable free fight over the possession of the instrument. Every one wanted to try the novelty, and, having tried, was loath to step aside. Those who had heard once eagerly clamored for a second chance, and the man in temporary control of the receiver was an active storm-center, with all the rest jostling and pushing and struggling to wrest away his prize.

The "diamond horseshoe" never contained a more appreciative audience than that little coterie gathered among the hams and calicoes of that country store, listening to Caruso as he sang a famous air from "Rigoletto."

Bender himself was at the phone when the end was reached—that brilliant cadenza which never fails to evoke a tumultuous round of applause.

He was standing with closed eyes drinking in the music; but as the full, trumpet-like tones trilled higher and higher, his lids widened, and he raised himself until he stood upon his toes.

Then he came back to earth with a

thud, dropping the receiver with a crash, and staring about him in startled alarm.

A second later he was bellowing into the instrument at the top of his voice.

"Hey, what's the matter thar?" he shouted; then, after an interval, in less excited tones: "Oh, so that's yew ag'in, is it, Mr. Grant, an' what stopped the music was yew a shuttin' the door of the booth? By gee! when that feller went skimmin' up ter the clouds that way, an' then all of a suddin I couldn't hear nothin', I think sure he must have bu'sted his throat.

"Did we enj'y the music? Yes, sir, yew bet we did. Ask Uncle Billy Gale here, what ain't never been to a playhouse sence he seen 'Ten Nights in a Barroom' down at the ole Bow'ry Theayter, in '62. He's a figgerin' naow on takin' the money from his turnips an' goin' inter town to hear the hull of that air piece.

"An' now, ter git down to business ag'in, eh? Yew say yew won't be able to git down here afore yew sail; but to go right ahead an' have the 'lectric-light plant put in, an' yew'll settle when you come back in the spring? Oh, yes, that'll be all right, Mr. Grant. Jest so that we know yew're goin' to foot the bill in the end.

"An'— What's that? Yew think this'd be a good time to put in some other improvements that is badly needed? Wal, I don't know, Mr. Grant. Yew see, taxes is pretty high now, an' our folks—

"Oh, yew're willin' to go inter yer own pocket fer the other things, tew? Wal, now, that is cert'nly squar' on yer part, Mr. Grant. It's more'n squar'; it's deownright ginerous.

"A town hall? With a stage an' scen'ry on it? Yes, indeed, sir; I cert'nly dew think it's badly needed. An' what'll sech a buildin' as we require cost erbout? Wait a minute, sir, an' I'll ask Eph Fanshaw, here. He's a builder, an' he kin prob'ly give yew a rough estimate."

He slid his hand over the mouthpiece, and turned to question the man of practical knowledge.

"One that'll seat erbout tew hundred people, Eph," he explained. "An' finished pretty nifty both inside an' out."

Fanshaw calculated laboriously with a stubby pencil on the lid of a flour-barrel for a minute or two, and then announced that, in his opinion, "fifteen hundred'd come close to seein' things through"; but this did not at all satisfy Isaiah's expanding views.

"Shucks!" he growled. "Ramsay Grant'd think yew was plannin' ter build a dog-house."

He turned to the telephone again, and explained in dulcet tones that since they did not wish to "stick" their benefactor, they had concluded a town hall costing three thousand dollars would serve all their present needs.

"What'd I tell yew?" he observed a second later, as he again shut off the mouthpiece to turn a beaming glance upon his associates. "He made no more fuss over it 'n yew would in swallerin' mush an' milk fer breakfast. I'm only sorry now I didn't raise the figger to five thousand."

On the subsequent items, however, Isaiah gave himself no such cause for regret. Mr. Grant proposed a new Union Church, and was promptly held up for eight thousand on that score. A new schoolhouse was decided upon, which Bender told the donor he was getting cheap at four thousand.

The electric-light plant, which it will be remembered was originally estimated at three thousand dollars, it was now discovered could not be put up for a cent less than double that amount and a thousand dollars more.

Still, the bank president seemed in no wise dismayed at the rapidly mounting total, nor at all inclined to be critical of the figures suggested to him.

He assented to everything without demur or haggling, and immediately went ahead to discuss some new subject for outlay.

At last, when Isaiah's brain was fairly whirling, and the others had reached a state where they could only gaze at one another in dazed incredulity, he halted.

"I guess that is all," he remarked. "Or, no—I was forgetting about those execrable paths you have down there. Have a three-foot cement walk laid along the road leading to my house, will you, Bender, and have it extend about a quarter of a mile beyond my place."

"Beyond your place?" Isaiah dissented. "What's the use o' that? Thar ain't nothin' more out in that direction 'ceptin' Mis' Somers's scrub-oak patch."

"And that is exactly the reason why I wish it done," retorted Grant. "Mrs. Somers is a worthy and estimable woman, and if I can be of assistance to her, I shall be only too glad of the opportunity. While I think of it, too, don't forget to see that one of the new electric lamps is hung opposite her property."

And with that he rang off.

The storekeeper's face was a little clouded as he turned from the phone.

"The idee," he grumbled "of wastin' good cement a runnin' a walk out to the Somers place, an' hangin' a lamp out there to light the owls an' chipmunks! What he ought ter 'a' done was to put that walk in front of my store, an' give me a extry light on this corner in return fer all the trouble I'm takin' fer him."

His expression slowly cleared, though, as he recollected the full extent of the blessings which he had gained, until at last the little drop of bitter in the brimming cup was forgotten.

"Glory hallejuhah, boys!" he ejaculated, cutting a pigeon-wing in his exuberance. "Jest think of it! We're goin' ter git free, gratis, fer nothin' our 'lectric lights, an' a church an' a schoolhouse, an' cement sidewalks, an' a taown hall!"

"A taown hall with a stage an' scen'ry," amplified Uncle Billy Gale, with sparkling eyes. "Oh, I tell yer, fust thing yer know we'll have a Gre't White Way of our own, an' mebbe have C'ruso standin' on that stage an' scen'ry a singin' fer us!"

IV.

WHEN GRANT CAME HOME.

THAT was a busy winter in Vanceport. Day after day and week after week the carpenters and masons and bricklayers and plasterers and painters worked with unflagging industry. The ringing blows of the hammer and the blithe tap of the trowel came to be familiar sounds.

It was not long before the powerhouse, the church, the school-building, and the town hall began to assume visible form; and then Vanceport, as though awaking from its long doze, commenced to sit up and take notice.

There is no more powerful incentive than example; and when the villagers saw the pretty and substantial public structures which were going up, they felt stirrings of shame at the weather-beaten and faded condition into which they had allowed their private properties to lapse.

Eph Fanshaw was one of the first to act upon this impulse by replacing his dingy old carpenter-shop with a commodious, modern building. True, the step was taken largely on account of the increased demands of his business; still it must be confessed that a far less ornate structure would have satisfied all his requirements.

Nor could any such excuse be adduced for the attractive new front which Isaiah Bender added to his store, or for the transformation of Uncle Billy Gale's old blacksmith forge into an up-to-date machine-shop and garage.

Indeed, the fever proved of a most "catching" variety, and even where there was no rebuilding or repairs, there was a general freshening up with paint and putty, and such a "readying up" of yards and gardens, that, as the Rev. Jonathan Short expressed it on one of his bimonthly Sunday visits, "Vanceport shone like a bride adorned for her marriage morning."

The town, too, began to boast an increase of population. With the demand for labor, artizans and mechanics commenced to move in, and to erect homes and cottages for their families.

A village improvement society was finally formed, and a hot discussion opened up in favor of a trolley line to Bellville to take the place of the antiquated stage.

Yet, despite all the expense of these various repairs and additions, nobody seemed to be out of pocket. Indeed, money had never been so plentiful in the village; and Isaiah Bender found to his surprise, on footing up his books, that his winter's business, even after deducting the cost of the alterations to his store, was more than treble the best summer trade he had ever known.

It was about this time, too, that Ike Somers, at his new home in the city,

began to receive letters offering him gradually enlarging amounts for his "patch of scrub-oak."

The first was from Isaiah Bender, and made a tender of five hundred dollars, which Mrs. Somers was inclined to jump at; for, although Ike had secured a position as a newspaper reporter, his earnings were still meager and the starting of his law studies still loomed dim and far away.

Ike, however, advised her not to be too anxious, but to hold off a bit; and the wisdom of his course was shown a week or two later, when a missive arrived from Uncle Billy Gale, raising the bid to six hundred dollars.

After this, letters from the "leading citizens" appeared at frequent intervals, and the price of the land steadily advanced until it had reached five thousand dollars.

Then Ike cut short the avalanche of correspondence by informing the crew that he would take no steps in the matter until he had run down to Vanceport and looked over the ground himself.

"There is undoubtedly a good-sized 'culluhd pusson' in this woodpile," he said to his mother, "and I am certainly not going to close until I find out just what and where he is."

Moreover, when he finally did revisit his old stamping-ground, it was in a professional capacity.

Much to his surprise, his city editor called him up one morning and directed him to take an assignment at Vanceport.

"To Vanceport?" Ike exclaimed amazedly, for he had been so out of touch with the old place that he had no knowledge of the remarkable changes which had occurred there.

Nor, it may be observed, had any mention of them been vouchsafed in the epistles of the "leading citizens."

"To Vanceport?" he repeated. "What on earth is going on at Vanceport that merits the attention of a metropolitan daily?"

"Oh, they are going to have quite a celebration down there, I believe. Opening of a lot of new buildings, inauguration of an electric-light plant, and all that sort of thing. Kind of a 'harvest home' lay-out, don't you know?"

But Ike seemed not to be listening.

"Opening of a lot of new buildings!" he gasped dazedly. "Inauguration of an electric-light plant! At Vanceport, did you say?"

"Yes. Ramsay Grant, the banker, who got back from Europe yesterday, did it all for them; and this is to be a sort of 'welcome-home' and grand powwow in his honor."

The reporter's face was more than ever a study.

"Ramsay Grant?" he ejaculated unbelievingly.

Then a great light fell upon him.

"Oh, say, chief, I can't go to that," he stammered hurriedly. "Send one of the older men. I couldn't handle an affair of that sort. I—I'm sick."

But the other would listen to no excuses. There was no one else who could be spared for the assignment, it appeared, and, protest as he might, Somers in the end had to go.

Still, it must be confessed that for a time after his arrival he kept himself pretty sedulously in the background.

He dodged about back ways and through unfrequented thoroughfares in order to get his notes and snapshots of the new buildings and changed conditions, and it was not until he had strolled out along the new cement walk leading to his former home that he dropped the attitude of a skulking fugitive.

Altered as the rest of the village had appeared to him, he had to rub his eyes before he could make himself believe that this was the same locality he had once known so well.

Houses, either finished or in course of construction, had sprung up on every side; lots were staked off, and the whole section presented the aspect of a thriving and rapidly growing suburb.

What caught Ike's eye more than anything else, however, was the sight of a neat real-estate office, and, noting that its occupants were strangers to him, he entered and engaged in conversation.

When he came out again he was like a different being. No longer did he seek to dodge or evade observation, but, hurrying back to town, paraded boldly along the main street until he had found a long-distance telephone-booth, where he shut himself up and was busy with the wire for more than an hour.

Then, emerging again, he strolled about in plain view, affably greeting old acquaintances, until it was time for the train bearing Ramsay Grant to arrive, when he joined the tumultuous throng assembling at the station.

Not long did they have to wait. On schedule time to the minute, the accommodation puffed in, and from the steps of the rear coach descended the short, rotund form of the banker.

At first, he seemed unable to comprehend the meaning of such an outpouring of people; seemed rather dismayed than pleased at the shouts and cheering which greeted him. He appeared almost inclined to cut and run; but Isaiah Bender, who was acting as master of ceremonies, speedily reached his side, and explained matters.

"It's jest a leetle welcome our folks has arranged fer you, Mr. Grant," he said. "See," and he pointed proudly to an electric sign which hung between two posts just outside the station.

"Welcome to our benefactor!" it read.

Grant straightened up at the sight, and seemed far from displeased.

"Hum! Ha!" He pulled down his hat-brim and puffed out his chest. "Yes, I suppose I have been a benefit to the village in a small way, Bender; but I certainly did not expect such a cordial appreciation of it as this. It touches me. I may say, it warms up my very soul."

"Oh, we ain't begun yet," chuckled Isaiah. "Come on, Mr. Grant; I'll pilot yew to yer kerridge."

And then the astonished banker found himself escorted to a hack drawn by white horses and swathed in bunting, which fell into line behind the Vanceport Silver Cornet Band and led a lengthy parade over the entire village settlement.

The magnate could not restrain his expressions of admiration and amazement as he proceeded through the well-lighted streets and noted the evidences of prosperity and well-being on every hand.

Was this Vanceport, he kept wondering to himself, and ejaculated at almost every step, "Marvelous! Marvelous!" while Isaiah repeated with parrot-like exuberance: "Yew're to blame fer it all, Mr. Grant. Yew're to blame."

In turn, they inspected the electric power-house, the church, and the school-building, thus at last arriving at the "taown hall," where upon the stage "with scen'ry" was set out the semi-circle of chairs and the stand bearing a glass and pitcher of water which always betokens "oratorical doings."

A chorus of school-children dressed in white opened the program by singing an ode especially composed for the occasion, and then each of the "leading citizens" made a speech, descanting with perfervid eloquence upon the glories of Vanceport and the manifold virtues and generosity of Ramsay Grant.

Finally, the central figure of the evening rose to reply. He was gracefully modest—some thought a shade too modest—in speaking of his own part in the village's improvement, alluding to what he had done only in the most general terms; but he came out strong in congratulating and praising them for what they had accomplished by their own unaided efforts.

"A year ago," he said, evoking a round of cheers, "I was seriously considering abandoning my summer residence in Vanceport; but now you have made it such a paradise that I could not be hired to leave."

This was all very well; but every one felt that something was still lacking. The audience remained in their seats, and the members of the committee in charge drew apart and conferred earnestly together.

At length, Isaiah rather hesitatingly approached the banker and plucked at his sleeve.

"Don't yew think it'd kind o' end up the perceedin's with a hurrah," he whispered, "an' send 'em all home happy, ef yew gave us a check naow?"

Grant turned upon him blankly.

"A check! A check for what?"

"Why, fer all these public improvements we've put in—the 'lectric light, an' the taown hall, an' the church, 'an the schoolhouse, an' the cement walk out to yer place—same's yew promised. I've footed up the totals so's to make it convenient fer you, an' the hull amount is twenty thousand eight hundred dollars."

But Grant waved away the paper which the other sought to thrust upon him.

"I promised that?" he said grimly. "And this is the reason for all this to-do to-night, and the hailing of me as a public benefactor? Why, man, you must be mad. I remember receiving a letter from you last fall requesting me to contribute to some electric-light project you had down here, and promptly declining the proposal; but that is absolutely the only connection I have ever had with your program of improvements."

"What?" demanded Uncle Billy Gale, who, with the rest of the committee, had drawn near at the signs of an altercation. "Dew you mean ter say that yew didn't call us up from the Meterpolitan Op'ry-House in Noo York, an' after letting us hear C'ruso sing, tell us to go ahead with all these fixin's at your expense?"

"My dear man, I certainly did not call you up with any such message, and as for being at the Metropolitan Opera-House, I never was there in my life. Some one has shamefully imposed upon you!"

Isaiah Bender collapsed, speechless, into a chair. The banker threw himself back into a belligerent attitude, as though prepared to resist any unlawful assault upon his pocketbook.

The other members of the committee glowered fiercely at him, and the audience, which by this time had gained some inkling of what was taking place upon the stage, was in an uproar.

Just what might have happened, it is hard to tell; but at that moment Ike Somers stepped forward from the reporter's table, and, addressing Mr. Grant and the committee in a low voice, asked them to step aside with him a few moments, as he believed he could explain the misunderstanding which had arisen.

Then, recalling to the "leading citizens" the stormy night upon which he had been ejected from Bender's store, he told how his attention had been attracted on his homeward way by the clanging shutter at Ramsay Grant's.

He did not mention, however, the temptation which had assailed him, but contented himself by stating that when he saw how easily access could be gained to the house, and the telephone inside, he was seized with the idea of thus paying off his scores against Bender.

"My original purpose," he explained, "was by mimicking Mr. Grant's voice and pretending to be speaking from New York to raise Isaiah up into the clouds for a few days, and then drop him to earth with a dull thud; but we moved unexpectedly to the city, and in the hurry and bustle of our departure I completely forgot the matter."

"But why did you not explain afterward?" demanded Grant sternly. "You could have written."

"Of course I could; but it really never occurred to me that these timorous old grannies would actually go ahead on no stronger authorization from you than a mere telephone talk. When I found out for the first time to-day that they had actually done so, I was simply thunderstruck."

"And now what do you propose to do about it?" snorted the banker. "Do you know, young man, that you have been guilty of a pretty serious offense?"

"Ah, that is the point I was just coming to. Fortunately, I am in a position to make amends. I learned this afternoon that a commission appointed by the Governor, struck by the beauty and progress of Vanceport, has about decided to select our land north of the village as the site for an important State institution, and I have closed a deal disposing of it for forty thousand dollars.

"Now, I feel that this increase in its value is entirely due to the improvements started here, and in all fairness I should stand the bill.

"I impersonated you in ordering them, Mr. Grant. May I not take your place again in paying for them?"

But the suggestion seemed not entirely pleasing to the banker. The savor of public esteem had been sweet in his nostrils, and he was not exactly willing to step down from his pedestal.

He hummed and hawed and grew red in the face for a moment; then burst forth explosively:

"No, sir, you shall not. I've had the credit of doing these things; and, by the Lord Harry, I'm not going to resign it. Here, Bender, give me a pen, and I'll write you a check this minute."

Isaiah Bender, however, had not been cherishing the seed of civic pride in his breast all these months for nothing. It flowered out now into effusive bloom.

"They ain't neither one of yew goin' ter pay," he announced with dignity. "Vanceport is big enough an' great enough an' grand enough to meet her own obligations. We'll fix these things by addin' a mite to our taxes an' be beholdin' to nobody. Eh, boys, ain't I right?" he asked of the "leading citizens."

And among the committee there was not a dissenting voice.

"But, say, boy," quavered Uncle Billy, still a shade incredulous, "ef yew sent that phone to us from Mr. Grant's house in Vanceport, haow in thunder did we come to hear C'ruso sing?"

"Oh, that was merely to make the deception complete," laughed Ike. "I saw a phonograph standing there in the room, and, slipping on a suitable record, let it do the rest."

"All right," said Uncle Billy. "I ain't a bearin' yew no malice; fer mebbe we'll have a C'ruso an' a Meterpolitan Op'ry-House of our own right here in Vanceport some day. We've got the stage an' the scen'ry naow!"

THE CRIMSON HARVEST.

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "From Flag to Flag," "On Glory's Trail," "With Sealed Lips," etc.

A story of Paris in the Reign of Terror, with an American for its central figure and his sweetheart in the grip of powerful foes.

CHAPTER I.

IN STRANGE COMPANY.

"AN' that," concluded Shadrach solemnly, as he lighted his long pipe from flint, steel, and tinder-box, "an' that was how I happened to get scalped. I haven't ever told the story before, an' the mem'ries it rouses in me is something scand'lous."

He replaced his broad-leafed hat upon his tousled head, shutting from view the central bald spot which had aroused the sea-captain's curiosity.

Much impressed, though perhaps more mystified, the skipper thanked him in broken English and stumped off toward the forecastle.

"Shad," said I meditatively, "do you know that's the seventh time I've heard you explain your scalping?"

"Well," replied the ex-trapper, shifting rather uneasily on his rope-coil seat, "I s'pose public cur'osity must be gratified. An' everybody asks—"

"After you've skilfully led the talk up to the point," I cut in, "and you always end by saying you've never told the story before. As a matter of fact," I added, "that part is true. For you never do tell it twice alike. Once it was a Creek Indian, down in Tennessee, who caught you asleep.. And once a war party of Seminoles that—"

"I reckon," began Shadrach in some haste, "I reckon the way them clouds over there seems to be—"

"Another time," I went on remorselessly, "it was a Delaware chief who—"

"We've been blowed three days southward as it is, an'—"

"And another time a grizzly bear, whose paw—"

"Look here, Jack Braith!" roared Shadrach, casting aside his counter-weapons of evasion and menacing me wrathfully with his long pipe-stem. "Look here! Whose scalp is it, anyhow? Your'n or mine? That's what *I* want to know. 'Twas *me* that lost it, I reckon. An' if any one's got the right to—"

"Have it your own way," I sighed, giving up the struggle. "It may have been bitten off by a sparrow—for all I care. Only, when we get to France, you'd better hit on some one story to account for it, and stick to that. It'll save trouble."

"France!" he scoffed. "Accordin' to all I've heard, they're doin' so much

scalpin' on their own account over there just now that nobody'll have time to bother over how I lost my one little ornery—"

"They don't scalp people over there," I explained for the tenth time. "The guillotine makes rather more thorough work of it. But even that is all over now."

"Then there won't be any sort of fun?" he asked, chagrined.

"Not of the sort you mean. But there'll be something about as exciting for *me,* I think."

"For you? Why not for me, too?"

"Because it's my quarrel. Not yours."

"Quarrel! You never said a word about a quarrel before we started. You claimed you was just goin' over to claim your Great-uncle Shayvrooze's farm and cash-box and the handle on his name."

"Shad!" I exclaimed in mock horror, "if my highly honored great-uncle, M. le Vicomte de Chevreuse, were alive to hear you refer to his Touraine estate, his fortune and his title as a 'farm, cash-box, and handle,' he'd be more contemptuous than ever at me for preferring to live in America rather than in his beloved France."

"Well," urged Shadrach, "from all I hear, the people in France get as r'iled over the title-and-estate game as I am. 'Twasn't over a year ago I heard about their rippin' their monarchy all to shucks an' sendin' their noble folks screechin' up a tree an' hittin' out on the Ind'pend'ce trail in Uncle Sam's wake."

"By the latest letters, that's all over, though," I told him. "The monarchy is restored and the country going on as of old. That's why I'm on my way there. I'd scarcely be fool enough to go looking for title and estates in a country where wearers of the one are guillotined and owners of the others find their property confiscated 'for the good of the people.' It was only because of those last letters from my great-uncle's lawyer that I decided on the trip."

"But this quarrel? How about it? Who's it with?"

"Upon my soul," I confessed, "I don't know."

"Just goin' to meander around lookin' for trouble?"

"No. I'm afraid trouble is coming to look for me. The De Chevreuse advocate in his letter warned me there was another claimant to the fortune who was resolved, at all cost, to combat my claim. Now, the claimant must be of noble birth. In France his manner of 'combating my claim' will doubtless take the shape of challenging me to a duel."

"A duel? An' you was fool enough not to bring your rifle along? I warned you, time an' again, you'd need it. Think of strikin' a new trail without totin' your rifle! It's like—"

"I sha'n't need it, I think," said I.

"That's so," he admitted. "'Cause mine's always at your service, same as anything else I got. She shoots just a wee trifle high an' to the left, an' you've got to humor her. But, 'cept for that, there ain't a better gun between Nashville an' Pens'cola. I'll—"

"In France," I explained, "they don't use rifles in duels. They prefer *these,*" and I touched the small-sword that hung at my side.

"Those!" snorted Shadrach in huge contempt. "Lots of fun there must be in gettin' spitted on a skewer like that! If I was to get in a row an' had no better weepon than one of them steel spits, I'd grab it by the point an' hammer t'other feller over the head with the butt of it."

"That would certainly be a unique improvement on the gentle art of fencing," said I, "but a man who understands how to use a dueling-sword can make it almost as deadly as your beloved rifle. I remember, in France—"

"Oh, *that's* where you learned to use such trinkets? I thought as much. How long did it take you?"

"I fenced for seven years under Cadillac. Even at the end of that time, I could hardly call myself an adept."

"Seven years to learn fool nonsense like that!" groaned Shadrach. "Longer'n it took me to get married an' to find out that women are dangerouser'n cantamounts and to sneak out of my own country to get away from 'em. Did I ever tell you how I happened to get married?"

"Yes," I answered hastily, "as often as you've told me about being scalped. And how you ran away from—"

"No, no, son!" he expostulated, "I didn't run away. She druv me out. An' then she sued me for divorce for leavin'

her; an' I lit out'n America, so the papers couldn't be served on me. It must be a dretful thing to get divorced. Not any of it for me!"

"And *you*—a man whom Washington himself called his pluckiest scout — ran from one little woman!"

"Son, you ain't married. So don't presume to jedge the fears of them that are. It's a— Hallo, there! What's up now, I'd like to know!"

A yell from the lookout, a rush of feet across the deck, and at the same instant the double booming of distant guns. Shadrach and I were at the rail on the moment, straining our eyes across the tumbled mass of gray waters.

May I stop here to explain a little more fully, yet in as few words as I can, the reason of our presence there and then aboard the French brig Solent?

I am Jack Braith, American. At least, so I have ever styled myself, though my grandfather was a Frenchman. He was eldest of the several younger brothers to the Vicomte de Chevreuse, and emigrated to the American Colonies as a lad.

There he married a New Jersey maiden and adopted her name of "Braith," his own being hard for Yankee tongues to master, and Frenchmen being none too popular in the Colonies at that time.

No more was heard of our French relatives until I was a child of six. Then word came that my great-uncle, the *vicomte*, was old, childless, and lonely. He had quarreled with his various other brothers and their children, and his mind had at length turned to our branch of the family.

The upshot of it was that I was sent to visit him "on approval," with a view to becoming his real, as I was his natural, heir. My parents had died in my babyhood.

For the next eleven years I had dwelt in France. It was a loveless, if beneficial, time. My great-uncle wasted no affection on me, nor I on him. Moreover, even as a child it angered me to hear his sneers on America.

Nevertheless, he gave me such education as a young nobleman of the day was supposed to receive. I was taught the various arts and accomplishments, spoke French better than English, could handle a dueling sword, ride, dance, and exchange small-talk with the best of them.

But, oh, it was a lonely, cruel life for a growing boy! Thanks to the *vicomte's* quarrels with his family, I saw none of my several cousins who were scattered through France and Germany, nor was I able to learn much concerning any of them, save Etienne de Chevreuse, a lad of my own age and—to judge from all I had heard—strikingly like me in looks.

He was the grandson of a still younger brother of the *vicomte* than my grandfather, and had already attracted some note as a daredevil, gambler, and swordsman.

Etienne and his wildness the *vicomte* never wearied of denouncing, until, though I had not chanced to meet the unfortunate youth, I began to feel a lively sympathy for him.

It was in 1779, when I was about seventeen, that the crash came. I fell in with some French officers newly returned from America. They told me—what heretofore I had but vaguely understood—the story of my native land's mighty struggle for liberty, and painted in strong colors the glory of that conflict.

It was enough. My boyish blood was fired. The patriotism my great-uncle had spent years in crushing sprang into new life. I announced my intent of going home to fight for my country.

"If you go," roared the *vicomte*, "your name is forever blotted from my will and from my memory. Take your choice—the life of a French noble or of a Yankee rebel."

Next week I sailed.

Armed with a letter of introduction from a friend to the young Marquis de Lafayette, I landed in America after eleven years' absence. I was not likely to starve because of the rank and wealth I had put behind me. For I had inherited a comfortable little New Jersey property and a few slaves from my parents, whose only child I was.

Another month, and I was in the army. Before the Revolutionary War's end I had been so fortunate as to rise to a captaincy and to win praise from no less a personage than the great Washington himself. After which I had settled

down to a quiet country gentleman's life, letting memories of France fade gradually from my mind.

It was early in 1793 that a letter from my great-uncle's family advocate sharply recalled those memories. He wrote of the *vicomte's* death, intestate. Thus I, as grandson of his next elder brother, was heir to title and estates.

The letter warned me that other heirs —one especially—were supposed to be preparing to contest most vigorously the heritage of an alien American to such French rank and wealth.

Yet, my rights were clear, and I was minded to claim them. True, garbled tales of the French Revolution had reached our shores—tales that I, with my recollection of the nobles' power and the peasants' crushed condition, could scarce credit.

But later rumors told of an agreement between king and people and a smoothing over of political differences. This, with my knowledge of the France I remembered, I naturally took to mean that old times were restored.

So I secured passage aboard an armed French brig, built and fitted out in New York and manned by a mixed crew. It was the brig's maiden trip. Nor had her officers—who had superintended her building—been home for three years. I could, therefore, learn little of present-day French politics from them. They seemed, in fact, as ignorant as I.

On the day of our sailing I had come face to face, on Water Street, with a man as much out of place there as a bear in the capitol. He was Shadrach Bemis, a lank Tennessee trapper, at whose side I had fought at Cowpens and at Yorktown.

He was one of Washington's own scouts, an Indian fighter of local renown, and a quaint character not easily forgotten.

It was twelve years since we had met. He hailed me with delight as the one familiar figure in a strange, overpopulous place. It seemed he was in hiding. Having successfully escaped British and Indians alike, the man was in full retreat before a fair foe. He had recently married a frontier woman who, tiring of him, had threatened a divorce.

Like most backwoodsmen, law had untold terrors for the otherwise fearless Bemis. So he had incontinently fled at threat of the mysterious divorce.

Reaching New York, he was still in fear lest his wife might reach him with legal proceedings, and he had resolved to add the ocean to the stretch of distance between them. Hearing I was bound for France, he eagerly took passage on the same ship—where his long rifle, fringed buckskins and coonskin cap were an endless source of wondering joy to our French companions.

At first our voyage had prospered. Then the new stearing-gear had broken in a gale, and we had drifted four days southward on the wings of the hurricane. Hundreds of miles south of our course, when the storm at last died down, we had just repaired the tiller and were on our northward way at the time this story opens.

Shadrach and I joined the crowd at the rails and looked out, across seas as from a stage-box, at an exciting little nautical drama.

Barely two knots to westward lay two vessels. One—by far the smaller—was a French merchant sloop; the other, a brig carrying full gun-ports and floating a British flag.

She was bombarding the smaller vessel, at easy distance, from her starboard-guns. The sloop was making ineffectual retort with a couple of short-range deck-carronades.

It was like a fight between a mastiff and a kitten, so far as fairness went, or chance for the French craft. I took in the situation at a glance.

The brig was doubtless a British privateer, preying on French commerce from the West Indies. My only wonder was that the sloop dared offer fight to so formidable a foe.

The wind was sharp from the south, which had prevented our hearing the firing at first. How long the pitifully unequal fight had waged I could not guess. But already the brig was closing in. The sloop, most of her rigging shot away and smoke curling from her after-ports, was slowly settling by the head. Still she did not strike her little patch of colors, and continued to bark valiantly with her ridiculous little carronades.

Aboard our own ship everything was abuzz with wild activity. Amid a salvo of excited oaths and bellowed orders, we were put about and bore down at full speed to the tardy aid of the Frenchman.

Neither of the antagonists noted our coming until a long-range shot from our bow-gun tore through the privateer's staysail, ripping the canvas clean from its supports. A second shot whizzed across the swarming decks, and her crew beheld us, a bare furlong distant.

So near were we now that we could hear the halloed command from a deck officer's speaking-trumpet, as he ordered all sail crowded on and the helm put down. It was clear he did not mean to fight us.

We were a third larger, for one thing. Besides, privateers are out for plunder, rather than for glory. With them, he who loots and runs away may live to loot another day.

But this particular "running away" was slightly hampered. For the French sloop had sighted us, too. Already her decks were awash. She could float but a few moments longer at most.

On seeing us, her captain hurried a half-dozen persons into the already unslung long-boat. Six sailors then sprang aboard and bent to the oars, sending her flying across the narrow patch of water toward us.

I saw the object of the maneuver. At any instant the sloop might sink. The captain had sent the passengers out of the way, and the long-boat was trying to put enough space between herself and the sloop to avoid the fatal suction of the sinking vessel.

A yell from our helmsman broke in on the glorious excitement of the moment. One of our newly shipped rudder-chains had parted. We were floating, helpless once more—helpless to bear down on the enemy or to maneuver our batteries!

We were for the time simply a floating fort—dangerous to attack, but incapable of pursuit.

CHAPTER II.

STRANGE DOINGS IN SMALL BOATS.

THE privateer's captain saw our plight almost as soon as did we. Up came his helm, and the brig halted in her flight.

While her port batteries blazed out in a futile duel with ours, two boats were hurriedly put off from the brig. One—a long-boat—headed for the sinking sloop. The second—a gig—sought to cut off the sloop's long-boat before the latter could reach us.

From the direction in which both the gig and the escaping long-boat were coming, our guns could not cover either. Motionless as we were, we could offer no aid, though our captain had belatedly ordered our own long-boat lowered to the water.

Pursuer and pursued must come together before we could send to the rescue. Nearer and nearer the privateer's boat drew to her victim, till hardly fifty yards separated them.

"I ain't much posted on boats," drawled Shadrach, at my side.

His cool, sleepy voice struck on my exicted senses like a splash of cold water in a hot face.

"An'" he added, "seein' I'm so ignorant of the pesky things, would you tell me who's the most useful man aboard that British rowboat? Is it that tall feller standin' up in front, or some one else? Which one helps make it go?"

"The one who's guiding it, sits in the stern—the back," I answered, impatient of the interruption. "He is the helmsman, and—"

A thunderous roar close to my ear silenced my words. The helmsman of the privateer's long-boat sprang up, lurched backward and tumbled overboard into the sea.

"Now," went on Bemis, in the same slow drawl, as he began to reload his rifle, "which is next most important?"

It was a wonderful shot. At extremely long range for so old-fashioned a weapon, and fired from a rolling deck at a tossing boat. The tall man who stood in the long-boat's bow turned and assigned another to the vacant tiller. As he did so I saw to my surprise that he was masked.

"That is a ship's officer, possibly the privateer captain himself," I said, noting the masked man's air of authority. "Try him next."

"Anything to oblige," cheerfully as-

sented Shadrach, bringing his rifle up to his shoulder as tenderly as a virtuoso might settle his loved violin under his neck.

A whirl of spray blew about us. "*Click!*" went Bemis's rifle-lock. A drop of salt water had fallen on the priming. With a little grunt the trapper lowered the weapon.

"Had him covered real pretty, too," he sighed. "Right over the heart, an' all allowance made for the ship's roll."

The sloop's boat was within easy view of us now. I could even see the strained look on her helmsman's brown face. Two other occupants of the boat faced us; a thin, pale man with snowy hair and a lad in a sea-cloak and feathered hat.

But for the death of the privateer's helmsman the fugitives must have been much sooner overhauled. As it was, the pursuer was now almost alongside her.

Why the officer in charge did not order his several marines to end the chase by opening fire on the victims I could not imagine. Nor, for many months, did I find out. He seemed bent on capturing the lot of them alive.

And now our own heavily manned long-boat took part in the proceedings. Thanks to Bemis's shot, she was in time, after all, to be of use.

Bounding forward toward pursuers and pursued, she was within a biscuit-throw of them as the privateer's gig reached the sloop's boat.

The masked officer, as his craft grated past the other, braced himself with one hend on the gunwale. With the other he seized the shoulder of the lad who sat beside the white-haired old man.

With one powerful wrench he lifted the youth from the seat and was about to swing him into his own swiftly passing boat. Truly, an odd enough proceeding and one none of us could understand!

That an officer should brave death to pursue a boat merely for the sake of snatching from it one boy seemed laughably incredible. Yet that was apparently the intent.

The whole affair passed in the fraction of a second, almost before the old, white-haired man could spring up with a cry of terror and seize the lad's other shoulder. But, quick as the masked man was, and unexpected as was his action, the boy was quite as agile and as full of resource.

Even as he felt himself lifted from the seat, the youngster whipped out a pistol from beneath his cloak and fired pointblank at his masked assailant. The latter dropped his intended victim's shoulder and reeled back among his own rowers, clapping one hand to the elbow of the other arm, whence blood began to gush.

He lost his balance and collapsed into the bottom of the gig as a bullet from Shadrach's rifle sped through the space his tall body had just been filling.

I heard the masked man call out an order as he fell. The rowers put about and made off for the privateer brig at full speed, even as our long-boat reached the fugitives from the sloop.

My eye strayed to where the sloop herself had been wallowing in the waves. She had vanished. Gone down with colors flying. All left of her was the long-boat with its dozen survivors now coming slowly toward us under the escort of our own boat.

The gig made its way back to the privateer. I saw men carrying the wounded masked man aboard. Immediately, with a parting volley and derisive cheer, the privateer's crew got their vessel under way and showed us a clean pair of heels, while we floated, helpless, and sent an impotent fusillade after them.

Then came the crowning insult. From the departing privateer's mast the British flag dropped. An instant later a French flag was run up in its stead. Pitou, our captain, fairly danced with rage at the sight.

"No privateer at all, but a dirty pirate!" he raged. "Flying British and French flags alternately and robbing both nations. Oh, if I could only get after her and—"

"Sloop's survivors coming aboard, sir," reported an officer.

Pitou straightened himself and hurried to the side to help the refugees over the rail and extend to them a rough but eager welcome.

One after another they toiled up the ladder, passengers and crew alike. Following the majority came the tall, white-haired man.

"An aristocrat of the old school!"

was my mental comment as he clambered feebly over the rail, assisted by a couple of sailors.

The old man turned to give a helping hand to the last passenger—the plucky boy whom the masked one had tried to steal and who had shown such presence of mind in the face of sudden peril.

The lad was tight-wrapped in his long sea-cloak. His broad hat was down over his eyes. His hair had escaped from its old-fashioned queue and hung loose and shimmering on his shoulders.

In one hand he bore a heavy portmanteau. The other clung convulsively to the old man.

At sight of the ring of strange, curious faces on our deck, the youth shrank back, and crouched, hesitating, by the rail.

"Brave lad!" cried Pitou, clapping him on the back. "A good shot if ever I saw one!"

"Oh, *don't,*" gasped the boy, hysterically. "Don't speak of it! It was *horrible!*"

He sank down upon a chest, covered his face with his hands and broke into passionate sobbing; his whole fragile body convulsed and trembling.

"Come, come!" urged Pitou with rough gentleness. "That's no way to behave! Be a man!"

"I—I can't!" was the wailing reply. "I'm—I'm a *girl!*"

CHAPTER III.

I LOSE SOMETHING NOT WORTH KEEPING.

"I'M a girl!" repeated the weeping figure crouched there upon the chest.

And all at once my contempt was turned to a wondrous unexpected pity for the frail, trembling little creature.

"What's the row?" asked Shadrach, to whom the foregoing French dialogue had been as Greek. "What ails the brat?"

"It isn't a brat," said I in English. "It's a girl."

"A *gal?*"

"So she says."

"Well," he drawled, "I s'pose that ought to settle it. Do all French gals dress like that?"

We had been speaking needlessly loud. Especially by contrast with the hush of embarrassment that had fallen over the rest of the group at the pseudo-boy's announcement.

On Bemis's wondering query I saw the figure on the chest start guiltily and pull the long sea-cloak more tightly about her. I could have kicked both Shadrach and myself for adding to her embarrassment.

"Of course," went on Bemis, unnoting, "if they reely enjoy sech clo'es—"

"Shut up!" I whispered savagely. "She understands English."

"Permit me!"

It was the white-haired man who spoke. He had recovered his breath, and now, with an air of authority, advanced shelteringly in front of the girl. Facing Pitou, he resumed:

"Let me thank you, first of all, captain, for your timely aid. We owe you our lives. Had you arrived earlier—but our debt is none the smaller. I am le Sieur de Perier, Barbados planter, late of France. With my daughter, Mlle. Elise de Perier, I set sail last week in my own sloop, L'Hirondelle, for France on a mission of importance. This morning we were overhauled by the British privateer you saw. I forbade my captain to strike his colors and—"

"But," cried Pitou, "what chance had a little sloop like yours against—"

"It is the creed of my race, sir," reproved De Perier calmly, "to fight as bravely against hopeless odds as against a weaker foe. It is on such a seemingly hopeless mission I am now bound for Paris. To continue: When we were without hope of rescue I bade my daughter don a suit of the cabin boy's. As a boy she might die fighting. As a woman she would perhaps have been spared and sold as a slave in the West Indies. That will account for her costume, I think.

"If any here," and he bent a stern eye on the curious Bemis, "if any here deems so necessary an action unworthy of a De Perier, I am ready to justify my course and my daughter's behavior in whatsoever method he may prefer."

To which Shadrach, supposing himself addressed, and being sensitive on his ignorance of French, replied gravely:

"I lost it in a knife-fight down in the Everglades. But I kilt the pesky redskin that got it. He won't do any more scalpin', I reckon, unless the—"

I wheeled quickly and walked away, trying in vain to stifle a snort of laughter. Shadrach followed me.

"What's up *now*?" he asked, aggrieved. "I had to answer, didn't I, when the old feller asked me a civil question? Say," he went on, more confidentially, "what was he tryin' to say? Could *you* make out? I don't see why folks ever made up such a fool language as French, anyhow. I don't b'lieve they understand each other half the time. They just pretend, 'cause they think it's smart. Next time any one tries it on *me*, I'm goin' to answer 'em in Choctaw or Sioux. I'll bet there ain't a one of 'em that can reel off Indian lingo better'n I can. I'll do that, you can bet."

He was as good as his word. Next morning when le Sieur de Perier met him on deck and said: "*Bonjour, M'sieu l'Américain!*" Bemis answered glibly, in Sioux jargon:

"*How, Peha-He-Haska!*" (Hello, Man-With-Long-White-Hair!")

It was on the day before we sighted the gray French coast. Elise de Perier and I were pacing the deck.

We had grown to know each other well during our weeks of slow eastward voyaging. Not only through the enforced ship-board informality, which all seagoers will understand, but because I was the only man on the Solent with whom her father did not discourage association.

He judged from my dress and manner that I was of rank not far beneath his own. Also, one of my uncles—my mother's brother—had been New York correspondent for the old man's Barbados plantation. Thus I was not wholly a stranger to him, as were the rough seafarers who had so kindly offered refuge to the sloop's fugitives.

And I profited thereby in winning leave to tramp the deck occasionally with Elise, under her father's protecting eye.

Age and rheumatism had rendered such exercise out of the question for him. But he always kept us in view from his lounging-chair. For, French girls, for some reason, have not the latitude in such matters that is granted our Yankee maidens.

Yet I had made the most of the daily walks. In fact, I now realized, as they were about to end, that they had meant more to me than all else connected with the voyage. Clad in one of the dainty gowns from that portmanteau of hers, Mlle. de Perier was a far different personage from that weeping, oddly appareled stripling who had cowered so piteously against the rail that day of the fight. By common consent we had never referred to the scene.

To-day we came nearer to it than before.

"You had actually started for France, you and le Sieur de Perier," I was saying, "without having heard that the revolution was at an end? That took courage."

"It was necessity," she answered. "We had received tidings that called us to Paris. It was a mission that could not well be disregarded."

It was not her first veiled mention of her journey's object. But its nature she seemed intent on keeping secret. So I, naturally, could not seek further.

I had long since made a similar resolve of reticence as to my own reasons for going to Paris. Except to Shadrach Bemis, I had confided them to no one. When I should have won my heritage it would be high time to boast.

I was not minded to speak of it beforehand, and then, perhaps, find the whole affair a mistake and be forced to take back my vaunting words.

So Mlle. de Perier and I each had our own secret, and neither sought to fathom the other's. A not over-common trait, perhaps. I sometimes think the reason a man who minds his own business succeeds in life is because he has so little competition.

"You were going to risk your lives in that mob-ridden city for the sake of a principle?" I went on.

"Possibly," she returned. "And for what better thing could a life be risked?"

"From all I hear," said I, "most people of your class in France forgot principles and all else in a rush to reach some other country. Those who stayed had little chance of exploiting principle or anything else. I am thankful, from the bottom of my heart, that the lawless days ended before your arrival."

She looked a trifle surprised at my vehemence. But I thought she seemed embarrassed rather than displeased.

"You are quite certain the 'old order' is restored?" she asked.

"So I gathered from the tidings that reached us," I replied. "The French peasant could hardly hold out long against the men to whom he has cringed for centuries."

"I am not so sure," she protested. "One day or another the *real* rising must come. When it does, we of the old nobility must pay a terrible price for what we and our ancestors made the peasant suffer."

"That is strange doctrine, *mademoiselle,* for a member of the *noblesse,*" I remarked. "Does your father agree with such ideas?"

"My father still lives in the Golden Age. Time has stopped for him. He has never fully believed there could be a revolution. But, then, he was just as much amazed, I hear, when you Americans revolted. Is it so strange that he should feel as he does? His point of view is no more odd in its way than that of your 'savage' friend, Mr. Bemis."

"You still find pleasure in practising your English on old Shadrach?" I laughed.

"He is a never-ending delight," she retorted. "And we are getting to be great friends, he and I. It was only yesterday that he told me a great secret. I felt quite honored."

"A secret?" I echoed in wonder.

"Yes. The history of that queer bald patch of his. It seems he was set upon one day in New York by pirates who took him by surprise, and—but oh!" she broke off, in contrition. "It was a secret. I forgot."

Another version of the lost scalp! But I held my peace.

"He tells me you are a renowned soldier," she went on—"that you fought in—"

"Bemis is a silly old braggart!" I interrupted crossly. "The only time when my fighting might have been of service to you, I stood idly at the rail here and watched you. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do. Had I known you then I think I should have risked swimming out for a chance at that masked fellow."

Yes, it was a silly speech. I know that. But I think she liked it.

"Tell me," I went on, "if it isn't an impertinence to ask it—is there any one who would have had an object in kidnaping you?"

"Why, no," she answered, puzzled.

"Because," I resumed, "that is the only way I can explain the masked officer's action. Both boats were going at full speed. He tried to snatch you out of your own into his as the two passed each other. What sense would there have been in his capturing a mere boy? Either he acted insanely and risked his life by doing it, or else he recognized you and had some tremendously strong reason for wanting to carry you off."

"I—I never thought of that," she murmured, half to herself, the perplexity in her fair face deepening. "But—why, it's impossible! No one would have any such reason. At least—" She paused for the remotest space, then repeated quickly: "No one!"

"Perhaps not," I admitted, still unconvinced. "Nevertheless, it was a queer freak for a pirate captain to—"

"He was not a pirate captain," she contradicted—"not a pirate at all."

"Not a pirate? But—"

"A pirate or any other man who followed the sea would be tanned. His hands would be rough and brown. That man's hands were as white as a woman's and as well formed as—as yours."

I looked up quickly, suspecting a joke. But she had not even intended a compliment. For, noting my glance, she went on:

"The typical hands of an aristocrat. Such shape is the result of many centuries' heredity—the result of having other people do all one's manual work."

"My father," said I, "was a gentleman farmer in New Jersey. My grandfather was a pioneer in the new land. Both worked hard. The theory does not hold good."

"No one but a man of old French blood has such hands," she insisted; "and no one not of French ancestry could speak French as you speak it. But to return to the 'pirate'—"

"The pirate who was not a pirate?" I suggested, more impressed with her ideas of the mysterious man than I cared to show. "That certainly complicates the matter. What would such a man as

you describe be doing in apparent authority aboard a privateer or pirate craft, cruising in the southern seas—unless, perhaps, he is a refugee aristocrat of France who has turned to piracy for a living?"

"If he had turned to such a means of livelihood he would be tanned," she asserted; "yet his hands were white. That means the constant wearing of gloves—not usual among pirates, I should think. And, from the glimpse I had of his forehead where the mask ended, that was white, too."

"But what sort of a freak could have led him to—" I began.

"Then, too," she broke in, more excitedly, "he had not the figure of a sailor. He was tall, and slenderly though strongly built, and had the carriage of a gentleman. Tell me, do pirates usually go masked?. No one else in his boat was."

"I never heard of such a case," said I. "I would like to get at the bottom of the mystery. It means much to me."

"But why?" she asked.

"If this man, or any other, is pursuing you or seeks your harm, I want to stand between you and him. I want," I added, carried on by hot impulse—"I want the *right* to protect you. Do you understand me, Elise?"

Now, it was a fearsome thing in those days for a man to address a daughter of the *noblesse* by her Christian name. And I knew it quite well. Also, a suitor should have spoken to her father, not to herself. This also I knew.

Why did I then doubly transgress? I suppose because by heart and nature I am American, not French. I say that in boast, not excuse.

She made no answer, and I looked in vain for some sign from her averted face. To a French girl, reared in the ultra-sheltered fashion that she had been, my words must have seemed a million times more glaringly unconventional than American women can understand.

Small wonder her head was turned away and that the tiny portion of her cheek still visible to me should have flushed so deep a rose color! My only marvel was that she did not leave me on the instant and go straight to her father for protection.

Yet she did not. And I took her staying as a good omen.

Nevertheless, her first start of frightened surprise brought me to my senses—not only as to the proper treatment of a sheltered French girl confided by her father to my escort, but also to a realization of my own position.

While I was fairly well-to-do, according to our rural New Jersey standards, still I was a mere gentleman farmer of no wealth or station. As such I knew myself no fit match for the daughter of a French noble who owned vast Barbados plantations and had the bearing and traditions of a great family name. This, too, was the view M. de Perier was certain to take.

Yet I, who had never till this hour realized that I loved the girl, had plunged—American fashion—into something very like a proposal of marriage. I had smashed Gallic convention, and—had she chosen to take my words so—had committed a mortal offense.

Then a hope cut across my chagrin. Was I not on my way to Paris to claim the splendid fortune and title of the Vicomte de Chevreuse? With that affair satisfactorily settled, I should be in a position to beg the hand of any woman alive.

So when I spoke again it was less ardently, but with a thrill that must have robbed my words of their formal primness.

"*Mademoiselle,*" I began, "I ask your pardon for speaking as though you were an American lass of my own station. What I said I had no right, as matters now stand, to say. The next month or so will make or mar my fortune. In the latter case you shall see me no more. In the former, I shall seek out your father and beg of him what I now dare not ask. When that time comes—"

I paused. She had turned toward me again. And in her flushed face so much was written! But what the emotion stamped there might be I had not the courage to guess.

Perhaps it might be anger, or contempt, or impatience, or pity, that softened those big gray eyes to a wondrous light and set the lovely face aglow.

Perhaps—but I, who had faced Corn-

wallis's regiments without fear, lacked the daring to read her face as I wished to. I could not stand a rebuff—and what else had I a right to expect? I know so idiotically little of women.

Her lips parted. Before she could speak, Shadrach Bemis had joined us.

"Maybe you folks think it's fun for a white man to herd all by himself on a ship," quoth he. "Old Pitou speaks what he thinks is English, but he can't get any one else to believe it. An' all the rest jabber French at me. Lord! Why can't folks learn to speak some civilized language when they first begin to talk? An' you two—the only folks I can chin with—you two walk up and down together, chatterin' French like the worst of 'em. So I couldn't stand it no more by an' by, and I makes bold to jine right in with you. D'you mind?"

"Not at all," said Elise in her pretty, accented English, quite herself again, while I was still confused and angry at the interruption. "Come and walk with us, M. Bemis. So you're lonely on shipboard?"

"Well, I wouldn't hardly say that, miss," he replied. "Only sometimes I can't help thinkin' of what I heard a feller read once in a book. Somethin' about a man on shipboard bein' like a man in jail, with the extry danger of gittin' drowned. I heard Andy Jackson say, down in Nashville once, that—"

"Elise!"

It was M. de Perier's querulous voice. He had risen from his chair, and was signaling his daughter to come to him. Refusing our escort, she ran lightly across the deck to where the old man awaited her.

"Jest as I knew he would!" chuckled Shadrach.

"What do you mean?" I asked crossly.

"Why, the old wool-head don't like his darter talkin' to the likes of me," explained Bemis, with cheerful irreverence for M. de Perier's snowy locks. "I don't talk his lingo, but I notice he always kinder shooes her off when he sees me with her. Thinks I ain't quite in the high-nob class, I reckon, an' not proper company for his gal. So I jined you two on the chance he'd call her off."

"Why did you do such a wretched thing as that?" I asked with more indignation than the case perhaps called for. "What business was it of yours to—"

"I wanted to speak to you alone an' in a hurry," he replied colossally, unmoved by my wrath. "There's trouble."

"Mutiny?" I queried in quick alarm.

"No. Worse, I'm thinkin'."

"Speak out then, can't you?"

"Son," Shadrach went on with a gentle severity, "you're a good boy in your way, but you have a nasty habit of tryin' to hurry people that want to take their own time. I jest nacher'ly *hate* to be hurried. One of these days you'll hustle me too hard, an' then I'll do to you like I done to a Britisher that thought he could chase me down at Norfolk jest 'cause he had a musket with him an' I hadn't. I ran away from him, reel obligin'. It's always good policy to run away from a loaded gun. But he made me run too fast for sech hot weather. So by an' by I got peevish an' turned all of a sudden on him. An' what do you s'pose happened then?"

"He probably scalped you," I suggested maliciously. "If not, he must have been the only one, according to your stories, who—"

"That'll do," cut in Bemis in cold dignity. "When it comes to jeerin' at a feller man's phys'cal infirmities, it's time to draw the line. D'you want to hear my views or don't you?"

"I'm sorry, old man," I said, stretching out my hand. "Go ahead, won't you, please?"

Quite mollified, Bemis shifted his quid of tobacco and, sitting down beside me, began:

"In the fust place, we passed a westbound bark from France about two o'clock this mornin'. Did you know that?"

"No. I was asleep. Did—?"

"None of us other passengers did, I reckon. But she 'spoke' us, an' we hove to while they sent across a boat for a confab. She'd just left France three days ago. She had news. Lots of it."

"How did you find out all this?"

"When I told Miss What's-Her-Name just now that no one spoke Eng-

lish here, I told a kind of white lie. D'you know Peer?"

"Pierre, the cockswain?"

"Yep. Him an' me struck up an acquaintance t'other day when I licked him for laughin' at my bald spot. That trouncin' sort of endeared me to Peer, I reckon. For ever since then he hangs around me, tryin' to make friends. He speaks pretty fair English. Worked on a Britisher packet a couple of years once. He don't get more'n one word in two so bad I can't understand him."

"And it was he who told you about the French bark?"

"Half an hour ago. It seems the law-shark that wrote to you was puttin' money on the wrong card."

"What do you mean?"

"A while ago there was some sort of pow-wow between old King Looey an' his lovin' people, an' they came near agreein' not to chase him around no more. That must 'a' been when your friend wrote to you. Since then, Peer says, there's been terrible ructions in Paris. Them same lovin' people took Looey an' cut his head off."

"The king guillotined?" I gasped. "They dared—"

"Measly sort of trick to play on him, wa'n't it?" agreed Bemis. "But that's what the bark folks told Cap'n Pitou last night. King's dead, queen's in jail; an' merry hallelujah's runnin' riot all over the place. This rev'lootion is actin' up pretty petulant. They've cut off all the 'ristocrats' heads they could find an' now they've begun on each other, with a stray batch of nobility thrown in now an' then for good measure. Paris is about as safe just now, from all Peer tells me, as a caveful of rattlesnakes.

I sat dumbly listening to his recital. If what he said was true—and it was hardly to be doubted—my air-castles were about to tumble about my ears.

This was scarcely a propitious time to go to Paris and demand an inherited title of nobility. My own head would not be over-safe, my chances of success barely one in a thousand. I must await quieter days.

Then came the thought of Elise de Perier. She—with no stronger escort than her feeble old father—was venturing into that lion's den.

I was about to carry her the tidings I had just heard and counsel her father to take passage back to Barbados on the next outgoing ship. Whatever their mission in Paris might be, they must not venture there now.

But, on the moment, I remembered what she had told me. She and her father had sailed for France in the belief that the revolution was still rife. Both had said that such knowledge could not deter them; that their mission was a matter of principle which must come before thoughts of life itself.

No, they would go on, whatever I might tell them. And I—I would go, too. Where Elise Perier led I would follow, were it to the foot of the guillotine itself.

Nor should I prove myself less courageous than she. Since my one hope of winning her lay in my establishing claim to the De Chevreuse title and estates, I would take that chance, even if death should cog the dice against me.

"Shadrach," I said, after a short silence, "I must go on. I'm going to play the game down to the very last card. But when we reach Calais *you* can get passage back. You can—"

"Son," interrupted Bemis, "if I go on I run into a rev'lootion. If I go back I run into a d'vorce. I've lived through one rev'lootion an' maybe I can live through another. But a d'vorce is something I ain't up to tacklin'. I'm goin' on with you!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE TERROR.

WE had been in Paris nearly a fortnight. I had taken rooms for Shadrach and myself on an upper floor of a quiet little hotel in the Rue St. Honoré. On my advice, M. de Perier had engaged a suite in the same hostelry for Elise and himself.

I had gone at once to the office of the Chevreuse advocate, only to find he was absent in Touraine. As he was expected back within a few weeks and as his present whereabouts were somewhat in doubt, I had resolved to await him in Paris rather than waste time on a wild goose chase through southern France.

I was in almost a daze during my first week in the French capital. The gay, sordid, magnificent, misery-checkered Paris of my boyhood days was gone. The formal courtesy, the contrasting splendor and raggedness of dress, the Old-World charm—all were fled.

In their place, surging streets; a mob no longer servile, but supreme; strange placards everywhere; on nearly all faces a look of ferocity or of panic fear. No man was "*Monsieur.*" To use that term was to incur suspicion of aristocratic leanings. Every one was "Citizen," from duke to pickpocket.

And this was Paris! To me it seemed like some stately marquise masquerading as an insane, drunken rag-picker. The king was dead. The "Terror" was king.

To Shadrach the whole affair was charmingly entertaining. He would wander for hours, alone, through the maze of the dangerous underworld; always returning safe and elated. Thanks to his woodsman's instinct, he already knew his way about Paris almost as well as I.

The volatile mob, too, had learned to know him. His lank, gigantic, buckskinned, coon-capped figure, his rifle, hunting knife, and rough, fearless bearing all delighted them. He was hailed admiringly wherever he went as "*Le Grand Sauvage.*" He was looked on as the typical American—the race France in those days loved and was loved by.

To-day Bemis and I were standing on the hotel balcony, outside the grand salon, some twenty feet above the street. From wall to wall the thoroughfare was choked with the rabble. A spectacle was on view. For, along the center of the roadway rattled the tumbrels, laden with victims on their way to the near-by "Place de la Guillotine" (later mockingly renamed "Place de la Concorde").

A file of soldiers, in blue coats, white trousers, and tri-color cockade hats, would force a way through the mob for the rumbling, creaky carts with their loads of the condemned. And as each fresh party of victims rolled past, the crowd would break forth anew into that terrible hymn of theirs. Truly, I exaggerated little when I compared them to wild beasts at feeding time!

"You were wrong in one thing, son," Shadrach remarked. "You said we was puttin' our heads in the lion's mouth by comin' here. Now, I'll grant you these folks seem some peevish toward their own feller countrymen. But they act reel cordial to me when I go out. I guess you got scared for nothin'!"

"I hope so," I answered. "They're no more dangerous to us than a tiger to a fawn he has not yet discovered. But I wish I could persuade M. de Perier to get away."

"You wouldn't have any int'rest, I s'pose," observed Bemis, "in his darter's bein' safer. Only the old man you think of, hey?"

He dug his elbow into my ribs and chuckled in a peculiarly irritating way.

"There, there!" he laughed, noting my annoyance. "Don't you care, I ain't blind an' I can see as fur through a stun wall as the best of 'em. She's a fine, sweet-spoken gal. Have you popped yet?"

"What?"

"Have you asked her to be Mrs. Jack Braith? If you ain't you've been wastin' a whole lot of time."

"I'll trouble you to leave my private matters alone," I said stiffly. "It is not good form to speak of a woman in that—"

"Never mind all that," he broke in, "an' don't take offense where none's meant. Nobody asked you to jine forces with me if you didn't like my 'form.' Our 'form' *ain't* alike. That's a fact. You wear tight pants and brass button coat and two weskits an' a fob and a sword an' a glass an' a neckcloth that'd choke most folks. An' you comb that long, yaller hair of your'n. You're what they call a macaroni or a fop, I guess.

"I dress as nater' meant folks should. But I was a good enough man to save you from bein' rode down an' sabered at Cowpens, an' I reckon I'm good enough to talk to you like I want to now."

I laughed. One couldn't stay angry at Shadrach.

"That's all right," he said, his sulks gone. "An' now, tell me why you don't marry her."

"For one thing," I replied, "because I'm not in her station. For another, I'm not rich. For a third, there's no reason to think she would accept me. Those are

the only obstacles I can think of just now."

"This business of station and cash is beyond me," answered Shadrach, "but I haven't spent my life studying trails and the sign language without recognizin' a gal in love when I see one. An' if Miss Elise ain't pretty near ready to drop into the basket when you shake the tree, then I—"

A rustle of skirts from the room behind checked him, and Elise de Perier stepped out on the balcony. She looked very fresh and lovely in her white muslin dress.

I set a chair for her at the rear of the little space where, sheltered by the iron trellis, she could look out, unseen from the street below.

"I am waiting for my father," said she. "He has ordered a cab, and sent me down here to let him know when it arrives. But no carriage could make its way through such a crowd to the door of the hotel."

"The crowd will thin out soon," I told her. "The last of the carts will be passing in a minute or two. Then the street will be passable again. In the meantime, Shadrach and I—"

I checked myself and glanced about. Bemis had vanished. I now recalled that he had done the same thing several times lately when he, Elise, and I had been left together alone. I understood, at last, his kindly motive.

"I don't know," said Elise, "why I look at sights like that in the street down there. Heaven knows, it is not from morbid curiosity. I feel as if each of those poor, bound creatures in the tumbrels might be a personal friend of my own. It's horrible! *Horrible!*"

She shuddered as she spoke. A louder shout than usual from the crowd made her glance involuntarily downward.

My gaze was riveted to her face. I saw it suddenly blanch and the big eyes distend in some quick emotion—whether of dread or of mere astonishment I could not determine. For, almost at once, she regained control of her features.

I shifted my glance at once to the crowd, to find what face or other sight could have thus shocked her. But in that sea of red caps, waving arms, and flushed, distorted countenances, I could single out none that seemed especially different from the rest.

"Something startled you!" I hazarded. "What was it?"

"It was—" She paused, laughed in a forced, mirthless fashion, and added: "Nothing!"

"Won't you tell me?" I begged.

"It's absurd," she said shyly; "but all at once I *felt* some one was looking at me intently. I glanced up. There was only one little patch of space—where that iron ornament has been broken off the balcony rail—from which I could be seen from the street. So I looked through it."

"Well?"

"It commanded a view of at least a dozen men and women on the opposite walk. One of them was just turning away as I saw him. So his face was invisible to me. But—"

"But *what?*" I asked, as she stopped again.

"My nerves must be a little shaken by all the tumult and tragedy about us, I think," she said, hesitating. "Perhaps that was why—just for an instant—his pose and figure brought back all in a flash a vision of that masked man of the privateer ship. It's silly, of course. And it *couldn't* be the same man. And he no doubt looked at me just from idle curiosity."

She spoke fast, excusing her weakness as might a child. It went to my heart to see her so distressed. I rose and leaned far over the balcony, scanning the street.

"He's gone!" she hastened to say. "He moved away at once."

"You shall not be annoyed by him or by any one else!" I declared. "It is unsafe for you to go abroad in a hired cab with no other escort than M. de Perier. When you go out to-day, won't you let Shadrach or myself come along? We will not intrude, nor—"

"You are very good," she replied, now quite mistress of herself again, "but we are in no danger. What object could any one have in harming us? I am ashamed that my nerves were so shaken just now. I'm not *really* a coward—honestly, I'm not."

I remembered her shot at the masked man, her serene calm in this city of horrors, and I answered:

"You are the bravest girl I ever knew. Just the same, I should feel easier if you would let me keep near you whenever you stir from the house. Is it too much to ask if your mission in Paris will be accomplished soon?"

"I can't tell," she answered. "We have made no progress thus far. But today we hope—"

Now I had understood why she had vetoed my suggestion to accompany her. And a vague curiosity as to their mission's nature assailed me.

Whatever it might be, she and her father were risking life for it. And I, who loved her, was not allowed even to share her peril.

We had turned away from the street and were looking at each other now.

"And your own errand here?" she queried.

"No progress, nor strong chance of it," I told her gloomily enough, adding: "It means everything to me."

"I am sorry," she said softly.

"It means love, happiness—a future of sunlight," I went on. "Without it my life is not worth the living."

I saw she remembered our talk on shipboard, for again her cheek was dyed a deeper red.

"Now that you know all it means to me, *mademoiselle,*" I continued, "do you wish me good fortune in it?"

I hung breathless on the answer that would tell me whether or not she returned my love. She, too, knew what her answer must mean. But her eyes met mine bravely. Then, drowning her first word, came the deafening roar of the crowd's awful song again.

The last cart was passing. The throng, falling in behind, followed it, singing, to the place of execution. Their din echoed and reechoed between the narrow walls, obliterating the girl's soft-breathed answer.

I drew closer and repeated my question. My heart hammered wildly, and my throat felt curiously tight.

I was a novice at this game of love. I am told some can play it as coolly as tennis. I was not one of these.

But my question was scarce half-voiced when an attendant appeared in the doorway of the balcony.

"Citizeness," he reported, in the queer phraseology of the day, "your father, Citizen Perier, bids me say he is waiting for you in the *fiacre,* on the street in front of the hotel."

With a little exclamation, Elise was on her feet.

"How thoughtless of me!" she cried. "I hope I have not kept him waiting long. I certainly understood that it was here on the balcony he was to meet me."

With a hasty *au revoir,* she snatched up her traveling-cloak and was gone. I, looking down into the street once more, saw a cab drawn up before the hotel. I had not noted its approach. On the box sat a frowzy, unshaven driver. A *commissionnaire* held the door of the vehicle partly open, awaiting its second passenger's arrival.

A moment later Elise darted out of the hotel, crossed the narrow pavement, and hastily approached the cab. The *commissionnaire,* with a scant curtsy—for which, in the olden days, he would have been flogged—caught her elbow as she drew near, half-lifted, half-supported her into the dark depths of the hack, and slammed its door behind her with decided haste.

The driver, before the door was fairly shut, set off at a rickety gallop. I had scarce time to note what even then struck me as an an odd fact: that the *fiacre's* curtains were drawn down.

Still, on second thought, I did not marvel at this. It was not a period when pretty girls of rank, accompanied by weak old men, drove in public behind raised curtains.

Even as I turned away, the cab was out of sight. So was the *commissionnaire.* I started to reenter the salon. At the very doorway I collided with a man. It was M. de Perier..

"Pardon, *m'sieur,*" he said, stepping back, "I came in search of my daughter. She was to meet me out there on the balcony. I have been over-long, for the latch of my room door became somehow broken, and I could not get out. So —what is the matter?" he broke off, noting my stare of horror.

"Elise—Mlle. de Perier!" I croaked, hoarse with dread. "She — she has gone!"

"Gone?" he echoed querulously. "Where?"

"Heaven knows!" groaned I. "She is kidnaped—stolen! She was taken away in a *fiacre!*"

CHAPTER V.

ON THE PARIS TRAIL.

"GONE!"

M. de Perier repeated the word once more, dully. His old face seemed to shrivel, his lean body to hover on collapse.

Pityingly, yet with excitement I could not wholly suppress, I laid a hand on his shoulder, and spoke very calmly and simply as to a stupid child.

"M. de Perier," said I, "Mlle. Elise was told just now that you awaited her in the *fiacre*. I saw her run out to the vehicle. A *commissionnaire* helped her roughly into it and the driver galloped off. He was out of sight inside of a minute. Perhaps you can explain this?"

But he only shook his head feebly. All at once his legs gave way and he slid half senseless into a chair.

And there I left him. Clearly, no clue, no help of any sort could be wrung from the senile wreck of a man. The first great shock had crushed him. If Elise were to be found it must be I, not her father, who should undertake the well-nigh hopeless task.

By this time I was out of the hotel, hatless, and running full speed in the direction whence Elise's cab had vanished. My mind was in sickening turmoil. I could not make head nor tail of the business.

In the very last year of the enlightened eighteenth century, it was well-nigh incredible that a girl should be thus kidnaped in broad daylight. Yet I could make nothing else of it.

Elise had certainly been told her father was in the cab. As she approached the rickety old vehicle, *some one* (whom in the gloom of its interior she must have mistaken for M. de Perier) had been awaiting her there. Otherwise, on learning she had been tricked, she would have sprung out again and raised some alarm.

And at what this thought called up I ground my teeth in helpless fury as I ran. I could picture the rough hand that had checked her cry of surprise, the rude arm that had prevented her from leaping out to safety. And again I recalled those ominously closed curtains.

The plot had been well and simply devised and cleverly carried out. The cabman on the box, the *commissionaire* who had hustled her into the carriage—yes, even, no doubt, the hotel attendant who brought her the false message—all were in the scheme. And how many more, I did not know.

I marveled at this. For, in those days, the guillotine stood unpleasantly ready for malefactors as well as for political victims.

Who could have framed the plot—and why? What object could any one—

I thought suddenly of the masked man on the privateer and of Elise's fancy that she had seen him again that day in the crowd. But this conjecture only plunged me the deeper into confused uncertainty. Meantime, at every second, the dainty, sheltered maiden I loved was being borne farther and farther away from me—and whither and to what?

Meantime I had been rushing along the half-deserted Rue St. Honoré, following the line taken by the cab. Now I came to the corner where it had turned into the wider boulevard. There my clue failed. The cab had turned to the right. But into which of the several branching streets?

The proverbial needle in the haystack was as a lodestar compared with my present quest. Yet I did not pause. I dashed at full speed around the corner to the right, whither the *fiacre* had gone as it left the Rue St. Honoré.

So fast and so blindly was I running that I collided violently with three men who were coming up the boulevard from the opposite direction. Before I could check myself I had struck full against the man nearest the curb and had sent him flying into the muddy gutter.

He was a large, stout fellow, clad gaily in the uniform of a colonel of the National Guard. Rain had fallen that day and the streets of Paris were one vast, sticky puddle. Into this same puddle rolled the gaudily clad colonel, collecting more clinging mud than could any professional scavenger in double the time.

But with a nimbleness remarkable in

so huge a man, he was on his feet and, with an oath, had whipped out his sword before I could stammer forth an apology and hasten on in my fruitless quest.

With a howl of rage the bespattered colonel rushed at me. I had barely scope to flash my own weapon from the scabbard and guard his first fiery thrust when he was upon me.

There was no time to argue, to explain. The officer was mad with chagrin and bent on wreaking vengeance upon the cause of his misfortune. Indeed, I had need of all my skill as a fencer to save myself from his lightning attack.

But we had scarce engaged again after his initial lunge when one of the two others hurled himself between us, beating down our swords with his walking stick.

"*Sacré bleu,* Carré!" cried the peacemaker, half angry, half laughing. "Look who it is you are trying to kill!"

"What do I care?" roared the colonel, scarlet with fury, as he struggled to pass the other to get at me. "He ruined my uniform. He—"

"But look who it is!" insisted the first speaker.

The colonel blinked at me out of his red, near-sighted eyes. Then, his anger changing to sullen resignation, he saluted and sheathed his sword.

Utterly at a loss to understand this swift change of affairs, I mutely followed his example.

"You were likely to fall into trouble, my good Carré," went on the peacemaker. Next time be more careful how you draw sword in the public streets. There is a wider, sharper blade than yours over yonder," jerking his thumb toward the Place de la Guillotine, "and it has a way of punishing those who attack the republic's officials. Besides, he apologized. I heard him."

"It is of no moment whether he apologized or not," observed the third of the trio, speaking for the first time and in a high-pitched, dry, precise voice, "you are at fault, Citizen Carré, for allowing your temper to blind you. As is he for running the streets in this drunken state. As a lover of all that is highest in man I feel shame for you both."

I had thought the prim words and falsetto utterance would have raised a laugh. But, instead, both the others listened with marked respect.

Wondering, I glanced at the speaker sidewise through the tangle of hair that had fallen over my eyes during the wild run.

I saw a man, perhaps thirty-five years old, thin, of a greenish, jaundiced, parchment-like complexion, and with the big luminous eyes of a mystic. He was dressed in the very extreme of fashion and wore his hair in a powdered queue. But for the strong, harsh face I should have taken him for a Paris dandy of the most ridiculous type.

"I—I ask pardon, Citizen Robespierre," faltered the colonel, fidgeting like a guilty schoolboy.

Muttering something apologetic under my breath I bowed low and hurried on, leaving the trio so hastily that they had no chance to call me back.

What did it all mean? That they mistook me in the early twilight for some acquaintance of their own I had gathered from the talk. My face, flushed from running and half covered by my long fair hair, that had become disarranged in my flight, had probably resembled that of some official of the republic.

And to this same tumbled aspect I doubtless owed the rebuke for drunkenness wherewith Robespierre had favored me.

It had given me more than a slight thrill, through all my worry and mad haste, to come thus face to face with the great Maximilien Robespierre. He was the most talked-of man in France even then, and was already mounting fast to the zenith of his brief, meteoric career.

It was but recently he had been elected to the famous—or infamous—committee of public safety, that dread body which swayed the nation and turned loose the Terror, like some fearful beast, on its enemies.

Dapper, eccentric, half mystic, half demagogue, wholly incorruptible in an age of corruption and boundlessly popular with the mob, Robespierre had just begun to stamp his name in crimson letters on history's face. Glad enough I was that I had met him as a supposed friend, not as victim-foe.

My delay had robbed me of the last frail chance of tracking Elise. Though I ran from street to street for an hour, like some coursing dog — seeking, inquiring, bribing — even consulting the police bureau, I could find no sign of her nor of the cab that had carried her off.

Footsore, ill with the horror and despair of it all, I retraced my steps at last toward our hotel. I fell to cursing myself for my idiotic, aimless hurry. Had I waited to summon Shadrach Bemis before setting off on that wild-goose chase, his half-miraculous instinct for picking up a trail might perhaps have availed something.

I dimly remembered seeing him lolling on a sofa in the salon as M. de Perier had accosted me. But now I sought him in vain. From top to bottom I searched the hotel, inquiring of servant after servant. Yet with no success.

M. de Perier, so I learned, had recovered from his swoon and had hurried to the prefect of police, to set the law in motion in his daughter's behalf—a thing I myself had done during my useless hunt an hour earlier.

But of Bemis nothing had been seen. And my worry changed to petty anger against the gaunt old trapper. As the moments went by, my wrath grew the hotter and more unreasoning.

There is nothing so trying as forced inaction in time of heart-stress. And Bemis, as well as any other, served as scapegoat for my temper.

As I tramped up and down the hotel foyer, the trapper strolled unconcernedly in through the great doorway, mopping the perspiration from his bald forehead and grinning benignly on every one.

I ran up to him.

"Mlle. de Perier has been kidnaped!" I exclaimed.

"Do tell!" he replied calmly. "Got any terbacker? I lost my pouch an'—"

"You idiot!" I blazed out, gripping his arm. "Mlle. de Perier is gone. She—"

"So you said, 'son,'" he returned; "an' you needn't holler it at me, nor yet pinch my arm off like you was a measly grizzly. I've been out—"

"Out gaping at the executions and enjoying the crowd's delight at your clownish self, I suppose," I snarled. "While I needed your help to—"

"Son," he said sadly, "you act more an' more peevish the older you get. Honest, it almost riles me to hear you talk so paltry. Be ca'm, can't you? I—"

I turned away in furious despair. Everywhere I was balked. Not a soul could I rely on for help.

And out there, somewhere in the dark murderous night, my beautiful love was held captive! Oh, the anguish of it all!

I had little hope from the police prefect. If, as I surmised, those who had taken Elise away were powerful in the government, the suborned police would give scant aid toward her recovery.

And I, who would have died for her, was powerless. Worse than powerless. A weak old man and an ignorant, vainglorious backwoodsman were my only allies.

Nevertheless, I had the grace to feel shame for my boyish outburst. I dug my nails into the flesh of my palms and fought for self-mastery. I gained control of myself by a mighty effort and walked out to the street to recommence my hopeless search.

But Bemis caught up with me on the threshold.

"Now, if you're more like a grown man again an' less like a frettin' brat," said he gently, "I'll go on with what I was tellin' you. I've been out. On the trail. The Paris trail. Lookin' for this Miss Elise of your'n."

"Looking for her?" I shouted, wild again. "Did you find any trace of—"

"Why, son," he answered, hurt in his self-esteem, "what a fool question! Any *trace,* eh? Why, I found *her!*"

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW MYSTERY.

For a moment I could scarcely believe I had heard aright. I stood staring doubtingly into Shadrach's lean, stolid face. Bemis went on as quietly as though describing a deer-chase:

"When I heard what you said to the old man, I knowed there wasn't any use

wastin' time in slappin' my forehead an' askin', 'Can sech things be?' So I lights out."

"Well?" I demanded eagerly, as he ceased to speak.

"Why, then," he resumed, "I found her."

"But *how*, man? And where? And where is she now? Is she safe? Is—"

"Son, I've only got one mouth," remonstrated Shadrach, "an' it's built so I answer only one question at a time. Where'll I begin in that long string of—"

"Is she safe?"

"Sure. If she wasn't I wouldn't be here."

"You brought her back with you?"

"No. Couldn't."

"But where is she, then?"

"I dunno."

"But," I cried, at a loss, my heart again sinking, "you said—"

"I said I'd found her, and she seems all right fer the time. That's the best I could do. So I came back to you for further orders."

"But if you don't know where she is—"

"I don't know the name of the place, but—"

"On what street? Is it in Paris? Where—"

"I dunno. But I can lead you there easy enough. Come on, if you're in such a thunderin' hurry."

He set forth at a swift pace, I at his heels. Passing through the Rue St. Honoré, he turned to the right at the point where I had collided with the National Guard colonel. He followed the boulevard for a hundred yards, made a détour, doubled, crossed the lower end of the Place de la Guillotine, and so came at last to the Pont Neuf, which he proceeded to cross.

"You took a roundabout way to the bridge," I commented, coming alongside him as we crossed above the river.

"So did her cab," he answered; "I follered it."

Reaching the Boulevard St. Germain, he crossed it obliquely, and we entered the network of mean streets known as the Latin Quarter.

"Tell me how you found her?" I asked as we strode along.

"She went in a cab, I gathered from what she told you when she came out on that balcony. An' she was waitin' for her father. When the old man showed up after she'd gone, an' I got a look at your face, I saw what was wrong. So I follered."

"But how? In a city like Paris—"

"In a city like Paris," he mimicked, "it's ten times as easy as in the Everglades. The carts had just passed through. While they was goin', there was no chance for a cab. The cab came just after they went. So it was the first cab in the street after the carts. An' it stopped at the hotel door. An' the streets was all mud from the rain. Why, son, a Cherokee baby could 'a' follered that trail."

"But after it turned into the crowded boulevard—"

"By that time I'd studied the wheel-marks enough to know its tracks in a thousand. Loose left-hand hind-tire. Made a blur mark as it shook, in goin' fast. Cracked right-hand hind-tire. Crack as plain in the mud as a piece of printin'. I could 'a' follered it in th' dark. It was too easy to brag about."

And, to his woodsman instinct, it must indeed have been so. The deep mud, of course, had helped; but, none the less, I still look on Shadrach's trailing feat as remarkable.

"Follered it more'n three miles," he continued. "Streets got wider. Fewer houses. I came out on a big house in grounds. Just in time to see the cab rattle off from the gate, a hundred yards ahead."

"Was she still in it?"

"No one aboard but the driver?"

"You could see inside?"

"No. But the springs was up straight. If there'd been even a hundred pounds' weight in the wagon, them rickety old springs would 'a' been bent."

"What sort of looking house—"

"Had a cross an' a statoo over the gate. Convent. I've seen lots of 'em here. That's how I knowed she was safe. So I came back for you."

A *convent!* Why should kidnapers take her to such a place? The whole thing grew more and more puzzling. And I plodded along by Shadrach's side, musing hopelessly over the tangle.

At last we came out into the suburbs, and there loomed up before us the black bulk of a building, standing back in its own grounds, which were enshrouded in thick shrubbery.

"Thar it is," announced Bemis in gentle triumph.

And now I saw where we were. For I recognized the old Convent of Our Lady of Montmartre. I knew its history. I had also heard of the use to which the republic had put it since the fall of the monarchy.

It was now not only the abode of pious nuns, but a sort of semiprison for women of rank or importance suspected of political misdeeds. Not for flagrant cases calling for the guillotine, but a place of detention—subject to the will of the revolution's chiefs—for witnesses, suspects of the milder kind, and others deemed best incarcerated for minor causes.

Here it was that Elise de Perier was lodged. But by whom and for what cause? She might as well have been in the Conciergerie or La Force, thought I, for all the chance I had of rescuing her. Yet I had not come thus far only to turn back without at least an attempt to set her free.

So, without actual plan, I hurried on to the gate, Bemis beside me, and tugged at the great bell-handle. A jangling peal woke the stillness of the courtyard. A moment later a lay sister, accompanied by a little boy, shuffled across the inner yard and thrust open the wicket loop-hole.

"I wish to see the abbess at once!" I said with what authority I could muster.

It was the day of much sudden authority, and disobedience to such was not always prudent. Yet the lay sister demurred while deliberating the matter over in her mind.

"What is your business with the Mother Abbess?" she quavered doubtingly, after a slight pause.

"It is for *her* ear alone!" I replied haughtily. "And it brooks no delay. Admit me at once."

By the light of the gate-lamp the woman eyed me closely. But my dress, which by this time was once more in order, seemed to assure her I was a person of consequence. She seemed, in fact, almost to recognize me. So, after another mumbling pause, she unbarred the portal and let me in.

"Wait here for me," I whispered to Bemis. "If I'm not out in a half-hour, go back to M. de Perier and report. The *maître d'hôtel* will interpret for you."

"If you ain't back in that time, I'll come in an' find out what ails you," he retorted grimly.

I followed the woman and boy across the wide yard, up the steps, and into a dim-lit reception-room off the main hall. There the lay sister left me to my own sad reflections.

From somewhere in the distant recesses of the building came the muffled chanting of nuns in chapel. Then this died away, and I was alone in a silence as deep and cold as that of the cheerless tomb.

What I intended to do, I did not know. Force was out of the question. I had hazy ideas of an appeal to the abbess's heart, and, if that should fail, by adroit questioning I could learn something which might lead to a clue concerning the mystery.

None could have realized better than I how unlikely was success. Yet, it was my one chance. And to feel that I was even in the same house with Elise filled me with a certain illogical, if not animating, elation.

Presently light steps echoed down the corridor. I rose to my feet and stood, waiting.

Through the gloom a woman came toward me. She was tall and stately, pale of face, and of a calm dignity. This much I could discern through the dim light. But the one small lamp that hung in the reception-room was high above our heads, and left our faces in shadow.

The abbess entered and paused. I bowed in silence, uncertain how best to open the interview. But it was she who spoke first.

And, of all the words on earth, those she uttered were the last I should have expected to hear. Commonplace as they were, they left me both dumfounded and amazed.

(To be continued.)

GLASS—CUT AND BROKEN.

By ROBERT CARLTON BROWN.

A department-store experience which was first pitiable, then astonishing, and finally unpleasant.

MY wife was too busy to get the present. So she delegated me to the task. It was to be a piece of cut glass of a certain pattern for her mother's birthday.

Her instructions were exact. She handed me a little olive dish and explained:

"Get a water-bottle of that pattern. All of mother's cut glass is of the same design, and remember the evils of substitution. Nothing will do but an exact match for this."

So I slipped the dish into my pocket and started out.

I went to a big department store near the office. There I found the cut-glass department, slipped the dish from my pocket, handed it to the saleswoman, and asked:

"Can you match that design in a water-bottle?"

She looked dubious.

"Just a moment," was her reply, "I'll ask the head saleswoman if we have it. I think this pattern is old and isn't on the market any more."

I stood waiting, and to pass the time inspected a large table of handsome cut-ware along the center of the aisle.

My attention was suddenly diverted by the advent of a curious couple. Evidently they were foreigners.

The man had a nervous, erratic way of jumping about. He seemed to be in a hurry. His companion was quite an unusual looking woman, French, I was sure.

They bustled up to the table and the woman stood near me, looking at the glass, while the man asked a clerk for the linen department. Receiving his direction he took the woman by the arm and started off at an energetic pace.

Just at that moment there was a crash. In turning from the table the lady had knocked off a piece of cut glass. It lay on the floor in a hundred fragments.

The man looked back quickly. A floor-walker cried to him. The Frenchman turned with a frightened glance, and, jerking his companion by the arm, started on. It was clearly evident to me that he saw what had happened and knew that his wife was responsible.

The floor-walker rushed up to him and touched him on the shoulder. The man started to argue. They returned to the table from which the glass had been knocked. I still stood there, watching.

"Ze gentleman zere. He did it!" cried the Frenchman, suddenly, turning on me, and pointing an accusing finger.

I flushed. The man's nerve appalled me. To think that he would try by such underhanded means to shift the blame.

I took a firm stand and told the floor-walker that I had seen the woman knock it down. She did not deny it, but the man was firm in his assertion that I was to blame.

The floor-walker stood in doubt.

"Well," he decided, "this thing has got to be paid for, and one of you two is responsible. I'll hold you both for it if neither of you will own up."

I was indignant and burst forth in my statement of what I had seen, declaring that I would pay nothing.

Just then the clerk who had gone to find out about my piece of glass came up.

"I saw the lady knock it down," she volunteered.

The woman blushed, and did not deny it.

Suddenly the Frenchman turned toward her with an angry gesture.

"Well, if you broke it, you pay for it," he cried.

Clearly he was her husband. The woman winced, wavered for a moment, and then opened her pocketbook. She pulled out two twenty-dollar bills, carefully pinned together.

"Ze money was to go on ze piano, you

know, Robespierre," she said, with a sad touch in her voice.

"It was your own fault; you pay," he snapped.

I felt sorry for the woman. Her husband was such an inhuman sort of devil. I never saw a "tighter" man in my life.

"What was this piece worth?" the floor-walker asked a clerk.

"Six dollars."

With that the man in authority took one of the twenty-dollar bills, wrote out a slip, pulled out his wallet and counted fourteen dollars into the woman's hand.

"It is outrage!" fumed the little Frenchman, as he saw the six dollars pinned to the ticket. "Ze barbarous American practise. I was going to buy ze linen here. I go elsewhere."

With that he gave a toss to his head, jerked the woman by the arm, and they started off in that same excitable way I had noted from the first.

"Sorry, sir," said the clerk, "I find that we can't match this in a water-bottle. In fact, this particular design has not been in stock for two years."

I took back my olive dish, thanked the woman for her trouble, and returned to my office.

I telephoned my wife the result. She was insistent.

"You must get it," were her words. "I've had my heart set on giving her that, and nothing else will do."

So I started out for another department store.

As I approached the cut-glass counter I saw three or four clerks and a floor-walker gathered around, talking together.

"And he made her pay for it. The tight-wad!" cried one of the clerks, as I came up.

"He didn't seem very polite for a Frenchman," remarked another.

I pricked up my ears.

"Look! They just got into the elevator," exclaimed the floor-walker. "He's still jawing her."

I cast a quick glance toward the elevator, and, to my boundless surprise, I saw the French couple just disappearing. Could it be that the woman had broken another piece in this second store?

"What is it all about?" I asked one of the clerks, as the little group broke up.

"Why," she explained, with a smile, "a foreign couple just came through here. The man asked me for the linen department and just as he was going on, as I had directed him, the woman with him—his wife, I suppose—knocked down a piece of cut glass from the edge of the table. He became very angry when the floor-walker insisted on payment, and at last he gave in. But the brute made his wife pay for it.

"She handed over the last bill in her pocketbook, saying that now she could never get the piano, and almost crying. She accused him of having taken the change from her other bill, and he retorted something about her awkwardness in breaking another piece of glass this morning."

"What was the piece worth?" I asked.

"Only about four dollars and when she gave the floor-walker the only bill she had, he handed back sixteen dollars change, and that Frenchman grabbed it away from his wife, crying: 'You go without ze piano for your carelessness.' The woman wept, and they hurried off. He was still lecturing her when they got into the elevator."

I felt very sorry for that poor Frenchwoman. She was so beautiful and good, and that husband of hers was such a fiend. I could not get the thing off my mind.

Then I forgot my pity for the unfortunate woman as I recalled my own plight and the search for the water-bottle of particular design.

Handing out my olive dish, I said:

"Can you match this in a water-bottle? I want the same design."

After examining the thing for a few moments the clerk looked up.

"No," she said. "We haven't had that in stock for some time. But I think there is just a chance you can get this pattern across the street, at Smith's. I know they handled it six months ago, but this line is being closed out everywhere."

I thanked her and quickly crossed over to Smith's.

As I drew up with several people at the cut-glass department, to my surprise I saw the French couple questioning a clerk.

"Where is ze linen department?" I just caught the man's now familiar question.

He was directed there and, taking his wife by the arm, they started off. Just as she left the table against which she had been leaning I was startled by a resounding crash and looked over just in time to see that the lady had knocked a cut-glass water-bottle from the edge of the table. It lay on the floor in hopeless pieces.

It seemed incredible. This was the third time I had seen this careless lady knock off a choice bit of glassware.

The pair glanced back for a second and then hurried on, trying to lose themselves in the crowd. But a clerk stopped them and held them until a floor-walker came up.

Several people gathered to see the excitement, and I was among them.

"You'll have to pay for that. It's worth eight dollars," the floor-walker was saying, as he led the couple back to the table.

"But she did not knock eet down. Eet fell off," protested the little Frenchman hotly.

The thing had become funny to me. To think that a graceful, beautiful woman like the one before me could be so awkward. Three pieces of glass in one morning. It was astounding.

I suppressed a laugh and, to keep from exploding at the absurdity of it all, I turned to a quiet man next to me, and said, in a low voice:

"Funny thing! That's the third time this morning I've seen that woman knock down a cut-glass dish."

"Is that so?" he commented. "Where were the other two places?"

I told him, and we edged in nearer to hear the hot dispute.

"Well, eef she did break eet, she pay!" cried the Frenchman.

"But, Robespierre," faltered the woman. "I cannot. I haf no money. I was going to buy ze piano, but ze money ees in your pocket."

Again I felt a great pity for the poor woman.

The Frenchman cast an angry look around the little gathering, to find somebody else that he could accuse, I imagined. Suddenly he sighted me.

He gave a start. Then he looked down with an awkward stare. Evidently he was put out at my seeing him twice in such a ridiculous position.

Then, abruptly, he plunged his hand into a deep pocket and brought up a wallet.

"I pay you," he cried, "but I will not patronize you. My wife, she suffer for thees. She awkward, like a cow."

He unsnapped the wallet slowly, skinned off a twenty-dollar bill and handed it to the floor-walker.

The latter started to make change, when suddenly the quiet man beside me pushed himself forward.

"Just a minute, Perkins!" he said.

The man who had taken the bill from the Frenchman evidently recognized the quiet man and stepped toward him. I hoped that he was going to intercede for leniency toward the poor woman, influenced perhaps by what I told him.

But instead of that he reached out, took the twenty-dollar bill from the floor-walker and held it to the light.

I glanced quicky toward the Frenchman. He had turned pale and was slipping toward the edge of the crowd.

"Catch that man!" cried the quiet man, as he reached out and placed a restraining hand on the shoulder of the woman, who would have followed her husband.

"That's a neat counterfeit," continued the man who had stood beside me, as he looked at the bill, and addressed the pair of nervous foreigners. "But that game doesn't go in this store. It's a new one and mighty clever, but I've got the goods on you."

Then it came to me like a flash. The French pair were crooks. The woman had knocked off the pieces of glass on purpose, so that the bils could be passed without suspicion. She had played her part well, and so had the man.

I hastily figured what money they had made that morning to my knowledge. There was sixteen dollars profit on the first bill passed, fourteen on the next, there would have been twelve on this had they not been caught. Then I understood how they could afford to break the articles, and why it paid them to act so cleverly.

By this time a policeman had been

summoned and the thieves were led off. As the crowd dispersed I suddenly remembered my errand. But I had a curiosity still about the quiet man at my side, in whom I had confided.

Going up to the floor-walker I asked:

"Who was that gentleman that found the bill was a counterfeit and knew that those two were working a shrewd game?"

"Why, that's the house detective," he replied.

Having recovered from my surprise I hunted up a clerk, produced my olive dish and asked her if she could match it.

"Yes, I believe I can," was her reply.

With that she took up the piece and began looking over the table.

"We had one here, I'm pretty sure. Unless it's been sold this morning."

I helped her look, while she explained that they were just closing out the stock in this variety, and had but one piece left of the kind that I wanted.

Suddenly she looked down at the floor. The pieces of the article the woman had knocked off still lay there.

The clerk glanced up at me and exclaimed:

"What a shame! The one water-bottle we had left in that pattern was the one that woman knocked off. I don't believe you can get another in the city."

I had felt a momentary pang of regret that I had caused the arrest of the pretty Frenchwoman. But now I was glad! To think that she should have picked out to break the one article in the whole town that I wanted!

The Name of Martin Hoffman.

By STEPHEN BRANDISH,

Author of "Gordon's Getaway," "When Suspicion Struck Hard," "At the Mercy of the Unseen."

The astounding experience of a business man who thought all his troubles were over just as he was on the eve of the greatest calamity in his career.

CHAPTER I.

THREE DAYS AFTER TO-MORROW.

OVER the long line of plate-glass store-front that extended along five numbers of the street, stretched the sign which announced the presence within of the Galpin Manufacturing and Stamping Company. Further lettering, in smaller type, gave one to understand that the company was prepared to furnish anything in its line from a soup-kettle to a galvanized ash-can.

Entering and walking to the rear of the store, one encountered, among others, a heavy ground-glass door bearing the device: "Secretary and Treasurer."

The door was closed tight this afternoon and locked on the inside.

At the big desk by the window sat a man of a little less than forty. There were papers on that desk, and telegrams and books and printed forms galore.

There were letters and memoranda and sheets full of figures — and, more than all, there was gloom!

It was no mere chance gloom, this— no temporary melancholia caused by a minor business reverse or an annoying commercial twist. It was gloom in its fullest sense, and the man's head was bowed before it as his forehead rested on his hands, and his dull, tired eyes stared at the chaos of papers before him.

Hope was gone! That was the beginning and the end of the whole proposition. The last expedient had been used — and had failed. And now the old Galpin concern was ready to— The man started up at the sound of a knock, and for the briefest instant his eyes lighted.

He hurried to the door and turned back the key, and a man of nearly seventy shuffled in and dropped, uninvited, into a chair.

A momentary exchange of glances was enough. The occupant of the office laughed bitterly, and returned to his chair with:

"Well, I perceive that you've seen them, Stound?"

"I saw Mr. Ridgkin himself, Mr. Hoffman," said the septuagenarian. "He wouldn't do anything at all, sir."

"Wouldn't extend the notes even for thirty days?"

"He said they didn't feel justified in extending them even for the three days of grace the law allows, Mr. Hoffman."

"Then, thank God, the law's good to us for once," snapped the treasurer. "He can't help himself for the three days, at least. And a devil of a lot of good they'll do us!" he concluded savagely.

The old man crossed his legs with a sighing groan that went very well with the general air of depression.

"I'll tell you precisely all he said, sir," he went on slowly. "I'll tell you just exactly the excuses he gave me, and—"

Hoffman turned on him with something like a growl, and for a minute his teeth were fairly bared.

"Stound!" he snapped. "I don't want to hear it. The mere fact that we don't get the extension is merriment enough for one afternoon. I don't want to know anything about the garnishings."

He stopped at the querulous indignation in the old face.

"Oh, I don't mean to be abrupt, Stound, especially to you. I know that you've spent fifty years with the house to my twenty, and that you've more interest in the business and all that sort of thing. But the whole blasted affair's on my shoulders now, and basic facts are enough for the present."

The old lips pursed under the beard. Hoffman went over and laid a hand on the old general manager's shoulder.

"And thank you for going up and seeing Ridgkin, Stound. I'm sorry you couldn't do anything with him; but I know if mortal could have accomplished anything, you could."

The old man rose and bowed.

"Thank — you," he said huskily. "I'll get back to my office again now—Mr. Hoffman."

He shuffled out—and something very like a tear trickled down Hoffman's cheek.

"The poor old cuss!" he muttered as he dropped into his chair again. "Fifty years in the one joint, and now there's hardly a chance of his spending more than fifty hours here! I— Bah!"

His head dropped into his hands once more, and the black pall seemed to gather over the office again. Now and then the head wagged dismally; now and then a groan came forth.

Once or twice a little shriek of sheer rage burst from the man at the desk; and as rapidly was conquered and choked back into the infinite murk of melancholy whence it issued.

An hour passed. The sun worked around and fell upon the ancient clock in the corner, ticking along with the same monotonous click that had fallen upon the ears of the long-dead John Galpin fifty-five years ago, when the establishment was a little, unpretentious affair, and the clang of hand-riveters and the smell of soldering acids were as much a part of the office atmosphere as the desk itself.

Well, it was over! That tiny statement covered everything. Four days more and—the knock was going again, and Hoffman started up and shouted a savage:

"Come in!"

A boy, apologetic and puzzled of expression, entered the office with a card.

"The gentleman says he wishes to see you personally at once, sir."

Hoffman studied the pasteboard with a scowl.

"Mr. Theobald Thomas!" he breathed. His head came up then. "Tell Mr. Theobald Thomas I don't know him and I haven't time to see him."

"But he said—"

"I don't care what he said."

"He said that he was a friend of old Mr. Galpin, sir—the first Mr. Galpin—and that his business was important."

"Well—" Hoffman snapped his fingers. "Oh, send him in, Harry. And," he added to the clock, "if it's some relic trying to borrow money, you'll have the job of sending him out again inside of fifteen seconds, and—"

The treasurer sat up rather abruptly. Evidently Mr. Thomas had been near at hand, for he was facing a tall and portly man of perhaps seventy, ruddy-cheeked and broad-chested.

Nor did he look quite like the expect-

ed pensioner, for his long coat and automobile-cap, coupled with gloves and goggles and the distant chugging of a motor, hardly suggested extreme poverty.

He studied Hoffman with keen blue eyes for a minute. He shut the door then and locked it and brought a chair to the side of the treasurer's desk.

"My name is Thomas," he said without preface. "You're Martin Hoffman?"

"That is my name."

"Treasurer of the Galpin Company?"

"I am."

The visitor leaned back and laughed richly.

"And you don't remember me?"

"I can't say that I do," Hoffman responded colorlessly.

"Well, I remember you, my boy, in the days when old John was alive and making things warm around here. I remember you first as a lean youngster in his first long pants, with shaggy hair and a wise look and a desk over in the far corner there. Eh?"

"I was certainly there — something over twenty years ago." The treasurer smiled faintly.

The older man's chin dropped to his chest, and his under lip was thrust out for a little in a meditative smile. He returned from the past rather suddenly then, and straightened up with a look that was businesslike in the extreme.

"This concern's in trouble, Hoffman!" he observed.

"Yes?" The treasurer stiffened.

"Bosh!" The visitor snapped his fingers. "Don't put on that frigid air, boy! I'm a friend of the house, to put it mildly. I was the silent partner over half a century ago when it was 'Galpin & Co., Tinware.' I laid the foundation of a fortune here—and it was a good foundation, I can tell you. Come! Tell me precisely what is wrong."

Hoffman stiffened further, and his smile was distinctly perfunctory.

"Whatever the circumstances, Mr. Thomas," he said, "I think you will realize that it is impossible for me to discuss the business of this firm with a practical stranger."

"Then—" There was a little frown. "See here, Hoffman! Tom Stound's here still, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Send for him."

In a little bewilderment Hoffman pressed a button at his side. Perhaps half a minute passed when the door opened again and the old general manager entered.

It was a brief, dramatic instant in which the treasurer had no part. The two old men stared at each other. Thomas came out of his chair, and Stound stumbled forward uncertainly—and they were all but in each other's arms, babbling and laughing and chattering and shaking hands and talking together.

The stranger was the first to recover himself, and he turned to Hoffman with a smile.

"Stound seems to know me, at least!" he observed.

"Know you, sir! Good gracious! Know you, Mr. Thomas! I—"

"Wait, Tom! Do you believe I'm a friend of this concern—that I'm entitled to its confidences?"

"Good Lord, sir, there ain't another in the country better entitled to 'em! Well I remember the time—"

The visitor laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Well, that'll do for the minute, Tom. I wanted to establish my identity with Mr. Hoffman here—that was all. I'll see you a little later, I think."

There was another long handshake, and the general manager departed to his own domain. Thomas settled himself once more in his chair and grinned at Hoffman.

"Tell me the whole trouble—the real trouble!" he said flatly. "What the deuce's the matter with this outfit I don't know. I haven't been around here much in the last fifteen years, since young Richard Galpin took charge," he ended pleasantly, "because Dick's as big an ass as his father was a business man. *Now!*"

"And how do you know that there is anything the matter with the outfit?"

"Simply because it's the talk of the hardware trade that either you or the Dalton Stamping Company is going out of business this month," said the visitor

lucidly. "Go on. I may help you. I *will* help you if the firm isn't beyond help!"

"Mr. Thomas," said the treasurer almost breathlessly, "is that *straight?*"

"It's straighter than any arrow you ever saw!"

The secretary and treasurer leaned back and shut his lips in thought for a moment.

"The trouble can be put into a very few words," he said. "Mr. Galpin has been in Europe for nearly a year and—"

"Have you sent for him?"

"I cabled yesterday. He sails to-day. The business has been altogether on my shoulders. I have power of attorney to act for Mr. Galpin in everything. Indeed, I am at present the entire company so far as business dealings are concerned."

"Ah?"

"We've had competition in the last ten months — murdering competition — the kind that's worse than cutting throats. Of course, the Dalton Company has been the only serious proposition—"

"And?"

"And they've cut everything so low and pressed us so hard that three months ago I was absolutely forced to borrow a large sum of money for the first time in the history of the concern."

"And the sum was?"

"Four hundred thousand dollars, Mr. Thomas!" said Hoffman coolly. "And we couldn't have kept up with a cent less."

"Great Almighty!" the visitor gasped. "And John and I started up here on two thousand."

"Since which times have changed and business grown," the treasurer said.

"You're right, I suppose." Mr. Thomas recovered from the shock. "Well?"

"We've nearly three hundred thousand outstanding in bills — the money stringency caused that. The rest I reckoned on making up fully on increased trade. The Dalton people have been giving away goods and donating an automobile with every contract—and to make a very long story very short, the notes fall due to-morrow and we can't meet them."

"Not even with your days of grace?"

"Not even with a month of grace!"

"Certain?" queried Mr. Thomas.

"Absolutely," said Hoffman wearily. "You've tried to negotiate another loan to meet this one?"

"Without any success whatever."

"People afraid of the business?"

"Not at all. Money's too tight to get a quarter of what we need."

"Who did you borrow from?"

"The Ridgkin banks."

"Won't they extend the notes?"

"Not under any conditions."

Mr. Thomas nodded sagely and sat back for all of five minutes, while Hoffman watched him with a rather weary interest and prepared to listen politely to whatever regrets he might express.

But suddenly Mr. Hoffman was electrified, for the visitor was saying softly:

"I'm going to lend this house four hundred thousand dollars. Hoffman!"

"What!"

"These Dalton people are also on their last legs, aren't they?"

"Yes! But—"

"And if you had a free hand with that four hundred thousand for four months, say, you could put 'em out of business?"

"I don't think there's a doubt in the world."

"Me, neither!" Mr. Thomas agreed with utter disregard for grammar as he rose. "All right. I'll be here to-morrow at ten in the morning with checks for the money. You can sign notes to me. I'll hand you the cash. You can pay off Ridgkin and be happy. Eh?"

"Do you mean—" Hoffman gasped.

"As a general rule, young man, I say what I mean. Ten o'clock to-morrow morning, Hoffman, and be sure to be here. You're pretty essential just now, it appears. Good afternoon."

"But—"

A hand was shaking that of the treasurer.

Also, as he observed presently, the door had closed, and he was alone.

For some five minutes he sat motionless. Then he pressed the button beside him, and the general manager entered.

"Er—Stound!" said Hoffman with some difficulty. "Was that—that man a millionaire or a lunatic?"

"A millionaire? God bless us, sir! Mr. Thomas is nearer a billionaire, I hear! He—"

The treasurer of the Galpin Company was out of his chair; he had gripped the old man and was waltzing him around the office as he chanted:

"Then—Holy Moses!—Stound! The old concern's saved! The company isn't going to fail! As soon as I've signed my name to some notes to-morrow morning—whooo!"

CHAPTER II.

THE PREMIUM OF CORRUPTION.

CALM came presently.

Hoffman released the aged manager, and the latter dropped breathlessly into a chair; and there was a dazed smile upon his wrinkled and bearded countenance as he stared at the wide-eyed treasurer of the company.

"Did he—did he say, sir—"

"He said he was coming around here to-morrow morning with four hundred thousand cold plunks out of his own particular storage warehouse, to take up those notes of ours and carry them himself for a few months longer on his own account, Stound!"

"But—"

"Blast the buts!" Hoffman cried. "There aren't any buts! It'll carry us over, won't it?"

"There's every chance in the world, sir," responded the manager gravely. "I don't think the Dalton people can last for another month at this rate. They've been borrowing very heavily, and they'll have to pay off this month or fail, from all I understand."

"And does that far-reaching wisdom of yours happen to include the knowledge as to whether they're able to pay?"

The old man's eyes twinkled.

"From what I hear, Mr. Hoffman, they have as much chance of paying their debts as we had an hour back!" he said.

He chuckled softly, and his chuckle found echo in Hoffman's low laugh.

For a time they sat there in silence; until at last the old man rose, chuckling still. For an instant he paused, his merriment reflected in Hoffman's own face; then he gave an almost airy wave of the hand and disappeared toward his own part of the establishment—and the treasurer of the company abandoned all thought of work and propped his heels upon the desk and fell into a day-dream that was all high lights and pink roses!

They were saved!

Yes, they were actually saved. An hour ago, absolute and certain ruin had seemed as sure as death itself. A day or two more, and the ancient house would have had to close its doors for good—and the Dalton concern would have skipped blithely after its business and secured it.

And after that, on the strength of their own operations they would have been more than able to secure an extension of their own loans; and in a year the Galpin Company would have been no more than a memory!

And now! Ah, now! Now the tables were turned altogether. To-morrow morning Hoffman would affix his name, as sole power in the company at present, to several notes, and the good old business would jog on just as serenely; and the Dalton people would shut up shop and hand over their trade as well.

It was great! It was more than great! It was so big and so glorious and so lovely all around that Hoffman could have stood on his head and cheered.

Just the signing of his name to a document or two! Just his name!

The idea impressed him suddenly. Dummy treasurer though he might be, owner of no more than half a dozen shares of stock at present, he was, nevertheless, the whole power just now.

The thought thrilled him. In the exhilarating reaction that followed so many weeks of gloom and depression, he half contemplated calling in Stound and shouting it at him. His spirits found more private vent in hurling the letter-file at the big iron press in the corner; and Hoffman thrust a handkerchief into his mouth and yelled almost noiselessly.

A little time however, and he settled down again as the conservative business man and turned to his desk.

There were letters to be answered, and he would answer them—in a somewhat different fashion than he had contemplated a little while back. Instead of qualified statements he was capable

now of making definite ones, and plenty of them. He'd have Graham in and dictate such a collection of letters as had not come from the house in many weeks, and—

Graham entered unexpectedly.

"There's a gentleman, sir, to see you."

"What?"

"A gentleman. He wouldn't send in his name."

"Who is he?"

"I never saw him before, sir. He insists on seeing you, though."

Hoffman laughed aloud.

"Does he? All right. Send him in, Graham."

The stenograher stepped out, wondering rather at the change in his chief, and there followed a moment or two of waiting while Hoffman beamed at the closed door and wondered whether the newcomer contemplated making him a present of diamonds.

The door opened then, with Graham in the background, and a dapper individual entered briskly.

He was immaculate in the extreme, from his shining shoes to his shining silk hat. The latter he placed upon Hoffman's desk as he drew a chair to its side and sat down with:

"Mr. Hoffman?"

"Yes."

The stranger nodded happily, and drew off his spotless gloves. His shaven mouth expanded in a benevolent smile as he observed:

"Wonderful afternoon, isn't it, Mr. Hoffman?"

"More than that!" said the treasurer sincerely.

"For this time of year," continued the visitor, "I've never seen anything like it!" He glanced around the office. "Cozy little den you've got here!"

"It'll do," laughed the owner of the den cheerfully — and yet with a little wonder as to the mission that had brought this biped sunbeam to him.

He was a salesman, probably, and a genial bore. As a rule, Hoffman would have choked him off before now. This time, however—

"How's business?" asked the stranger.

"Elegant! Couldn't be better."

"Straight goods?"

"Everything you get here is straight goods, my friend!" responded the treasurer patiently.

"I imagined all you people in this line were pretty hard pressed just now," the stranger observed.

"You've got a mighty poor imagination!" observed Hoffman heartily.

The stranger's smile faded in a somewhat curious fashion. He sat back and studied the treasurer pensively—and, at last, he crossed his legs and sighed.

His head tilted a little to one side, and a sour smile came over his lips as he remarked:

"All of which seems to point to the fact that I was dead right, and this senile old relic of a Thomas had agreed to carry you through the trouble!"

"*What!*"

"Punk!" said the visitor elegantly. "I'm wise to the whole game!"

For a moment Hoffman stared; then his face hardened.

"See here, young man," he began sharply. "I—"

"Hold on!" The visitor leaned forward and regarded the treasurer closely. "Don't tell me there's a door there, and all that rot. I know that, too. Hoffman, it *is* so, isn't it?"

"If you'll leave your name and address I'll drop you a postal-card when I'm ready to discuss the business of this company with any fool that drifts in!"

"Wholly right and justifiable except as to the fool part," the stranger replied easily. "My name's Gulick. Ever hear of me?"

"Never. And I—"

"Don't want to again? Quite right. All the samey," went on Mr. Gulick, "I've blown in here to put a little spare change in your pocket, Hoffman."

"And thanking you kindly, I don't need it at present; and if you'll be good enough to get out of here—"

"Never chase out a man with spare change to hand you, Hoffman," the visitor proceeded calmly. "Bosh!"

He pulled his chair nearer to that of the treasurer, and his face grew earnest in the extreme.

"Hoffman, I know this whole game as well as you do. I'm going to prove it. You're in a bad hole here. You were on your last legs until this aged Mr. Thomas, who was once connected with the firm,

came in a little while ago and offered to help things through. Hence the unwonted geniality of my reception. What?"

There seemed to be no reply. The visitor continued:

"Now, that's all right. It's nice. It's lovely. Essentially, as you understand matters, it puts the Dalton people out of business, and leaves the Galpin outfit supreme. Young Galpin's on the other side attending to business in his usual fashion. You're here to look after matters, and you have them all on your own shoulders. You're going to put through this deal with Thomas."

He paused for breath. He also came still nearer the seat of authority in the Galpin Company.

"Now, suppose that things don't go as you expect them, even after you get the loan? Suppose that there should be such a load of money in the Dalton treasury that the Galpin Company was knocked off the face of the earth after all? There's a mighty good chance of it, Hoffman."

"On the contrary," said Hoffman swiftly, "you can go back and tell your Dalton people that there isn't a chance in the world of such a thing, and that—"

"But there *is!*" Mr. Gulick insisted placidly. "There's still a roaring good chance of it. And suppose that this firm goes out. Where'll you be? Out of a job, Hoffman! After that—well, you're near forty, and you're not experienced in any other line—"

"And now if you'll kindly get down to business before I decide to throw you out bodily?" the treasurer smiled savagely.

"*All right!*" The insolence in Mr. Gulick's tone grew suddenly as his legs recrossed. "Glad to hear you talk in that strain. Here! Your name is the only one that can go on those notes to Thomas, Hoffman. If you're not here you can't sign them. If you feel like disappearing from the face of the earth for a week, I'll pay you five thousand dollars in cash, here and now in advance."

The treasurer's breath left him for the moment. When it returned there was a marked flush on his cheeks.

"Straight down that aisle, outside, you'll find the street-door," he began. "You've got precisely three minutes to get through it with a whole skin."

Mr. Gulick rose and smiled broadly.

One hand went into his pocket and produced a roll of yellow bank-notes that might have been expected to choke the vulgar and proverbial cow!

"*Ten* thousand, Hoffman!" he observed.

The treasurer consulted his watch.

"Two minutes and a half!" he announced.

"Twelve thousand!"

"Two minutes!"

Mr. Gulick seemed almost bored. He filliped the roll gently as he squinted at the man with the watch.

"Well, you're a Tartar, Hoffman," he observed. "You go in for all the stage-settings and everything else, don't you, for your gallery plays? Fudge! If I was a profane person I'd make it stronger. As it is—merely, fudge! I—"

"One minute and a quarter!"

"I'll go the limit in that brief space," smiled the visitor. "Here's the whole blamed thing—fifteen thousand dollars! Now come with me and let me put you on a train! Quick!"

He tossed the huge roll to Hoffman's desk and thrust his hands in his trousers-pockets and grinned.

The treasurer pressed a button.

"There is only a little less than a minute left," he smiled coldly. "You'd better—"

"*Cut it out!*" The visitor snapped his fingers. "Drop that business and—"

He was interrupted by the entrance of a porter—a thoroughly large and capable porter who appeared fully competent to carry out a grand piano. Hoffman pocketed his watch and nodded:

"Time is up!" He turned to the person in the striped overalls. "William!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Pick up that roll of bills on my desk and put them in that person's pocket. That's right. Now kindly conduct the person to the street-door and kick him through it. If he should happen to resist on the way, use whatever means you choose, and I'll see you through any trouble he may make—so long as you're not gentle with him. That's all. Start!"

There was a momentary scrimmage.

Then a mighty hand had clutched Mr. Gulick's collar, and the immaculate gentleman was traveling streetward in leaps and bounds. There was a final slam as the door closed, and William sauntered, grinning, back to his own domain.

A thoughtful office-boy closed the door of the treasurer's den, and the treasurer himself propped his feet upon the desk and laughed aloud.

"Thus perish all traitors!" he cried at the clock. "The Dalton bunch is scared stiff and—hooray for old Thomas, anyway!"

CHAPTER III.

OTHER METHODS, AND A SHOCK.

For the rest of the afternoon there was correspondence.

It was great correspondence, too—a mass of letters filled with optimism and brisk business, and indicating the willingness of the Galpin Company to accept this or that or the other commission and carry it through at just such and such a time.

Graham, the stenographer, experienced a certain glorious relief on his own private account. For some three weeks he had watched his job fluttering and tottering like a leaf in the autumn winds, as he hammered out a mass of equivocal statements on his typewriter; now things seemed to have revived, and Graham scrawled cheerily a sufficient number of hieroglyphics to cover a dozen obelisks!

He left at last with his voluminous notes, and Hoffman locked the door and devoted the remainder of the short afternoon to roseate thought.

It was over! The crisis that he had considered certainly fatal was over before it was due! The old house was saved as surely as could be!

Yes, the old house was saved! That was the main part of it all. He—and almost all the employed force—could have secured other positions of value if the house failed; but the house was saved!

He gave over meditation at last and started for home, chest out and head erect—and the office employees heaved a sigh of relief.

Something good had happened. The cloud had lifted from the boss, and all was well; and five minutes after the door had closed behind him a whistled chorus of popular songs was shrilling through the establishment.

It was something of a stiff walk, that up-town journey, but Hoffman elected to walk it to-night.

Ordinarily, he would have made for the Subway, and cursed the crowd and anathematized the prospect of a lonely dinner at the apartment-hotel where he abode with his brother and his brother's wife.

Just now he bounded cheerily along to Broadway and up-town, and he found himself thinking tolerantly that he hoped Dick and his wife were having a thoroughly good time down South, and that when they came back a week from now they'd be greeted by some of the extremely good weather New York can give upon occasions.

The cross streets reeled off behind as if by magic. He passed out of the wholesale district and, as black night came down, he struck the stretch of incandescent thoroughfare that has gained the White Way fame.

He turned westward at last and hurried down the street and through a well-tended door into the light and warmth of the small hotel. He'd go up now and tidy himself a bit. He'd have a light dinner and an early bed—and to-morrow morning!

In his own cozy two rooms he sat down suddenly.

He was tired! He was rather more tired than he could remember at any other time in all his past life. His head ached maddeningly; his bones seemed to be twisting themselves out of their sockets; his muscles twinged with the aching pain of weariness.

The relax had come! He was forced suddenly to recognize it. The knowledge that to-morrow things were going to be absolutely all right, that the strain of the last few weeks was over, and that to-morrow life began anew for himself and his responsibilities; this knowledge was doing harm as well as good.

To move a limb was an effort. For half an hour Hoffman sat upon the edge of his couch and stared at the floor, dull and half unconscious.

He gave himself a mighty brace then, and dressed for dinner. It was an effort that brought an ache for every move, but he made it doggedly; and at last he descended to the dining-room.

Waiters have a way of knowing tastes. Hoffman's waiter, for example, without the sign of an order, brought him precisely the dinner he wished.

The treasurer of the Galpin Company ate mechanically, a hand pressed occasionally to his eyes or the back of his head. At the end he rose and shuffled back to the elevator with the single vision of cool and restful sheets and blankets floating before him.

He locked his door and groaned aloud. For the first time in his life he wished that he owned a valet.

He sank gruntingly to the couch, and put on his slippers. With a mighty effort he disposed of coat and collar and tie. With another he dragged the thick bath-robe out of the closet and, as he donned it, wondered why it seemed to weigh a thousand pounds to-night.

Rolled up warmly, he stretched out on the couch and closed his eyes; and his tired brain jingled along on its own particularly hazy train of muddled thoughts.

Thomas's four hundred thousand—sent direct from heaven! A brief blank. And that big Barnes order—that would amount to nearly ninety thousand dollars in itself, and they were half through it and now they could complete it; and old Barnes would no more think of letting a bill run over ten days, even if it happened to be a million dollars, and—another blank.

There was Kisley, too. There wouldn't be any difficulty about nailing that galvanized-ware order now that they were certain of putting it through at the right price. They . . . and then came another hazy space.

Out of the pink-fringed haze came a knocking.

Hoffman disregarded it altogether at first. It was something that had hung over from the office. But it seemed to be a persistent knocking; and at last, with a pull at himself, he sat up and called sleepily:

"Come in!"

A bell-boy poked in his head and started a little at the frowsy figure on the couch.

"Mr. Wellingford," he announced.

"*Who?*"

"Mr. George Wellingford."

Hoffman rolled back to his reclining position.

"Tell him to go to the deuce," he chuckled. "I don't know him."

"Well—" The bell-boy hesitated. "He said he was very sorry indeed, sir, to call at your home; but that his business was of an important personal nature, and he must see you to-night, if possible."

"*Personal* nature?" Hoffman sat up again.

"Yes, sir. He asked me most particularly to see you yourself, and give his message."

The treasurer hesitated. Then habit took the upper hand and, with almost a groan, he growled:

"All right. I presume that there's no rest for the wicked, Henry. Send the animal up."

Drowsily, he huddled back among the cushions and waited for some five minutes. He heard the elevator-door slam then, and he rubbed his eyes and smoothed his hair before another knock came.

The door opened—and Hoffman sat up and stared.

This, certainly, was a visitor of unexpected pretensions.

Beneath the silk-like shine of a sable-lined overcoat, evening clothes were revealed. The elegance, too, was upon a fitting person.

Perhaps sixty years of age, the visitor was portly and powerful and pompous. His shock of white hair matched his white side-whiskers perfectly; his round and ruddy face breathed conscious benevolence and virtue; his clear gray eyes were steady and firm, albeit a little too narrow.

And yet, somehow, he impressed the treasurer as of the alleged Sunday-school superintendent type. He seemed just a trifle too self-assured, just a trifle too perfect for mortal use—and Hoffman was shaking his hand and assisting him with the enviable coat and wondering who the dickens he was and why he had come.

The gentleman sat down with a smile that radiated good-will. He rubbed his plump white hands and fastened his eye upon the tired man with:

"I'm half sorry I came, Mr. Hoffman. You're fagged out. I can see that. I'll get right down to business, and then leave you in peace, eh?"

"Well—if you don't mind," smiled the treasurer.

"I don't. I assure you of that," the visitor chuckled pleasantly. "Mr. Hoffman, you're the treasurer of the Galpin Company, are you not—that is, you're *the* Mr. Hoffman I want to see?"

"I'm the treasurer."

"Exactly." The visitor rubbed his plump hands. "I looked you up in the directory, and I wasn't *quite* positive of the first name; but I felt pretty sure I was on the track of the right man. Ah!"

Hoffman nodded rather vaguely.

To be quite truthful, things seemed to be happening inside Hoffman's own head which he could not altogether understand. The racking ache was increased, and it appeared to be settling in his eyes.

Spots floated before them—a steady stream of formless, indefinable black particles which drizzled in unceasing lines from somewhere in the neighborhood of the ceiling and filtered into space in the direction of the floor.

He could place neither their origin nor the point where they disappeared; they were a quantity he had never encountered before, and they annoyed him exceedingly, and—

"Well, I, sir, am the vice-president of the Dalton Manufacturing outfit," the visitor was announcing.

"Oh!" Hoffman stiffened a little.

"I've come on an entirely peaceful and personal and conciliatory mission, despite any little business clashes our firms may have had," the purring voice went on. "I understand that an employee of ours, by name of Gulick, called upon you this afternoon?"

"He did," said Hoffman dryly.

"And that you—er—had him kicked out of the place?"

"I don't think he left of his own volition," the treasurer agreed.

A gloved fist came down upon an open palm with a resounding smash.

"Then I wish to say, sir," said Mr. Wellingford, "that you used precisely the right tactics. Personally, my only wish is that you had ordered Mr. Gulick kicked across the street."

"Eh?"

"Certainly, Mr. Hoffman." The tone grew even more earnest. "Mr. Gulick took a very great deal upon his own hands. Being intimately connected with one of our executives, he conceived the plan which he proposed to you, and Mr.—er—the gentleman I refer to, gave him permission, in a moment of weakness, to try it upon you. I may say, sir, that he regretted it almost immediately and sought to stop this Gulick. Further, I may add that Mr. Gulick, on his return, severed his connection with the Dalton Company by the decision of its officers."

"Really?" Hoffman spoke rather in a haze. The spots were fairly pouring down past his eyes now, and his head was pounding and banging almost beyond endurance. "I — I'm sorry for Gulick."

"Well, I'm not, sir," said the visitor heartily. "Our house, like your own, endeavors to do business on strictly straightforward and fearless lines, without any underhand work of any nature. This is not Gulick's first trick of the kind, but it is assuredly his last with us. Therefore, sir" — he arose slowly and held out his hand frankly—"I've come to ask your pardon in the name of the Daltons, and I hope most sincerely that it will be granted."

The treasurer all but gasped. One hand went to his eyes for a moment, for some malevolent force seemed to be pounding them with a red-hot hammer. It dropped then and went almost gropingly in search of Mr. Wellingford's, for temporarily things were somewhat dim in the room, and the vice-president seemed to have half a dozen hands.

Finding it at last, Hoffman shook it somewhat weakly.

"I'm sure — you're pardoned," murmured he uncertainly. "I'm very glad to know that the scheme didn't hail from headquarters."

"And I'm sure that when you think it over, you'll feel certain that it couldn't have hailed from our headquarters," laughed the large man.

He picked up his hat and cane and buttoned the top of his coat.

"Well, I'll leave you to rest now, Mr. Hoffman. Straight ahead to the elevator, isn't it? There, there! Sit still, my friend. I'll find it. Good night."

"Good night," said the treasurer weakly, as the spots whirled before him again in increasing volume. "I—er—good night."

The hazy figure was almost at the door. And then it had turned back for an instant with that infectious laugh and:

"Brilliant scheme of Gulick's, though, wasn't it—to buy you out of the way for a week and knock out the Thomas deal?"

"Very."

"By George! I believe that if I'd thought of it myself, I'd have tried it, all things notwithstanding," chuckled the elder man. "But I'd have made the bait bigger."

He chuckled afresh as he turned to Hoffman; and suddenly, despite the haze and the spots and the pain, the treasurer saw the broad face broaden in a new roar of laughter as the visitor said, with a little note of excitement in his voice:

"See here, Hoffman. This evening it became necessary for a man to pay me twenty-five thousand dollars in cash. If you'll take it and a week's vacation, without communicating with the Galpin Company in any way, shape, or form, I'll make you a present of it here and now. It's—*there!*"

Before the treasurer's rapidly failing eyes a huge roll of money floated suddenly. His head swam wildly.

Was this—this paragon of virtue who had come to apologize—was this individual trying to bribe him on a larger scale than Mr. Gulick? Was this—

A new thought shot into his tired brain. What could he do with twenty-five thousand dollars? What *couldn't* he do with it? He could set up, as he wished, in business for himself. With his own savings he could muster a full fifty thousand in cash for a starter. He could—

The thought was banished as quickly as it came. Following came a swirl of wild anger so overpowering that for the instant the whole room vanished as Hoffman rose to his feet and shouted:

"You infernal old hypocrite! You—ah!"

He dropped back suddenly as an exclamation came from Wellingford. *Where was Wellingford?*

Where, for the matter of that, were the lights and the tables and the chairs and the rug and the bookcases and everything else? Where was the door, or the windows and—

Where was everything?

For a long, terrible ten seconds Hoffman sat rigid in every muscle, his teeth shut and his hands clutched hard.

The fingers loosened then, and he felt about the couch wildly. And his eyes tried to follow them—and failed utterly. As concerned any report to the brain from the eyes, neither fingers nor couch existed.

And then, with a last, frantic rubbing at his aching orbs, realization came over Martin Hoffman and a wild little scream left him.

He was stone blind!

CHAPTER IV.

FROM BAD TO WORSE.

BLACKNESS had fallen! Right or left, before or behind, above or below, turn as he would, strain as he might at his eyes, there was nothing but blackness!

A second cry—and this time a yell of positive fright—came from the Galpin treasurer. He clutched frantically at the cushions and tried hard to regain his self-control.

Out of the limitless gloom Wellingford's voice issued, markedly startled, with:

"My dear Mr. Hoffman, are you—"

"Bah! Stop it! Don't talk to me!"

The words were fairly screamed. And as they left his lips, Hoffman grew limp for an instant and huddled down almost prostrate, trembling and stiffening, stiffening and trembling again, as a cold sweat broke out on his forehead.

His mastery of himself was gone.

He knew it now for a certain, terrible fact. The strain of the past months, endured, fought off from day to day; the sleepless nights and the racking hours of uncertain business transactions; the trials and the makeshifts which had kept

the Galpin Company alive; the hundred and one thousand pricking details—all of them together had returned to smite poor nature as represented in himself.

The sudden breaking of the strain, in the shape of the blessed Thomas, must have done it, but — the last vestige of sane thought seemed abruptly to depart, and Hoffman was on his feet, mouthing hysterical, incoherent nothings and feeling wildly about in space.

And there was nothing to feel—nothing to meet his hands. He was out—out somewhere among the planets, it seemed—out beyond human companionship! In the twinkling of an eye he had become distinctly a different being.

For he was blind!

Yes, blind! *Blind!*

Not one single, faintest detail of anything in the suite could be found by his aching eyes; not one familiar thing loomed up to greet him. He was as blind as a bat at noonday!

And then — things seemed to cease. In the filmiest way Hoffman knew that he was talking—nay, shouting. He was pouring forth words which had neither meaning nor connection. He was waving his hands and rushing about the apartment, and colliding with this and that and the other object.

There was a crash of breaking glass. He reeled back from it with a shriek and tore in the opposite direction. There was a stinging prod in his side. He must have met with the corner of the table; for he was roaring aloud now in pain and darting in another direction, hands outstretched before him.

The hands met warm skin and soft hair; and he knew that he must have struck Wellingford's face.

A violent rage possessed him on the instant. He screamed and struck out frantically. Out of the blackness some one grasped his wrists. He hurled himself loose with a demoniacal strength and struck out wildly—and nothing was there to be struck!

Snarling, he groped about in the room, ignoring the deep, meaningless voice that seemed to follow him everywhere with its absurd protestations. He found the wall and beat upon it wildly.

And then there seemed to follow another lapse, for Hoffman forgot suddenly that he was blind—forgot even that he was alive, as it appeared.

It was a long lapse—a lapse that carried him through ages. He seemed to float through it unresistingly for century upon century; until at last some one had his wrist again, and he was vaguely conscious that he was still stretched upon the couch, and that—he could not see!

The hand on his wrist was warm and soft. It relaxed after a little and left him, and a new, deep voice said:

"Undoubtedly, a case of extreme nervous prostration, with hysteria at the very mildest."

"Is he dangerous, doctor?" a vaguely familiar voice whispered.

The first tones lowered suddenly, so that they reached Hoffman's half-interested ears only as a hint of speech.

"That depends largely upon what you term dangerous, sir. In his present condition he is as likely to take me by the throat and try choking me as he is to break into tears or ask for a glass of water."

"But—"

The whispering trailed off into a long series of sibilant, meaningless sounds. As such it seemed to continue endlessly, while Hoffman heard with listless ears and was vaguely conscious that he groaned occasionally.

They were talking about him — or, perhaps, they were talking about some one else.

Certainly, it mattered very little, one way or the other.

He himself was going to sleep again; and he hoped that, blind or seeing, he would sleep until the judgment day itself, and awake rested at last. He would roll over now and—some one was raising him gently to a sitting position on the couch, and some one else was saying soothingly:

"Now, just drink this down, Mr. Hoffman."

"I—"

"Come, come, sir. Just gather yourself together a little—make an effort at controlling yourself, Mr. Hoffman. You know me—I'm Dr. Raffley. I treated you two or three years ago. Don't you remember?"

"I seem to—to—remember, but—"

"Then drink this down," the quiet

voice went on, much as if intended to calm an excited child. "You'll be a good deal quieter after a little, and then we'll talk things over and give you a first-class bullyragging on the subject of working yourself to death. Here it is. Now!"

Limply, the treasurer obeyed.

A cold—a gratefully cold—tasteless liquid was brought to his lips, and he gulped it down; and the powerful arm around him lowered him to the couch again, and a hand tucked a blanket about his throat.

He smiled faintly and relaxed again. Through his brain there was coursing a frantic impulse to shriek and struggle; but the rest impulse appeared to have the upper hand, and he remained limp and silent—and blind.

That blindness was the worst of it. In a minute or two, when he had regained a better grip on himself, he would ask the doctor about that—ask him what had caused it and how long it was going to last, or—or—

No, it couldn't be that. It couldn't last forever. It wasn't going to last forever. It was merely some freak of eyes overstrained and overworked; and in an hour or two they'd be in working order again, and he'd go to bed. And in the morning—

Ah, in the morning! Then he'd hurry down-town again and get ready for Thomas, and square matters for the company. And— Hoffman caught himself; he had almost dropped off to sleep in the middle of his meditations.

That comfortable sensation in the pit of his stomach seemed to be spreading rapidly to all his anatomy. The tired pains were relaxing under the magic of that glass of cold stuff; his headache was fast disappearing. And he was sleepy—sleepy beyond anything he had ever known before.

Indeed, he was so utterly sleepy that the blind eyes closed, and he tucked his hands under the covers and smiled a little; and then—

Voices again. More voices this time than there had been before, it seemed to Hoffman.

Well, what did it matter? There must be half a dozen men talking now somewhere out in that warm, comfortable space where he had taken up his abode. His brain, dulled, listened without interest to the low hum of words.

"Well, there doesn't seem to be any great difference of opinion among you gentlemen," said a low, sharp tone.

"On the contrary, I think that my colleagues agree with me perfectly," murmured Raffley. "It's a perfectly open-and-shut case, judge."

"Judge!" Judge—who? What was a judge doing here? Hoffman shook his head and smiled peacefully.

Beyond question, no judge was there; for plainly his apartments were not a court, and he owned no lights of the bench among his acquaintances. It was all a figment of his poor muddled brain, and—

"For my part, I concur absolutely with Raffley's diagnosis," remarked another new voice. "The condition of the eyeballs, the pulse, the whole history of the case—"

The words rumbled off into an indistinguishable muttering. They were replaced almost immediately by a high, thin voice, saying:

"And so far as I am concerned, judge, I can only agree perfectly with my friends here. It's one of those rather rare nervous cases in which a raw graduate could hardly mistake the marked symptoms."

The voice that seemed to hail from the "judge" laughed a little.

"Well, Dr. Cascard, I think that your opinion alone would be sufficient. Inasmuch, though, as you have two supporters so able, my course seems pretty clear. You have the papers, Dr. Raffley, have you not?"

"Yes. Fountain pen, your honor?"

"I have one, thank you," said the other voice.

There came another interval of stillness, broken, miles away, by the scratching of a pen, and now and then by a low murmur.

Hoffman listened without a trace of interest. He was comfortable and warm; and if a set of dream-demons wanted to hold a mock trial in his rooms, they were perfectly welcome to do so, so that they did not disturb him in the process.

Let them have their fun. If it kept them from him—but another voice was

talking aloud now; a strange, familiar deep voice that he seemed to have known in prehistoric times, and which said:

"I can conceive no harder action for a man to take with his own brother. However, since it must be, doctor, what place do you recommend?"

"Blatchford's," said an unhesitating voice. "There is nothing better in the country, Mr. Hoffman."

"Mr. Hoffman!" Was he, then, sitting there and talking with them? Did he merely imagine that he was stretched upon the couch and blind?

For an instant the treasurer's head whirled wildly; then peace came as swiftly—and a peace so overpowering that he settled himself anew and felt his senses going once more; and then—"

Out of a land of roseate dreams Martin Hoffman emerged once more, to find arms about him again.

Blindly, gropingly, he ascertained that he was sitting upright, and that a certain firm-toned individual was talking to him.

"The right foot, please."

"What?" Hoffman managed to wring from his dry throat.

"Just give me the right foot. I want to put on your shoes, you know."

"But I don't want my shoes on."

"Oh, yes, you do," the voice assured him. "Now, if—"

"Darn it! I tell you I don't want my shoes on," the treasurer rasped, his unreasoning irritation returning suddenly. "I—"

"But you do. The floors here are very cold, Martin, and—"

"See here! Who the devil are you, anyway?"

"I'm your brother, Martin," the voice choked.

"*What!*"

"Yes, old boy. Now, give me—that foot."

"But, I tell you, you're no brother of mine!" the treasurer screamed savagely. "I've got no brother with a voice like yours. I know that voice, but I can't place it. I—let go of me! Let go of me! *Let go of me!*"

For a dozen hands seemed to have seized him suddenly, and he had been forced back once more.

Panting, struggling purposelessly, he knew that he must have been talking wildly; he knew that he was being attacked, and in his own apartments, where he wanted to rest.

And somehow, all reason to the contrary, the idea possessed him that he must thrash them all, whoever they might be. He must conquer them and throw them and then get a doctor and find out what ailed his eyes, and after that get policemen and have this crowd properly attended to.

He went manfully about the task. He had the strange experience of feeling half a dozen men come out of the sightless gloom and throw themselves upon him bodily. Fight as he might, his arms were thrust up; something was being dragged around him. The arms were jerked down again—and he was perfectly rigid in a strait-jacket.

A long, wild yell of purely terrified rage came from his powerful throat—a yell that fairly rattled the walls.

"If you don't let me go—" he bellowed.

Over his open mouth a heavy hand fastened itself suddenly, and a strong, stern voice spoke rapidly into his ear:

"Hoffman, unless you want to make an infernal idiot of yourself and get your name into the yellow papers, stop that confounded nonsense."

"But—" the prostrate man gurgled thickly.

"Hush!"

One last, tremendous effort and the treasurer of the Galpin Company relaxed abruptly.

The weakness was on him again, and more markedly than before. The pains were returning swiftly, too; and he groaned before them as he sank down—and again, from a lately normal and strong man he seemed to have turned into a limp and blind and helpless wreck, only half conscious of what was occurring about him.

For certain things *were* occurring, and swiftly, too. Some one had raised him, and was thrusting his arms into what seemed his own thick ulster. He was being propped to his feet—and now he was erect, tottering and all but whimpering in his utter weakness.

Hands had him under the arms and were guiding him forward hastily. A

door closed behind him, and there came another wait.

Elevator cables sang whirringly in the vicinity. An iron gate clattered open, and he was forced forward again, to hear a muttered:

"Great Heaven! Poor Mr. Hoffman!"

The car sank to the lobby. There was a loud hum of conversation here; it ceased abruptly on the instant of his stepping out. The hands under the arms tightened, and he heard a whispered:

"Walk quickly if you can, Hoffman. There's no use in having this crowd stare all evening. Come!"

Rapidly again, and very unsteadily, he was pushed forward, his hands outstretched instinctively before him. A door creaked open, and a breath of chilly air struck his hot face—and they were down the steps and pausing again.

"Step up!"

The treasurer obeyed mechanically. His foot met a rubber-covered step, and the other followed it higher; and he was forced into what could be nothing but the seat of an enclosed automobile.

So they were taking him somewhere. And he—why, they had no business to take him anywhere. He gathered his strength and dragged back—in vain.

"See here! I don't want to leave my rooms!" he shouted weakly. "I—"

"Now, you sit down there, and—"

"I won't! I—"

With a violent shove, he was crushed back into the seat, and the vehicle gave a bound. A man settled down on either side of him, and he could hear the indistinct voice of another talking without.

Whirring, whizzing, the machine hummed along. A little lean and a slight slowing told of a corner. A series of gentle bumps indicated car-tracks—and after a very little another series told of further rails. They seemed to come to asphalt then, for the car spun along without a jar for blocks and blocks and blocks.

It slowed at last, after all of ten minutes, and turned to the right. It took some few hundred feet over rougher pavement and stopped suddenly—and a new breath of cold air and a new pressure of the hands came with:

"Here we are. Get out, Hoffman."

He was all but lifted. He was set upon the pavement and pushed gently forward again, and up some three or four steps—and suddenly there was warmth again and an absence of street noises.

Whatever their destination might be, they had reached it.

There was quiet—absolute quiet—save for a clock that ticked loudly and a fire—it seemed to be an open fire — that crackled softly and cheerily.

There was a pause of perhaps two minutes. Then hands were laid upon him again.

"We will go up-stairs now, Mr. Hoffman," came in a strange tone.

"But before we go," the blind man said with some difficulty, "I insist on knowing where we are and—"

"You shall know all that when you've had a thorough rest, Mr. Hoffman. Just now you must come to bed. It's growing very late — or, rather, early. Come!"

The tone had gained an imperious quality. The treasurer resented it with that sudden, wild fury which seemed so much a part of him this evening.

"The first man that lays a hand on me—the first man that tries—" He began at the top of his lungs as his fists clenched.

He tried to raise his arms. The straitjacket intervened suddenly. He strained at it, and felt another pair of arms fold about him. And still another pair were about his legs and lifting him bodily from the floor.

He screamed again. A towel, or something very like it, was thrust into his mouth, and the odd, jogging motion told him that he was being carried swiftly.

His feet seemed to go into the air—they were on a staircase now. He struggled anew and tried to call for help. The towel and the grips merely tightened, and he was borne on upward.

And then he was laid upon a soft bed, and there was quick talking all about him. Some one grasped his arm in an iron grip and shoved back the sleeve. Some one else took a hard pinch of skin—and there was a stinging, pricking jab that sent a shriek even through the gag.

And afterward—oblivion!

(To be continued.)

THE LION HE FACED.

By RALPH ENGLAND.

An original scheme whereby to acquire a reputation for courage, and how it worked out.

"I AM on my way to do some shopping, Mr. Seaton. Would you care to accompany me?" Belinda spoke very graciously.

"Would I? I should say I would. I shall deem it a rare privilege," exclaimed the young man eagerly.

"Well, I warn you that it may not be quite as pleasant an experience as you anticipate," laughed Belinda. "You will have to carry a whole lot of bundles, and I believe men detest carrying packages, as a rule, don't they?"

"As a rule—yes. But I assure you, Miss Farrar, I would gladly carry a hundred bundles for *you*," replied the young man ardently.

And he really meant it, too. In his eyes Belinda Farrar was the prettiest and most fascinating girl in the whole wide world. He yearned for the privilege of carrying her bundles and bearing her burdens for the rest of her days.

Even after they had visited a score of stores and he had stood by her side, with bated breath, while Belinda made many costly purchases, his sentiments toward her underwent no change.

And, after all, that is one of the supreme tests of love. A young man of modest income who is not discouraged by the discovery that the object of his affections is an extravagant spender, may be said to have the "divine passion" in its most violent form.

As Seaton stood by and watched Belinda spending her money with reckless abandon, instead of muttering to himself, "Heavens! What a costly and extravagant wife she would make!" his thoughts ran, "What a superbly beautiful creature she is! What a regal air she has! What wouldn't I give to win her!"

And a certain momentous question trembled on his lips as he stood leaning against the glove-counter of a dry-goods store, with a dozen packages in his arms.

He had been trying to ask that question for weeks past; but somehow, when it came to the point, his nerve had always failed him.

He had once heard Belinda declare to a girl friend that she would never marry unless she could find a husband who was "divinely tall, handsome, dashing, and brave."

The last-named quality was the one which Belinda emphasized the most. She was a hero-worshiper of the most pronounced type. She adored masculine courage.

Now, Seaton was not divinely tall, neither could he have truthfully called himself handsome or dashing.

He felt that he was no coward, and that he possessed almost, if not quite, as much courage as the average man; but he certainly had no reason to believe that he was cast in the mold in which heroes are made.

He was just a plain, ordinary, pleasant, good-tempered young fellow, with nothing shiningly conspicuous about him, and knowing Belinda's high ideals and his own limitations, he hesitated to propound to her the question which meant so much to him.

She seemed so unusually gracious to him to-day, however, that his heart beat fast with the hope that perhaps, after all, she would be willing to overlook his deficiency in the matter of height, good looks, and heroic courage.

"I will ask her to-day," he told himself. "I must not fail to take advantage of this opportunity. I will ask her before another hour has passed."

He could not ask her right away, for the reason that they were within ear-shot of the saleswomen behind the counter and of an unsympathetic-looking floor-walker who hovered particularly close behind them.

"I'll wait until we leave this store

and get out on the street," he told himself. "Then I'll have a good chance to put the question to her."

If Belinda guessed aught of what was passing in his perturbed mind, she betrayed no indication of it as she turned to him with a dazzling smile.

"I'm all through now, Mr. Seaton," she remarked, as the saleswoman handed her the dozen pairs of long white kid gloves she had just bought. "This is positively my last purchase. Do you think you can carry it, or shall I have it sent? No trouble at all? Thank you so much. I am afraid that I am sadly imposing upon your good nature, but I warned you how it would be if you came shopping with me."

She added the package to the half dozen which already cumbered his arms and they walked out to the street.

"My shopping is all done now, Mr. Seaton," said Belinda with a smile. "It really has been very kind of you to accompany me. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it."

"Miss Farrar," exclaimed Seaton, somewhat hoarsely, "there is something I want to ask you—something that has been on my mind for some time. Could you—would you—"

They were standing on the sidewalk as he began his little speech, and she was looking at him with a smile that was decidedly encouraging.

But he did not finish, for just then they both became aware of the fact that something extraordinary was happening.

Men were shouting wildly; women were screaming; everybody seemed to be running. Panic appeared to prevail among the pedestrians.

And the cause of the excitement was soon apparent. A big, savage looking bulldog came bounding toward the spot on which they stood.

White foam was issuing from the jaws of the brute. He was snarling and snapping as he ran.

"Mad dog! Mad dog!" yelled several men frenziedly.

Seaton was not afraid of dogs—he rather liked them, when they were sane and normal and well-behaved. But he had no desire to be bitten by a mad dog, for he had read graphic accounts of the horrors of hydrophobia.

Panic seized him as it had seized the rest of the crowd, and he dropped all of Belinda's bundles to the sidewalk.

Without stopping to pick them up, he seized the girl's arm and dragged her back into the store, hurriedly closing the door behind him.

Then through the excited, scurrying, frightened throng there came a tall, heroic figure, clad in the blue uniform and natty cap of a police-sergeant.

Through the glass door of the store they saw this hero coolly and calmly approach the infuriated bulldog. Coolly and calmly he proceeded to draw his revolver and stood there, smiling, and quite undismayed, as the brute, with a ferocious snarl, sprang at him.

The revolver flashed, the dog gave a convulsive shudder and fell dead at the policeman's feet. The brave man replaced the revolver in his hip-pocket and the admiring crowd gathered around to heap congratulations upon him for his courage and self-possession.

"Oh, isn't he a hero?" cried Belinda rapturously. "Did you notice how cool and collected he was? What perfect aim he took, too, despite his danger. What a sublime exhibition of courage. Oh, I do admire bravery in a man. That is the kind of man I could learn to love. That is the kind of a hero I hope to marry some day.

"Let's go out now, Mr. Seaton. The danger is all over. And—well, I declare—you have dropped all my packages. How could you be so careless?"

"I'm sorry," apologized Seaton, flushing crimson. "In my haste and excitement I—"

"In your haste and excitement!" repeated the girl witheringly. "You were afraid, Mr. Seaton—yes, afraid. You ran into this store like a coward, while that brave, handsome hero calmly stood there and confronted the savage beast."

"He had a revolver," protested poor Seaton feebly. "Perhaps if I had had a gun, I also might have stood there and shot that dog. It's easy to do it when you're armed, you know."

But this argument did not seem to carry much weight with Belinda. All the way home she talked of the gallant police hero and his brave act.

Her unfortunate escort walked by her

side in moody silence. He had been lucky enough to recover all the packages he had dropped, and once more both his arms were occupied in carrying them; but even this strong proof of his devotion did not prevent the haughty Belinda from treating him with almost open disdain.

Few men appear to advantage when carrying half a dozen variously assorted packages in their arms. The contrast between poor Seaton, patiently bearing his burden, and the tall, heroic, blue-coated and brass-buttoned figure of the brave police-sergeant was very greatly to the disadvantage of the former.

"I guess I won't ask that question to-day, after all," sighed the unfortunate young man, as he bade Belinda good-by, in front of her door.

II.

THE next evening he had an appointment to take Miss Farrar to a vaudeville show.

When he called for her, shortly before eight o'clock, the image of the brave, dashing police-sergeant and the exciting incident of the preceding day seemed to have lost their grip upon her imagination.

Once more she greeted Seaton with dazzling smiles and exceedingly gracious mood.

"I'll propose to her to-night without fail," he told himself as they rode to the theater.

Nothing occurred to cause him to falter in this determination until the sixth number on the program was reached.

This act was featured on the bill as "Professor Snowdon and his performing lions."

The curtain went up upon a large iron cage which had been erected upon the stage. In this cage were six powerful, ferocious-looking lions. The beasts snapped and snarled in a manner which made the audience shudder and feel glad that stout iron bars intervened between the footlights and the auditorium.

Suddenly, into the midst of this savage herd, strode a dashing figure.

He was a tall, handsome man, six feet two, if he was a single inch. He sported a magnificent pair of military mustaches. His coat was of white and gold, and natty brown leather riding-gaiters incased his shapely legs.

He walked into the midst of those lions as coolly and calmly as if they had been so many tabby cats, and when the ferocious brutes came toward him, snarling and menacing, he drove them back with lashes from a long whip he carried, and then made them cower submissively at his feet.

"Oh, isn't he grand?" whispered Belinda to her frowning companion. "Isn't he brave? Isn't he noble? And so very, very handsome, too. See what command he has over those wild beasts! Look how they cower before him! Isn't it wonderful, Mr. Seaton? Isn't it a truly magnificent sight?"

"Yes, I suppose so," muttered the unhappy young man. "I guess it requires plenty of courage; but, then, you must realize, Miss Farrar, that he has probably spent years in mastering those lions. It's perfectly safe for him to go among them now. He knows that they would not dare to harm him, of course."

"Oh, I think he's the bravest man I've ever seen," went on the girl enthusiastically.

Seaton scowled and bit his lip.

"I guess I won't ask her to-night, after all," he sighed. "What chance would I stand against a lion-tamer?"

After the show Seaton, of course, escorted Belinda to her home. She lived on the other side of the river, and they boarded a ferry-boat.

When the boat was out in mid-stream the passengers were startled by a cry of "Man overboard!"

Women screamed hysterically, men shouted hoarsely, a bell rang and the big boat came to a stop.

Belinda and Seaton were standing on the forward upper deck. They had seen the unfortunate man, apparently bent on suicide, poise himself for a second on the rail and then plunge into the seething waters, before anybody could put out a hand to restrain him.

"Great Heavens!" gasped Belinda. "Must he drown? Will nobody save him? Oh, isn't it awful?"

Seaton could not swim a stroke. He groaned as he realized his inability to do anything.

Suddenly, a tall, handsome man threw off his coat and vest and, amid a roar of applause from the admiring passengers, plunged fearlessly into the river.

In a few minutes a great cheer went up as he was seen swimming sturdily toward the boat, with the half-drowned fellow in tow.

A dozen pairs of strong arms assisted him and his burden aboard. Belinda was foremost in the throng which gathered around the dripping hero and shook his wet hand.

"Well done! Well done! God bless you for your noble act!" cried men and women enthusiastically.

"Pooh!" replied the gallant rescuer modestly. "It was nothing. It was easy work for me. I am an expert swimmer."

"Isn't he fine? Isn't he brave?" whispered Belinda to Seaton.

"Yes. It was a brave act," admitted the young man, and added with a regretful sigh: "I wish I could swim. Perhaps if I had been an expert swimmer, I, too, would have jumped overboard after that man."

Belinda sniffed her open disdain at this remark.

"What a handsome fellow he is, too!" she exclaimed. "And what a fine athletic figure. I wonder what his name is."

"No," said poor Seaton to himself with a sigh, "I guess I won't ask her that question to-night. I really don't think it would be a good night to propose."

All the rest of the way home Belinda talked enthusiastically of the handsome hero. His charms had even made her forget all about the intrepid lion-tamer at the vaudeville show.

She was so intent upon expressing her admiration of the brave swimmer that she actually forgot to thank her escort for taking her to the theater.

The unfortunate young man parted from her with the sad conviction that she was forever lost to him.

"If only I could be a hero!" he groaned, as he wended his sorrowful way homeward, and he resolved to begin a course of swimming lessons the very next day.

He crossed the river again and boarded an up-town car, throwing himself dejectedly into a rear seat.

After the car had proceeded a few blocks, three men boarded it and took seats immediately in front of him.

One of the men was tall and handsome, and it seemed to Seaton that there was something decidedly familiar about his face and figure. Of his two companions, one was thin and sharp-featured, the other corpulent and somewhat flashily attired.

As soon as they had taken their seats, the three men began talking very animatedly, and Seaton found himself listening intently to their conversation, without knowing why he did so.

"I can't say that I like the idea of it," remarked the flashily dressed man, with a shake of the head. "To my mind it would be decidedly dangerous."

"Not at all," replied the sharp-featured fellow. "There really wouldn't be the slightest danger. Professor Snowdon has one lion which is perfectly harmless. Haven't you, professor?"

"Yes," replied the tall, handsome man, speaking with a slightly foreign accent. "Nemo is as safe as a kitten. He is the only lion of the bunch that I can fully trust."

Seaton gasped. He recognized the last speaker now. "It was Professor Snowdon, the lion-tamer, whose courageous performance that very night had sent the hero-worshiping Belinda into such ecstasies of admiration.

At this realization, Seaton leaned forward in his seat and listened eagerly.

"Well, even so. I say again I don't like the idea," declared the corpulent man. "The police might make trouble. I've been running that theater for ten years, and thus far have never had any run-in with the authorities. I should hate to get into hot water now, just for the sake of a little free advertising."

"But think what a fine advertisement it would be!" exclaimed he of the sharp features. "The papers would have columns about it. They'd just jump at the thrilling story of a lion loose on the streets. And, of course, you wouldn't get into any trouble with the police. Nobody would know that we deliberately liberated the lion. We would pretend, of course, that the brute escaped from his cage."

"Humph! Supposing the beast should

kill somebody?" protested the fat man, with a shudder.

"No danger of that, my dear friend," interposed Professor Snowdon, with a smile. "With the other lions there would be great danger, but with Nemo it would be perfectly safe. Nemo wouldn't hurt a fly. He'd be afraid of a little child. He's probably the most cowardly lion in captivity. I only keep him in order to soften the savage mood of the other beasts. Force of example, you know."

"It would work like a charm," declared the thin man. "Listen! Here's the idea. At about nine o'clock the professor opens Nemo's cage and drives him out of the theater.

"After he's been prodded a bit, the lion will rush down the street with terrible roars. I suppose he *does* roar, eh, professor?"

"Oh, yes—he roars all right," replied the lion-tamer with a smile. "His roar is the only thing alarming about him."

"Very good. Well, as I was saying, the lion dashes up the street. People flee before him. Frenzied shouts rend the air. Police hurry to the scene, but are afraid to go near the supposedly savage king of beasts.

"Then, amid all the excitement, Professor Snowdon calmly appears, and with a whip drives the brute back into his cage. Much applause from the crowd. Professor lauded as a great hero. Columns in the paper next morning, accompanied by the professor's latest pictures. It would make a tremendous sensation."

"By Jove, Tody, you're the greatest press-agent that ever came over the pike!" exclaimed the flashily dressed man admiringly. "I yield to your eloquence. I admit that it would be a great advertisement. You are sure that there is no danger of that lion biting anybody?"

"He couldn't bite anybody," smiled Professor Snowdon. "Nemo has no teeth. I swear to you, my friend, that he is perfectly harmless. It will be quite safe."

"Very good," said the corpulent man. "I'm willing to try it. At nine o'clock to-morrow night, you say. If your plan succeeds all right, Tody, I'll give you that increase of salary you asked me for the other day.

"All right, boss," replied the press-agent gratefully. "The plan will succeed all right, I promise you."

Seaton gasped and sat back in his seat. He had heard enough.

Probably Belinda would read about the exploit in the newspapers, and her admiration for the handsome lion-tamer would be greatly increased.

It must not be, Seaton decided. He would take advantage of the information which had come to him so opportunely and foil the professor at his little game.

His first thought was to visit the offices of the various newspapers and expose the whole scheme. Then, in turn, the editors would doubtless expose the lion-tamer in their columns, and Belinda would read that her supposed hero was a cheap trickster.

But Seaton did not carry out this idea, because suddenly a much better plan occurred to him.

It was a plan so novel and so very daring that the mere thought of it made him gasp.

"Gee whiz!" he exclaimed. "I wonder if I could do it? I don't see why it couldn't be done. The professor swore that the lion was absolutely harmless—that the brute would be afraid of a little child. The professor ought to know. I guess it's safe enough to take his word for it.

"By George, I'll try it. I'll be a hero at last—or at least I'll appear a hero in Belinda's eyes, and that's all I care about."

The next morning he stepped into a sporting-goods store and purchased a thirty-eight caliber revolver.

As he loaded the formidable-looking weapon and put it in his hip-pocket, he chuckled to himself immoderately.

"It will be a great joke on that lion-tamer," he told himself. "I'll beat him at his own game. I'll have Belinda on the spot promptly at nine, and when that lion makes his appearance I'll boldly step forward and shoot at him before Professor Snowdon can move a step.

"Belinda will be astonished at my supposed bravery, and will be so full of admiration for me that she'll most likely be willing to forget that I'm not quite as tall and handsome as she might wish.

"Perhaps, too, I may be lucky enough to kill that lion with my revolver. That

would be a good joke. It would punish the professor and his friends for trying to deceive the press and public. Oh, it is a glorious plan!"

III.

AT eight o'clock that evening Seaton called on Belinda. His manner, usually so meek and diffident in her presence, was to-night so bold and commanding that the girl was secretly astonished at the change.

When he suggested that they go for a walk and Belinda politely refused, pleading a headache, Seaton said: "Now, see here, little girl, you go get your hat and come on out, right away. I won't take no for an answer. The fresh air will do your headache good."

And his manner was so dominating and compelling that Belinda found herself putting on her hat without another word.

They started out for a walk, and pretty soon Seaton suggested that they board a ferry-boat and cross the river to New York.

"Oh, no, let's not go to New York," protested the girl. "What's the use of crossing the river? Walking here is quite nice enough."

"No, it isn't," declared Seaton firmly. "The trip on the ferry will be good for your headache. Come on."

Again Belinda yielded to his unusually imperious manner and allowed him to escort her aboard the boat.

Then, at Seaton's suggestion, they boarded a car.

"A car-ride will be just the thing for that headache," the young man assured her.

And when they reached Broadway he suggested that they alight and promenade up the "Great White Way" for a time.

"But why should we get out?" protested Belinda. "This car is very comfortable. Let's stay here and ride to the end of the line."

"No! No! We'll take a walk on Broadway," declared Seaton, consulting his watch anxiously. "Come on, Belinda; hurry up."

Belinda took his arm and alighted without another word. She couldn't understand her companion at all this evening. He was displaying a degree of self-assurance and masterfulness that was most astonishing; but she had to admit to herself that this change in him was a great improvement.

Seaton himself was secretly surprised at his own temerity in presuming to boss this beautiful girl. Somehow the knowledge that he was going to face a roaring lion and be a hero in her eyes gave him a self-confidence and an assurance he had never before possessed in her presence.

"I'll propose to her to-night, after I've performed that stunt with Nemo, and I feel confident that she'll say 'yes,'" he told himself jubilantly.

They walked up Broadway until they neared the theater where Professor Snowdon nightly gave his stirring performance with his six ferocious lions.

A clock in the distance struck nine. Seaton scanned the street anxiously. "I hope that lion is going to show up. I hope those fellows haven't changed their minds," he mused.

He patted his hip-pocket to make sure that the revolver was there. Ten minutes passed and still no lion. Seaton began to despair. He feared that perhaps, after all, the manager had decided not to carry out his press-agent's plan.

"Isn't it about time we were going back?" remarked Belinda. "I don't want to stay out too late, you know."

"No! No! We will walk up and down here a bit," replied her companion. "The night is fine, the lights of Broadway are inspiring. We will walk until we are tired, and then we will get a bite to eat. It will be a fitting wind-up to a pleasant evening."

To himself he was saying anxiously:

"Will that lion ever appear? I do wish he'd hurry up."

Suddenly there was a terrifying, blood-curdling roar, followed by shouts and screams. Men and women were scampering down side-streets as fast as their legs would carry them. Some, unable to run far, were hastily seeking refuge inside stores and hotel entrances.

Horses plunged, reared and bolted madly with wild neighs of terror. Everybody—man, woman, and beast seemed to have been seized with sudden panic—that is to say, everybody except Seaton.

He understood the situation perfectly and, standing there, calm and collected, placed his hand on the revolver in his pocket and prepared to be a hero.

Belinda uttered a piercing scream and pointed a trembling finger up the street as she clung in terror to her companion.

"Oh, see—see!" she cried in horror-stricken tones. "The lion! The lion! The terrible lion! Save me, Mr. Seaton —save me."

"Fear not, little girl," replied Seaton coolly. "No harm shall befall you. I will protect you."

A tall, white-faced man, wearing the blue uniform, gold buttons and natty cap of a police-sergeant, dashed madly by.

It was quite evident that he was in a state of great panic.

As he passed them he shouted fearfully over his shoulder: "The lion! The lion! Save yourselves! Run! Run!"

"Yes, let us run," cried the frightened Belinda. "Let us get into this doorway. Quick, Mr. Seaton."

"No, no. Stay here," replied her companion, with the smile of a hero. "I assure you that I will protect you. Did you recognize that fellow, Belinda? It was the brave, handsome policeman who shot the mad dog the other day. Look at him now. He may not be afraid of mad dogs, but he seems to be horribly scared of lions. Now, watch *me,* little girl."

A huge, ferocious-looking lion came bounding toward them, emitting loud, blood-curdling roars as he advanced.

Seaton drew his revolver from his pocket and to Belinda's great surprise rushed boldly forward to meet the beast.

The lion was truly a terrible-looking creature. He didn't appear at all like the cowardly looking animal the professor had declared him to be. If Seaton had not had confidence in the lion-tamer's assurance that Nemo was perfectly harmless, he would have been overwhelmed with terror at the animal's loud bellow and savage aspect.

But he remembered that the professor had said that Nemo's roars were the only terrible thing about him. That recollection gave him plenty of courage.

He ran up to that lion quite fearlessly and gazed boldly into the beast's blood-shot eyes. Then his finger curved on the trigger of his revolver and he fired point-blank at those cruel, distended jaws.

As the revolver went off the lion gave vent to a particularly loud and angry roar, which fairly shook near-by buildings.

Instead of turning tail, as Seaton had confidently expected, the brute's massive body went hurtling through the air, a powerful paw smote Seaton on the right shoulder and bore him to the ground with the force of a catapult.

The beast's strong jaws closed upon his right arm, and the surprised and horrified young man, uttering a scream of agony, lost consciousness.

Belinda, standing a few feet off, watched Seaton with amazement as he courageously faced and fired at the lion. She saw the savage beast spring upon the unfortunate young man, dash him to the ground and fasten its cruel fangs in his flesh. Then she fainted.

IV.

WHEN Seaton opened his eyes again he was in a hospital, swathed in bandages from head to foot.

"Am I going to die?" he inquired of the surgeon who was bending over him.

"Die? Of course you're not. You've got a lacerated shoulder, a couple of broken ribs and a torn forearm, but otherwise you're all right," was the cheerful response.

"You had a mighty narrow escape, though," went on the surgeon. "There isn't any doubt that that lion would have done for you if somebody from the show hadn't shot him dead just as he was sinking his teeth into your flesh."

"Yes. I certainly had a narrow escape," sighed poor Seaton. "Those theater people ought to be ashamed of themselves for letting such a ferocious beast loose."

"Well, I guess they couldn't help it," replied the physician. "By the way, do you feel strong enough to receive a visitor? There's somebody outside who has been anxiously awaiting until you recovered consciousness."

"Is it—a lady?" inquired Seaton.

"No. It's a man," was the disappointing reply. "I'll send him in."

And a few seconds later, Professor Snowdon, the lion-tamer, stood beside Seaton's cot.

"My friend," said the professor, "I am very sorry that you suffered such painful injuries from my lion. Still, I must congratulate you that you are still alive. Neptune was the most ferocious of all my troupe, and when he broke out of his cage I thought for sure that somebody was going to be killed. It is a mercy we were able to shoot him dead before he did greater damage. Neptune had a reputation as a man-killer. He killed seven men before I bought him."

"Neptune!" exclaimed Seaton in surprise. "You mean *Nemo*,—don't you?"

"Oh, no," replied the lion-tamer. "It is true that I have a lion named Nemo; but he is perfectly harmless. He never would have hurt you. He'd have turned tail and run from you. He's afraid of his own shadow. But what made you mention *him?*" added the professor, looking at Seaton suspiciously.

"I don't know," answered the latter cautiously. "Somehow or other I thought that the lion who attacked me was named Nemo—"

"Well, that's a mighty strange thing," declared the professor. "As a matter of fact, my dear sir, I don't mind confessing to you that we *had* secretly planned to let Nemo loose on the streets—just as an advertising dodge, you know. It would have been quite safe, for Nemo is as harmless as a pet dog and would have hurt nobody; but just as we were going to carry out this plan, Neptune escaped from his cage and got to the street before we could recapture him.

"I am awfully sorry that you got in his way and were hurt. Here is my check for five hundred dollars to compensate you for your injuries."

The professor slipped the check into the hands of the surprised Seaton and disappeared before the latter could utter a word.

"There's another visitor outside waiting to see you," announced the surgeon after the lion-tamer had gone. "Shall I send her in?"

A second later Belinda was kneeling beside Seaton's bed.

"Oh, how glad I am to see that you are still alive," she cried, pressing the hand of his uninjured arm. "What a brave thing you did, Mr. Seaton! I never in my life saw such a superb piece of heroism.

"You deliberately walked up to that savage lion and risked your own life in order to save mine. I shall never forget your noble and courageous act. I think you are the greatest hero that ever was born. You are the kind of a man that I hope to—"

She did not finish the sentence. She suddenly realized what she was saying and stopped short, blushing vividly.

But Seaton knew the rest of that sentence by heart—he had heard it several times before.

On that other occasion it had filled him with despair and envy, but now his heart beat wildly with joy.

He squeezed her hand and raised it to his lips.

"Belinda's hand and a five-hundred-dollar check from the lion-tamer to pay for an engagement ring," he mused. "I guess my plan worked pretty well after all."

INCOGNITO.

We pay assiduous court to Yesterday,
Before To-morrow bend expectant knees,
Because the living monarch, King To-day,
Passes incognito, begirt in these
Dull robes of opportunity, in place
Of velvet—dim past glories, or the sheen
Of brocade—woven, sumptuous, baseless dreams.
Yet we but need to look upon his face
To know him royal—born of what has been,
And master of what is to be—the beams
Of dawn his crown—a young, brave warrior,
Heir of the Past, the Future's ancestor!

Grace H. Boutelle.

WANTED BY UNCLE SAM.*

By BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "The Jailbird," "When a Man's Hungry," "The Isle of Mysteries," etc.

Certain thrilling experiences that befell two army men and a sailor after they had left the service and looked forward to a peaceful civilian existence.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

FRANK LEFFINGWELL and Al Randolph, arriving in New York from the Philippines, wander into an anarchist meeting, where they rescue from the attack of the crowd a sailor, Simon Semple, also just discharged. The three men pool their money, which, together with their discharge papers, is stolen that evening from Leffingwell's pocket. They are accosted by a young woman who asks their protection from a man who is following her. The man, attempting to pass them, is knocked down by Randolph and taken to the hospital with a fractured skull.

Randolph is arrested, and his two friends leave him in jail to try to procure legal help. They are steered to a firm of lawyers, who demand five hundred dollars retaining fee. Leaving the place, discouraged, they chance upon and capture a man named Mitchell, a deserter from Leffingwell's regiment, but he induces them to let him go. In a saloon near by, Leffingwell picks up a newspaper.

"Good heavens!" he cries. "We've let five thousand dollars slip through our fingers!"

CHAPTER VII.

MELODRAMA TO THE RESCUE.

"FIVE thousand dollars!" gasped Simple Simon. "What do you mean, lad?"

"Listen to this advertisement," replied Leffingwell. "If only we'd seen it an hour or two ago:

> "Five thousand dollars reward will be paid to any person effecting the arrest or giving information leading to the arrest of Richard Mitchell. Wanted for desertion from the United States army—"

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Simon. "And to think we had our hands on that chap and let him go!"

"Five thousand dollars is a lot of money," remarked Leffingwell wistfully. "Think what we could do with it!"

"Sure. We could hire the very best lawyers in the world, I guess, and get our comrade out of his trouble in a jiffy," Simon suggested.

"Yes. And after paying the lawyers we'd probably still have money enough over to give the three of us a little start in life."

"Maybe we could even eat a meal and spend a night in that there Waldorf-Astory," said Simon, suddenly remembering his pet ambition.

"To think that only a little more than an hour ago we had that money within our reach makes me feel like kicking myself," groaned Leffingwell. "If only we had held tight to that sneaking, whining cad, instead of letting him go, that reward would have been ours for sure."

"I'm mighty sorry now that we allowed our feelings to get the best of us," Simple Simon admitted. "Of course, if we'd held onto that chap it would have been mighty tough on that poor girl he is going to marry to-morrow; but for five thousand dollars I fear I'd be inclined to throw sympathy overboard and act the part of a brute— Yes, I would, considering all we've got at stake."

"Poor girl—bah!" snorted Leffingwell disgustedly. "The more I think of it, the more convinced I feel that that girl doesn't exist at all. That sneaking cad was lying to us. He invented that story in order to work on our sympathies. And like blithering idiots we allowed him to fool us into letting him go. He's probably laughing himself sick, at the

present moment, over the thought of what easy marks we proved."

Simple Simon frowned at this unpleasant possibility. He hated to be laughed at.

Suddenly his face cleared and he excitedly smote the table with his fist.

"I have it," he cried. "I know what we'll do. We'll get him again. He couldn't have gone very far away by this time. We'll get him again and win that reward. What do you say, messmate?"

Leffingwell shook his head despondently.

"I'm afraid we'll have a mighty hard job finding him again, now that we've let him slip through our fingers," he said. "Doubtless his narrow escape has scared him and he'll take mighty good care now to keep under cover. Remember, we've only got two weeks in which to catch him."

"Two weeks!" repeated Simple Simon in surprise. "How do you figure that out?"

"It says so in this advertisement. I didn't finish reading it to you. The ad. goes on to give a description of Mitchell, and ends with these words:

> Arrest must be made during the present month. Immediately Mitchell has been handed over to the proper authorities, person responsible for the capture will be paid the reward by communicating with R. A., box 56, *Herald*.

"To-day is the 17th," Leffingwell continued. "That leaves only fourteen days to the end of the month. You see, therefore, that unless we can capture that cad within two weeks we don't get the money."

"What a strange advertisement!" exclaimed Simon. "I wonder what the mischief it all means. It's a cinch the government ain't offering that five thousand dollars reward. Fifty dollars is all that the capture of a deserter is worth to Uncle Sam. Then, who in thunderation is this R. A., and why does he want this cuss arrested so all-fired bad that he's willing to pay five thousand dollars in real money to bring it about?"

"I don't know," replied Leffingwell. "Suppose it must be some enemy of Mitchell's."

"Well, it sure don't look like the work of a friend," Simple Simon commented dryly. "However, it ain't any of our business what this R. A.'s motives may be. The principal point for us to consider is whether this offer is on the level. Do you think he really means to hand over all that money, comrade?"

"Oh, I guess the offer is genuine enough," replied Leffingwell. "I wouldn't worry much about not getting the reward—if only we could lay hands on that cad Mitchell again."

"Well let's make a try for it. As I said before, he can't have gone very far. We'll search this town until we find him. We've got to look for that girl, anyway, so we might as well keep our weather eye open for the deserter at the same time."

"We stand mighty little chance of finding either of them," sighed Leffingwell. "As that lawyer said, 'New York is a big city.' It's worse than hunting for a needle in a haystack. It would be difficult enough if we had funds and could go wherever we pleased; but here we are without even a cent car fare, which is just like having our feet tied. It's impossible to do anything under such conditions."

"Well, maybe if we write a note to this chap R. A. and tell him what we intend to do, he'll loan us a few dollars," suggested Simple Simon.

Leffingwell's face brightened.

"Say, old man, that isn't at all a bad idea," he said. "Of course the chances are that he'll suspect us of trying to work him for some easy money and will ignore our letter. However, the plan is well worth trying. R. A. is evidently a wealthy man, or he couldn't afford to offer such a big reward. If we can get an interview with him, we may be able to interest him in poor Al's case and persuade him to help us."

He begged a sheet of paper and an envelope from the saloonkeeper, and sitting down at one of the small round tables wrote the following:

> R. A., Box 56, *Herald*.
>
> DEAR SIR:—My friend and I have seen the deserter, Richard Mitchell, this day, and can give you some important information concerning him. I have just been honorably discharged from the United States army, and the said Mitchell was a member of my

regiment, and in the same company, some time ago.

Requesting the favor of an interview, I am.

Yours respectfully,
FRANK LEFFINGWELL.

After this letter had been read to Simple Simon, who expressed his hearty approval, the question arose where R. A. should send his reply, provided he saw fit to send any.

Inasmuch as Leffingwell and Simon were homeless, they of course had no address to which their mail could be directed.

After some deliberation Leffingwell hit upon the expedient of requesting R. A. to forward his reply care of the *Herald*.

Then the two friends walked to the office of the newspaper and handed their letter to the advertising clerk, informing him that they would call on the morrow for an answer.

"And now, since we must find some place to sleep this night, supposing we try to find some work at which one of us can earn the price of a night's lodging," suggested Simple Simon. "This clerk looks like a decent sort of chap. Supposin' we ask him to help us."

The clerk behind the advertising counter looked at the ex-sailor curiously when the latter put the question to him.

"Why, yes," he said. "I do believe I can help you. A friend of mine is stage manager at Dell's Theater. He was in here this afternoon, and was telling me he was short one man to carry a spear in the melodrama to-night. He needs a tall, husky-looking, middle-aged man, and you look as if you could fill the part to perfection."

"Do you mean to say you expect me to be a play-actor?" gasped Simple Simon. "Well, I'll be jaggered. Why, man alive, I couldn't act for sour apples."

"You don't have to act," explained the clerk. "You won't have any lines to speak. All you have to do is to wear a toga and brandish a spear. You're to be one of the Roman mob in the great Forum scene. You'll get fifty cents for the night's work."

Simple Simon scratched his head dubiously.

"Well, I don't know what kind of a Roman mob I'll make, and I've never worn one of these here togas you speak of in my life and don't know what they are," he said. "But that fifty cents sounds mighty good to me. It ought to buy us both beds for the night. If your friend is willing to have me. I'm game. I'd be willing to act *Hamlet* for half a dollar. I'm much obliged to you, my hearty, and I'll go to Dell's Theater at once. But, by ganders, I wonder what my old comrades in the navy would say if they heard that Simple Simon was going to be a play-actor!"

CHAPTER VIII.

NOT DOWN ON THE PROGRAM.

As Leffingwell and Simon were about to step out of the newspaper office, the former was suddenly seized with an inspiration which caused him to return to the advertising counter and once more address himself to the accommodating clerk.

"By the way," he said, "since you have been kind enough to help us to this extent, perhaps you wouldn't mind doing us another favor."

"What is it?"

"Won't you tell us the name and address of this chap R. A., who has advertised in your paper? It will enable us to save a great deal of time if we can go to see him right away, instead of waiting until we get his reply to our letter."

The clerk shook his head.

"No," he said. "I'm sorry I can't do that. It's strictly against the rules for us to impart any information concerning our advertisers."

"But this is an exceptional case," Leffingwell argued. "This fellow R. A. is so anxious to have the deserter, Dick Mitchell, arrested that he's willing to pay five thousand dollars to the man who can bring it about.

"Now, as that letter which I handed you states, my friend here and I have seen Mitchell, only a few hours ago, and can give R. A. some important information which, in all probability, will lead to the capture of the deserter. Don't you think that, under the circumstances, Mr. R. A. ought to be communicated with at once? You will realize that delay is dangerous."

"Humph!" exclaimed the clerk. "There's some logic in your argument. If you fellows really are in a position to give information which will lead to the capture of this fellow Mitchell, I guess Mr.—er—R. A. would like to hear from you at once.

"And yet I am equally certain that he does not wish his identity revealed. He is a man of some standing, and of course he doesn't care to have it leak out that it is he who is offering this reward.

"I'll tell you what I will do, however," he added. "I will send this letter of yours up to his house right away by special messenger. If he desires to give you an interview he can send back an answer by the messenger.

"Call here again in a couple of hours. By that time you ought to have your reply—provided R. A. sees fit to send any."

Satisfied with this arrangement, the two friends left the newspaper office and proceeded to Dell's Theater, which was only a few blocks away.

Leffingwell was by this time so confident that he would get a reply to his letter, arranging for an interview with the mysterious R. A., that he tried to dissuade Simple Simon from applying for the petty job at the theater.

But the latter had thoroughly made up his mind to be a member of the Roman mob, if the stage-manager deemed him satisfactory, and he refused to be persuaded to the contrary.

"After all," he argued, "it's possible that you won't get any answer to that note of yours. And if you do and go and see this fellow, R. A., he may turn out to be a stingy guy who won't advance us a cent until we actually capture that deserter feller. Then, again, you may not hear from him until to-morrow morning. In the meantime we've got to find some place to sleep this night, and I know a sailors' lodging-house where we can get two beds for the money I'll make by being a play-actor."

Silenced by this argument, Leffingwell accompanied Simple Simon to Dell's.

This door was closed, and they had to knock on it several times before a little old man, with a very sour look on his face, opened it a few inches and, eying them suspiciously, demanded to know what they wanted.

"Want to come in, of course, my hearty," replied Simple Simon cheerfully. "Ye don't think we were knocking to keep our hands warm, do ye?"

"And what business have you here?" growled the little old man. "Nobody is allowed on the stage, you know."

"Well, we want to see the stage-manager," Simple Simon explained. "He wants a play-actor, and I've been sent here to tackle the job."

At this the sour-faced doorkeeper disappeared and returned in a few minutes accompanied by a man in his shirt-sleeves.

"Want to see me?" the latter inquired.

"Yes, sir, if you're the stage-manager," replied Simple Simon. "Your friend, the clerk in the *Herald* office, was telling me that you need a play-actor. He sent me over to see you."

"Oh, yes. That's right. I told him if he came across a sober fellow who wanted to make a half-dollar for a night's work to send him to me. I'm short on supes. Have you ever done any suping before?"

"No, I ain't!" exclaimed Simple Simon disappointedly. "Soup, eh? Then that clerk chap told me wrong. He said that what you wanted was a play-actor to take part in a Roman mob. If it's a cook you're after, I guess I can't fill the bill. I don't know nothin' about soup."

The stage-manager smiled and Leffingwell grinned.

"I mean a super. That's what we call the man who carries a spear," the former explained. "I prefer a man with experience; but as long as my friend in the *Herald* office recommended you, I guess I'll give you a show. Come around here to-night at about seven-thirty and ask for Mr. Bradley. That's my name. I can't use both of you, as I only need one man. Don't go getting drunk in the meantime, or you won't get the job."

With this he went inside again and the grouchy old doorkeeper banged the door in their faces.

Courtesy and politeness are not to be encountered at the stage-door of a New York theater. Continual and provoking experiences with mashers and other pestiferous would-be intruders soon convert the most gentle of doormen into the most gruff and grim specimens of mankind.

Leffingwell and Simple Simon walked the street for a couple of hours, and then paid another visit to the *Herald* office and inquired whether a reply had arrived from the mysterious R. A.

The clerk informed them that the special messenger who had delivered the letter had returned and reported that R. A. was not at home. The messenger, therefore, had left the letter with a servant.

"Come back later," the clerk advised Leffingwell. "Perhaps when he returns home and finds your letter, he'll send a message down here for you."

At seven o'clock no answer had arrived and, after talking the matter over, it was agreed that Leffingwell should hang around the newspaper office in the hope of hearing from R. A., while Simple Simon should go to fill his engagement at Dell's Theater and join Leffingwell after the show.

Promptly at the appointed hour the red-haired man of the sea applied at the stage-door of the theater.

This time the surly old doorkeeper admitted him without challenge, and Simple Simon found himself in a dark, narrow passageway, at the farther end of which he encountered some of the queerest looking men and women he had ever seen.

Attired in the most extraordinary garments, and with their faces so thickly smeared with red paint that their own mothers could not have recognized them, they stood around in little groups, indulging in idle chatter.

Some of the men sported tin helmets and carried shining tin swords in their hands; others wore long, loose, flowing gowns which resembled bath-robes.

It took only one glance to convince Simple Simon that the women were far from beautiful. Whatever good looks had been bestowed upon them by nature were hidden and distorted by the grease-paint and powder which covered their features.

"And these, I reckon, are actor ladies," mused Simple Simon. "I've always heard that actor-ladies was peaches —that their beauty was such as to turn men's heads. Imagine any sane man's head being turned by these painted scarecrows! They're ugly enough to make a man want to turn his head in the opposite direction."

Of course Simple Simon did not realize that to the people on the other side of the footlights these roughly painted cheeks would appear delightfully smooth and deliciously rosy. He did not know that during a performance actresses' faces, like stage-scenery, are not supposed to be subjected to close inspection, and that even the most perfect complexions have to be "made-up" in order to produce a proper long-distance effect.

In a little group, standing apart from the rest of the performers, Simple Simon noticed a dozen miserable-looking men.

They were attired in shabby, tattered costumes, for they were supposed to represent a starving Roman street mob, clamoring for bread.

Their faces needed no stage make-up to carry out this effect, for they were the most gaunt, emaciated, wretched-looking group of men Simple Simon had ever seen.

These, of course, were the supers—poor unfortunates to whom a chance to earn fifty cents a night was a golden opportunity.

Simon was regarding this group with interest, when the hustling stage-manager suddenly approached and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Ha! Here you are!" he exclaimed. "Glad to see that you're punctual and that you've managed to keep sober. That's the trouble with most supes—they're so beastly unreliable.

"By the way, I'm going to give you a chance to distinguish yourself. Instead of being one of the mob, you're going to have a speaking part."

"A speaking part!" cried Simple Simon, aghast at the idea.

"Yes. Don't get scared. You'll only have two lines to speak. You oughtn't to have any trouble keeping them in your head. I've just received word that the man who regularly plays the part is sick and can't go on to-night. It's too late to get another actor to fill the rôle. I've been looking the supes over, and there isn't one of them looks intelligent enough to trust with the lines. I never saw such a stupid-looking bunch. You look like an intelligent man, so, although you say you've never had any experience, I'm going to give you a chance.

"It's a fine opportunity for you. I

can't make you any definite promise, but if you make good to-night, and help us out of our difficulty, you're likely to get a permanent job."

"Very good," said Simple Simon eagerly. "Tell me what I've got to say, sir, and I guarantee you that I'll say it when the proper time comes."

"Well, you're supposed to be a Roman captain. In the first act you rush on the stage and, approaching the emperor's throne, shout breathlessly: 'Imperator, all is lost! The imperial army has been defeated and put to rout. The enemy, fifty thousand strong, is even now marching this way to seize your august person.'

"Then the emperor asks you: 'And what of my son—does he survive?' To which you reply, very sadly: 'No, Imperator; alas! he, too, is slain. With my own eyes I saw him cut down by the sword of a barbarian.'

"Think you can manage that?" inquired the stage-manager anxiously. "Your appearance certainly fits the part to perfection, and if you can memorize these lines, you'll do first-rate."

Simple Simon was blessed with a very good memory, and he soon had the words down pat. When he was rigged up in the uniform of a Roman captain, with a shining tin helmet resting somewhat heavily on his red hair, he regarded himself in a cracked mirror with some complacency.

After the curtain had gone up, he stood in the wings impatiently awaiting his cue to go on, and constantly mumbling his lines for fear that they would slip his memory.

Suddenly the stage-manager tapped him on the shoulder.

"Now," he whispered, "here comes your cue. Rush on and speak your lines breathlessly as though you had been running a long distance. Don't be afraid to speak out. For heaven's sake, old man, don't make a mess of it or you'll spoil the whole act. Here you go, now."

With his bright tin helmet flashing in the light of the calcium, and feeling strangely shaky at the knees, Simple Simon rushed upon the stage toward a gilded throne, upon which sat a richly robed man of magnificent appearance.

"Imperator!" he cried, "all is lost. The imperial army has been defeated. The enemy—"

He suddenly stopped short and muttered under his breath, "Well, I'll be jaggered."

"Go on," commanded a voice from the wings in an angry whisper, "The enemy, fifty thousand strong, is even now marching this way."

But Simple Simon did not heed this prompting. He was staring over the footlights and into the big audience. His gaze seemed to be riveted upon somebody sitting in an orchestra-chair in the third row.

"I'll be shanghaied if it ain't him," he muttered.

"Go on," commanded the voice from the wings still more angrily. "You red-headed fool, what on earth is the matter with you?"

The Roman emperor wriggled uncomfortably on his throne; the other actors on the stage glared at the offender. The audience began to snicker.

But, unmindful of the sensation he was causing, Simple Simon walked slowly to the very edge of the stage and, leaning over the footlights, stared fixedly at the occupant of the above-mentioned orchestra-chair.

"*'Tis* him," he muttered again. "I'm sure of it. But how the deuce can he be here in the theater when he's supposed to be dead or dying in the hospital?"

Just then the emperor, realizing that desperate methods must be adopted in order to save the act, jumped from his throne and, going over to Simple Simon, cried in an excited tone: "Calm yourself, my good captain, and fear not to tell me the worst. What of the enemy? Are they marching this way, fifty thousand strong? Did you see my son slain by the sword of a barbarian?"

But his hope to save the situation by this ingenious improvisation was a vain one. Of course he expected that Simple Simon would avail himself of this help and make a suitable answer.

But, to his horror, the latter replied in a voice loud enough to be heard by part of the audience:

"I don't give a darn about the enemy, nor a continental about your son. I've got no time now to play-act. There's a man out in front there who's supposed to

be dead or dying in the hospital, and I've got to speak to him right away, so you'll have to excuse me."

So saying he bounded over the footlights and jumped from the high stage to the floor of the auditorium.

The audience broke into a roar of laughter. The stage-manager, almost foaming at the mouth with rage, hastily ordered the curtain to be lowered.

Simple Simon rushed toward the occupant of the seat in the third row.

"Excuse me, sir," he cried breathlessly, "I'm surprised to see you here. They said you was at the point of death and I'm real glad to find you ain't. Since you weren't seriously injured and, as you must admit, my messmate struck you fair and square, I hope you won't be mean enough to press the charge against him."

The man whom he addressed regarded him with frank amazement.

"I don't know you, and I don't understand what you're talking about," he said.

"What!" cried Simple Simon, equally amazed. "You don't mean to pretend that you ain't the man my comrade laid out flat with a knockout blow last night. Why, of course you are. I'd know you among a thousand. 'Taint any use for you to deny it."

"Nevertheless, I'm not the man," retorted the other quietly. "Either you're crazy, or else you're mistaking me for my cousin, who resembles me very closely."

Simple Simon gave a gasp of disappointment.

"Your cousin!" he exclaimed. "and what's his name?"

"His name is Thomas Clark. He's a private detective. Perhaps he's the man you mean."

"Good Heavens!" gasped Simple Simon in dismay. "A detective! That lawyer was right. The feller may have been perfectly justified in following that young woman. It looks as if my poor messmate is in mighty bad."

CHAPTER IX.

R. A. EXPLAINS.

WHILE Simple Simon was making his somewhat startling début at Dell's Theater, Leffingwell was waiting patiently in the advertising office of the *Herald*, in the hope of receiving a reply to his letter to R. A.

At about nine o'clock his patience was rewarded by the arrival of a district messenger boy, bearing a note addressed to him, which read as follows:

MR. FRANK LEFFINGWELL,
Care *Herald*.

DEAR SIR:—Yours received, and if you are really sincere in your statement that you can give important information concerning the deserter, Richard Mitchell, please call here immediately upon receipt of this.

R. A.

At the head of this note was the engraved address: "The Gondola Apartment House, Riverside Drive."

"Funny he didn't sign his name," mused Leffingwell. "I suppose, however, he's afraid to trust me until he is convinced that I am really on the level."

He consulted the advertising-clerk as to how to get to the Gondola Apartment House, and the latter not only directed him there, but, upon learning that he had no car fare, was accommodating enough to lend him a ten-cent piece.

Half an hour later, Leffingwell entered the big apartment-house which overlooks the Hudson River, and approaching a hall-boy, asked him if there was any person living there known as R. A.

"Before I answer that question, will you please tell me your name?" inquired the boy cautiously.

"Leffingwell—Frank Leffingwell."

"Then it's all right, sir," said the boy. "The gentleman is expecting you, and I'm to take you up to his apartment right away. Will you please come with me?"

He led the way to an elevator, and they were whizzed to the top floor of the tall building. The hall-boy pressed the bell of the left-hand apartment, and the door was opened by a tall, gray-bearded man.

"This is the party you told me to bring up, sir," said the boy.

The gray-bearded man nodded.

"Before I ask you to step inside," he said, addressing Leffingwell, "you will pardon me if I ask you to give me your word of honor that you are not a newspaper reporter."

"I swear to you that I am not, sir."

"And you told the truth in your letter? You have important information to give me concerning the man in whom I am interested?"

"Yes, sir. I have information which I think you will consider important."

"Very good. Kindly come inside. You will pardon my taking these precautions; but I am extremely anxious to avoid publicity in this affair; and when I received your letter, I half suspected that you were a newspaper man, and that you had written that letter as an ingenious means of getting an interview with me and obtaining some information concerning this matter."

He led the way to a magnificently fitted up library, and taking care to close and lock the door, motioned Leffingwell to a seat.

"And now, sir," he answered, "I am ready to hear this important information concerning Richard Mitchell. If it results in his capture, I assure you that you shall be paid the reward I offer."

"I'm afraid I can't promise you positively that it will result in his capture, sir," replied Leffingwell with a sigh. "The important information I referred to is that I know confidently that Mitchell is in this city, and that he has been drinking heavily. It seemed to me that, such being the case, it ought not to be a very difficult matter to run him down. The fact that he allows liquor to get the best of him shows that he is not taking any great precaution to avoid detection and arrest. I thought you might not know these things, and that is why I wrote to you."

"Humph! And you say in your letter that you and your friend have seen Mitchell to-day?"

"Yes. We met him on the street this afternoon. He was so drunk that he could scarcely talk, but when he saw us it sort of sobered him up."

"Well, if you met him, and knew that he was wanted by the government for desertion from the army, why on earth did you not hold him and hand him over to the authorities?"

"We did intend to do so; but he told us that he had a good job in Philadelphia, and that he expected to get married to-morrow. He worked on our sympathies to such an extent that, for the girl's sake, we finally let him go."

The gray-bearded man frowned.

"That was foolish—very foolish," he said. "The scoundrel was deceiving you. He told you barefaced lies. He has no job in Philadelphia, and I have good reason to know that he is not going to get married to-morrow."

"I suspected as much—afterward, when it was too late," admitted Leffingwell bitterly. "I was a fool to place any stock in what he said; for I know the cad of old, and he always was an out-and-out liar. I assure you, sir, that my friend and I now greatly regret our weakness, and if we can lay hands on him again—he'll have a hard job getting away."

The gray-bearded man shook his head.

"I'm afraid you'll have quite some difficulty in laying hands on him again," he said. "You had your chance, and you missed it. I don't think you'll get another."

"Well, we're going to try our best to find him," announced Leffingwell grimly.

"I presume that you are inspired solely by the big reward I offer, eh?" inquired the other.

"Principally by that, I will admit, sir. We need money mighty bad to help out a friend who is in trouble. But, apart from the reward, it will afford me much satisfaction to bring that cad to justice. I have several grudges against him to settle on my own account."

"Humph! You say in your letter that you have been honorably discharged from the United States army."

"Yes, sir. That's the truth."

"Have you got your discharge-papers with you?"

"No; they were stolen from my pocket yesterday, and, of course, I haven't had time to get duplicates from headquarters. I hope you believe that I am telling you the truth, sir?"

The gray-bearded man studied Leffingwell's face intently.

"Yes, I believe you," he said slowly. "If I am any judge of faces, yours is an honest one. May I ask why you have left the army?"

"My chum and I grew tired of a military career, and determined to seek our fortunes in civil life."

Leffingwell then proceeded to give R. A. an account of Randolph and himself, and told what had happened to them since their arrival in New York.

"And I will frankly confess, sir," he added, "that my real object in coming to you was to make you this proposition: if you will help my chum out of his trouble by loaning us the money to hire a good lawyer, we will, in return, devote all our time to running down this cad Mitchell, and if we succeed in capturing him, will be willing to forego the reward you have offered."

"Humph!" exclaimed R. A., apparently ignoring this offer. "And you say that a few years ago this fellow Mitchell was in your regiment and a member of your company?"

"Yes. He served with us in the Philippines until he deserted. The boys were mighty glad to get rid of him; for he was universally detested."

"Ha! Do you know anything specific against his character? Can you tell me of any acts he has committed, in addition to deserting from the army, which would discredit him in the eyes of an honest person?" inquired the other eagerly.

"Yes. I can tell you a whole lot against him, and nothing to his credit. The fellow is a thorough blackguard, and, while he was in the army, acted like one."

He proceeded to mention several incidents which showed up Mitchell's character in the worst possible light.

The gray-bearded man listened to his recital with great interest.

"Young man," he said, "I believe all you have told me; for I pride myself upon being a pretty good judge of faces, and, as I said before, yours bears the stamp of honesty.

"Now, I want you to do me a favor. Would you mind repeating these things that you have just told me about Mitchell to another person—a young lady. Will you do this for me?"

Leffingwell hesitated.

"Well, I can't say I exactly like that proposition," he said slowly. "It sort of goes against a fellow's grain to blacken a man's reputation in the eyes of a woman—even when the man is such a cad as Mitchell.

"Do you think it's exactly fair, sir, to ask me to do this without letting me know first who the young lady is, what relation she bears to Mitchell, and why you want me to tell her these things? It seems to me, sir, without meaning any offense, that if you expect me to do what you ask, it is up to you to do a little preliminary explaining. I swear that I will regard as confidential anything you may see fit to tell me."

R. A. nodded his head.

"What you demand is quite just and reasonable," he said. "I will be frank with you, Mr. Leffingwell, and take you into my confidence, and you will then see that my motives are perfectly proper and honorable.

"First of all, let me tell you that my name is Robert Addison, and that I am a retired Wall Street broker. The young woman I refer to is my ward. She was the daughter of my dearest friend, who, when he died, entrusted his motherless child to my care. I've brought her up as if she were my own daughter. That scoundrel, Mitchell, expects to marry her soon. The foolish girl is strangely infatuated with him."

"Ha!" exclaimed Leffingwell. "And I suppose you want me to blacken his reputation to such an extent that the young woman will lose her infatuation and refuse to marry him?"

"Exactly," replied Mr. Addison, nodding his head vigorously. "It may not sound like a nice undertaking, but, since you know Mitchell to be such a downright cad, don't you think that it is your moral duty to try to save this poor girl from the unhappiness that must come to her if she carries out her present intention of marrying him?"

"But the chances are that she won't believe what I tell her," protested Leffingwell. "They say that love is blind, you know."

"Very true," replied Mr. Addison with a frown. "But there is a slight chance that your words may have some effect, and I don't want to leave any step untried. If you go about your mission with diplomacy, there is a bare possibility that the fact that you were in the same regiment as Mitchell may have considerable weight with her."

"But does she not already know that

he is a deserter from the United States army? Surely that fact alone should be sufficient to open her eyes to his worthlessness," suggested Leffingwell.

Mr. Addison shook his head.

"She knows that he is a deserter; but I regret to say that that knowledge has had no effect upon her. The villain has a glib tongue, and he has managed to concoct a story to account for his act which puts his offense in a good light in her eyes. I have tried to argue the matter with her; but she is deaf to all reason. She declares that she loves Mitchell, and is determined to marry him."

"Has she known him a long time?" inquired Leffingwell.

"Only about a year. She met him down South. We had gone there to spend the winter, and Mitchell was employed as a clerk in the hotel at which we were stopping.

"Of course, nobody had any idea that he was a deserter at the time; but I didn't like his looks at all, and when I caught on to the fact that there was a love-affair in progress between him and my ward, I immediately packed my trunks and returned to New York, bringing her with me.

"Well, sir, that scamp soon afterward threw up his job in the hotel and came North. Pretty soon I found out that he and my ward had resumed their love-affair. Of course I forbade him the house; but, nevertheless, they managed to communicate with and see each other pretty often.

"One day, a few months ago, I learned that Mitchell was wanted by the army authorities for desertion. Immediately I heard this, I made up my mind to capture him and have him sent to prison, with the object of getting him out of the way and saving my ward from subsequent unhappiness."

"Well, I should think it ought to have been easy for you to get hold of him at the time," remarked Leffingwell.

"I guess it would have been, if I had not been foolish enough to inform my ward of my intentions," replied Mr. Addison with a frown. "She gave him warning, I guess; for I haven't seen or heard of him since that day, and haven't the remotest idea of his whereabouts.

"I have a sneaking suspicion, though, that my ward has, all along, been in constant communication with him; but how she manages it, I can't imagine. I have had private detectives watch her, and they have closely scrutinized all the mail she receives; but not a single clue have they been able to discover."

"Isn't it possible that they are already married?" suggested Leffingwell. "It seems to me that when Mitchell was warned that you were aware of the fact that he was a deserter, and were determined to hand him over to the authorities, it's likely that he would persuade the young lady to marry him secretly, so that, whatever happened, they could not be parted."

"No," replied Mr. Addison emphatically; "I feel sure that such is not the case. Mitchell won't marry that girl before next month."

"Why not?" persisted Leffingwell. "If she loves him and he loves her, it—"

"That's just the point," the other interrupted fiercely. "Mitchell does not love my foolish ward. The infatuation is all one-sided. I am positive of that. The scoundrel is trying to win the poor girl because he knows that, on her twenty-second birthday, she will inherit a million dollars from her father. He is nothing more than a contemptible fortune-hunter, and is after the poor child's money, although she blindly refuses to be convinced that such is the case.

"By the terms of her father's will, if she marries without my consent before her twenty-second birthday, she loses every cent of her inheritance. After her twenty-second birthday, she is supposed to have arrived at an age of discretion, and the will gives her the privilege of marrying whoever she pleases."

"And does Mitchell know of the terms of this will?" inquired Leffingwell.

"He does. My ward admits that she has told him all about it. That is why I feel confident that the scoundrel will not try to persuade her to marry him until the tenth of next month. She celebrates her twenty-second birthday on that date."

"Ha!" cried Leffingwell. "I see, now, why your advertisement in the *Herald* states that Mitchell must be caught during the present month."

"Well, that isn't the only reason why I inserted that clause in the advertisement," Mr. Addison explained. "As a matter of fact, if the scamp is not arrested by the first of next month the authorities will be powerless to arrest him at all."

"What do you mean?" cried Leffingwell, in great surprise.

"I mean that after the first of next month he will be immune from arrest, under the statute of limitations. Surely, you, as a soldier, must know the law regarding deserters."

"No, I don't," Leffingwell replied. "I never even thought of deserting, so never had cause to acquaint myself with the details of the law on the subject."

"Well, the law says that if a deserter is not arrested within two years after the expiration of his term of enlistment he shall be immune from arrest, provided that since the date of his desertion he has always lived in this country under his own name.

"I have learned that the term of Mitchell's enlistment expired just one year eleven and a half months ago; so, you see, if he can manage to avoid capture until the first of next month, the law will be powerless to touch him, and he will be able to marry my ward when she reaches her twenty-second year without fear of molestation.

"That is why he must be captured within the next two weeks. If I can have him sent away to a military prison he won't be able to marry my ward until he gets out. That will be at least two or three years, I guess, and by the end of that time the silly girl ought to be thoroughly cured of her infatuation."

"I sincerely hope that you'll succeed in catching him," cried Leffingwell earnestly. "If only I had known what I know now, when I had my hands on the cad to-day!"

"It is too bad that you let him get away," said Mr. Addison with a sigh.

"However, it's no use crying over spilled milk. Now, having heard my explanation, don't you feel justified in acquainting this misguided girl with all you know reflecting on that scamp's character?"

"Yes, sir; and I'm perfectly willing to do it," replied Leffingwell. "I'm afraid my words won't have any effect upon her; but I feel it my duty to do what I can to dissuade her from taking this rash step."

"Very good," said Mr. Addison. "I will send for her, now."

A few minutes later a pale-faced young woman entered the library.

"Do you want to see me, guardian?" she inquired, darting a glance of curiosity toward Leffingwell.

CHAPTER X.

A LITTLE LIGHT.

"CLARICE," began Mr. Addison somewhat nervously, "I sent for you because I want you to meet Mr. Frank Leffingwell."

The young woman acknowledged this introduction with a gracious bow. As Leffingwell rose from his chair he studied her appearance with great interest.

She was by no means a pretty girl. Her face, besides being devoid of color, was quite plain, its one redeeming feature being a pair of very bright black eyes. Her brown hair was dressed in a manner which gave her an appearance of being much older than her years.

It was an interesting face, however, despite its lack of beauty, and her figure was slender and graceful; but, knowing what he did of Mitchell's character and disposition, Leffingwell felt sure that this was not the type of girl to attract the deserter, apart from the fact that she was heiress to a fortune of a million dollars.

"Mr. Leffingwell, I must explain, has served in the United States army and has only just been honorably discharged," went on Mr. Addison.

At these words, the gracious smile disappeared from the girl's face and she regarded the two men haughtily—almost defiantly. It was quite evident that her suspicions were aroused.

"As a matter of fact," continued her guardian, paying no heed to her change of manner, "Mr. Leffingwell was in the same regiment and in the same company as—as that contemptible scoundrel with whom you are so foolishly infatuated."

"I beg your pardon, guardian," said the girl quietly, her black eyes flashing fire. "I must request you to choose your

words more carefully. I presume you refer to Richard. He is *not* a scoundrel, and I don't care to hear him spoken of in such a manner."

"He *is* a contemptible scoundrel," cried her guardian. "I have suspected him of being such all along, and now I have convincing proofs that my suspicions were correct. Mr. Leffingwell, here, knows the fellow well. He can tell you what kind of reputation the scamp bore in the army. That is why I have sent for you. I want you to hear the truth from him."

"If Mr. Leffingwell will pardon me," retorted the girl coldly, "I don't care to hear his testimony. It seems to me that a young man might be engaged in a braver and more honorable task than speaking ill of a man who is not here to defend himself."

Leffingwell colored furiously at this rebuke.

"I assure you, madam, that I am quite prepared to tell Richard Mitchell to his face what I am requested to tell you now," he said.

"By gad—yes!" cried Mr. Addison indignantly. "That remark is as unkind as it is unfair, Clarice. I wish to Heaven that that skulking scamp was here now to hear what we have to say about him."

"Two weeks from now your wish shall be granted, if you like," replied the girl. "Then, if Mr. Leffingwell desires, he shall have an opportunity of saying what he has to say in the presence of the man he is apparently so eager to traduce. Until that time, as you well know, Richard cannot afford to come out of hiding."

"And why is he in hiding?" cried the old man passionately. "Because he didn't have stamina or patriotism enough to serve out his time in the army. Like the white-livered coward he is, he broke his sworn pledge and deserted. He richly deserves to go to prison, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, my girl, for your lack of patriotism in defending him and shielding him from the authorities."

The girl sighed wearily.

"Pray, what is the use of going over all that again, guardian?" she said. "We have argued it out so often. I have told you that Richard has fully and satisfactorily explained to me why he deserted from the army. Of course, I'll admit, it was a rash and wrong act on his part, but under the circumstances he was justified."

"He was *not* justified," cried the old man angrily. "Tell her, Leffingwell, the real reason why the scoundrel ran away."

"He deserted because he was too cowardly to stay and fight," said Leffingwell. "We got word one night that we were to be attacked by Tagalogs. The next morning Mitchell was missing."

"That is a slanderous falsehood," cried the girl furiously. "He did not desert for any such reason. He received word that his aged mother was dying in Boston and was crying for him night and day. He applied to his officers for leave of absence. His colonel had a grudge against him, and permission was curtly refused. Then he deserted and went straight to the bedside of his poor mother. That is the truth. He has explained it all to me."

Leffingwell smiled grimly.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said quietly. "It is he who has lied to you —not I."

"I wouldn't believe you under oath," cried the girl, her eyes blazing with scorn and indignation. "I am fully aware of your object in coming here, sir. My guardian has hired you to attempt to poison my mind against Richard. You are prepared to slander a man who has done you no harm in order to earn a few miserable dollars.

"Well, you won't earn the money. I refuse to listen to what you have to say. Whatever you or anybody else might tell me reflecting on Richard Mitchell's character would have no effect upon me. I am fully aware of the motives which inspire such tales.

"As for you, guardian, you ought to be ashamed of yourself for adopting such methods. You are governed by a most unreasonable prejudice. Some day you will appreciate Richard at his true worth, and then I shall love you again. But until that time comes I cannot give you even my respect.

"Please don't send for me again for any such reason as this. No matter what you say or what anybody else says, I am going to marry Richard on the eleventh of next month. Nobody can stop me."

With this she stalked indignantly out of the room, leaving the two men regarding each other blankly.

"Well, what do you think of that!" gasped her guardian. "That girl is a regular fury when she's aroused. She's so infatuated with that villain that she doesn't even want to hear the truth. She's rushing blindly to her fate and refuses to have her eyes opened."

"I expected matters would turn out this way," replied Leffingwell. "I guess a woman in love's about the most unreasonable creature on God's green earth. It looks as if you are powerless to save her, Mr. Addison."

"There's only one thing left," replied the old man. "That fellow must be caught before the end of the month.

"I'll double the number of private detectives I've got working for me now. Can't say I've got much confidence in private detectives, however. All they seem to do is to look wise and put in big expense bills every week."

"Well, how about accepting my offer, Mr. Addison?" asked Leffingwell eagerly. "You promise to help my chum out of his scrape and I'll devote the next two weeks to trying to find Mitchell. I have an advantage over your detectives, you know, in that I know Mitchell and would recognize him instantly if I came across him, whereas they have never seen him and only have a description of him with which to work."

"That is very true," replied the old man. "I guess you wouldn't have any trouble in recognizing the scoundrel if you should come across him—but how do you expect to come across him? That's the point. You have no clues on which to work, and the chances of your meeting him accidentally again are about one in ten thousand."

"Well, my plan is to watch this house night and day for the next two weeks in the hope that Mitchell will try to communicate with the young lady, or *vice versa*," declared Leffingwell.

Mr. Addison shook his head dubiously.

"I'm afraid you won't be able to accomplish anything. As I have told you, I have had private detectives closely watching Clarice for the past few weeks, and they have been unable to discover any means of communication. If trained detectives have failed, how can you hope to succeed?"

"But you just told me that you hadn't much confidence in private detectives," argued Leffingwell. "Perhaps I and my friend, Simple Simon, will be lucky enough to succeed where they have failed. Don't you think you ought to give us a chance, Mr. Addison?"

"Well, you can try if you like, but I haven't any hope that you'll accomplish anything."

"And in return for our work, will you help my chum out of his trouble?" cried Leffingwell eagerly. "I realize that I'm asking a whole lot of you, sir, and that unless we actually succeed in running down Mitchell I'm giving you very little in return; but I assure you that if you will do us this great favor we will never forget your generosity. Whatever money it may cost you to get Al Randolph out of prison we shall regard as a loan and will pay you back every cent, some day—honestly we will."

"That's all right, my boy," replied the other. "As a matter of fact, after hearing your story, I had fully made up my mind to come to the rescue of your friend without asking anything of you in return. I have taken a liking to you and feel disposed to help you.

"I shall put your friend's case in the hands of my own lawyer to-morrow, and see if he can't get the young man out of his trouble. Of course that young woman will have to be found and persuaded to testify, but my lawyer doubtless will attend to all that. I am willing to spend whatever money may be necessary."

"I can't thank you enough," cried Leffingwell earnestly. "I only hope I shall be able to repay you, sir, by capturing Mitchell and thus helping you out of *your* trouble."

"If you could do that you would indeed be repaying me," responded the old man with a sigh. "By the way, my lad, I guess you need some pocket-money. I believe you told me that you lost your wallet containing every cent you had in the world. Here is twenty dollars—"

"No, no," Leffingwell hastily interrupted him. "I couldn't think of taking it, sir. Your promise to help my chum has placed me heavily enough in your debt, as it is."

"Tush, tush! If you are going to work for me you must have expense money. You can't expect to run down that scoundrel without money in your pocket; and, besides, if you are going to give me all your time for the next two weeks, how are you going to obtain money with which to buy food and hire a bed, unless you take it from me?"

Realizing the logic of this argument, Leffingwell took the money. As a matter of fact, he was mighty glad to get it, for now that his anxiety for his chum was relieved and he had leisure to think of himself, he began to grow conscious of the fact that he was feeling very weak from want of food and proper sleep.

After a little further conversation, Leffingwell took leave of his benefactor and departed, highly elated at the success of his visit.

"Al will be mighty glad when he hears what good luck I have had, and so will Simple Simon," he mused, as he stepped into the elevator and was whizzed to the ground floor. "By the way, I guess Simple Simon is now waiting patiently for me in the Herald Building. I'd better go to him at once, for he'll be wondering what has become of me."

As he stepped out of the Gondola Apartment House and found himself on Riverside Drive, he crossed the driveway to lean for a moment over the stone embankment and gaze down at the smooth, black water of the Hudson.

Viewed from Riverside Drive, the Hudson River at night-time is weirdly picturesque.

A steamboat, ablaze with light, was gliding majestically up the stream. In the opposite direction a saucy tugboat, invisible in the darkness save for a small lamp at bow and stern, was making her way noisily toward the sea. Across the river loomed the Jersey coast, ink-black except for the lights which dotted the margin of the shore.

Leffingwell lingered for a few minutes, admiring the view. Suddenly, as he glanced across the river, his attention was attracted by a tiny light, situated apparently a short distance inland at a point directly opposite where he stood.

It seemed to him that this light was acting somewhat queerly. It was constantly appearing, disappearing, and reappearing, and its intermittent gleams were of irregular duration.

During his service in the army he had seen enough of the work of the signal corps to recognize the Morse code when he saw it.

He had never studied telegraphy, so he was unable to interpret these irregular flashes, but he realized that that little white light was spelling out a message to somebody on the New York side of the river.

A sudden impulse prompted him to wheel around and glance at the upper stories of the Gondola Apartment House.

In a little window on the top floor gleamed a tiny light—a light which was flashing and disappearing at irregular intervals in a manner similar to the light on the Jersey shore.

"Jumping Jehoshaphat!" he exclaimed excitedly. "That light up there must be in one of the windows of Mr. Addison's apartment. It looks to me as if I've already discovered something that those private detectives have missed."

CHAPTER XI.

SIMPLE SIMON'S ILL-LUCK.

"AND you mean to tell me that my cousin, Tom Clark, is lying in a hospital at the point of death, eh?" said the man in the third row at Dell's Theater to Simple Simon.

"Yes, sir," replied Simon. "Leastwise, the feller in the hospital looks enough like you to be your twin brother, so I suppose there ain't no doubt that he's your cousin. An' you say he's a detective, eh? Well, of course, my comrade didn't know that at the time or he wouldn't have interfered. I suppose you don't happen to know why he was follerin' the young woman, eh?"

"I don't know what young woman you're talking about. You're speaking in riddles; but if my cousin is lying unidentified in a hospital I guess I'd better go to him at once. So it was your friend who assaulted him, was it?"

"Yes," admitted Simple Simon sadly. "But it was a fair blow and your cousin had a chance to defend himself. My

messmate is now in prison as a result of the thing. I hope, sir, that if your cousin comes to his senses you'll speak a good word with him on behalf of my messmate. Tell him, please, that the boy meant no harm and had no idea that he was a detective, and try to persuade him not to be hard on him in court."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," retorted the other angrily. "If the unidentified man in the hospital really is my cousin, I warn you that your friend will get all that is coming to him. Tom Clark has plenty of pull in this town, and whether he dies or whether he lives, his friends will see that he is fully avenged."

Feeling exceedingly despondent as a result of this reply, Simple Simon's first impulse was to go at once to Leffingwell to impart the unpleasant news to him.

But he suddenly recollected that he was still attired in the costume of a Roman captain and that a flashing tin helmet adorned his fiery head. Realizing that he would cut a painfully conspicuous figure if he appeared on the streets in this extraordinary get-up, he deemed it expedient to go in search of his own clothes before taking any other step.

With this purpose in view, he was about to endeavor to climb onto the stage again when one of the ushers intercepted him and, leading him to a door at the back of one of the boxes, explained to him that he could get back by this means without having to go through an acrobatic performance in full view of the audience.

When Simple Simon arrived behind the scenes once more, he was confronted by the angry stage-manager.

"You harebrained jackass! You wooden-headed simpleton! You red-headed baboon!" shouted the latter furiously. "You've ruined the act—you've spoiled the whole show. What the dickens do you mean by these infernal monkey-shines?"

"I'm sorry," replied Simple Simon, looking very sheepish. "I didn't mean to do it; but when I caught sight of that feller in the third row, he looked so much like the chap I thought he was, that I forgot everything else. I promise you, sir, that it won't occur again—"

"Won't occur again!" roared the manager. "You can bet your sweet life it won't. I'll be mighty careful in future not to hire a man who looks anything like you. Get your clothes, now, and get out of here, you freckle-faced clown, before I have you thrown out bodily. I intended to pay you two dollars if you'd done your work properly; but now you won't get a single cent."

Under other circumstances Simple Simon would have been inclined to resent the abuse which the irate manager hurled at him; but now his sense of guilt caused him to receive these epithets with meekness and submission.

He lost no time in exchanging his stage costume for his own clothes, and hurried out into the street and proceeded as fast as his legs would carry him toward the *Herald* office, in search of Leffingwell.

But Leffingwell was not to be found. Their friend, the clerk at the advertising desk, had gone home and another man was there in his place. The latter knew nothing about Leffingwell, and could give no information as to where he had gone.

For two hours Simple Simon waited patiently.

Suddenly, happening to glance through the window into the street beyond, his eyes encountered a sight which made him gasp.

On the other side of Herald Square a young woman was stepping into a hansom cab. The cab was some yards away from where Simple Simon stood; but his eyesight was good and, despite the distance, he was able to recognize that young woman.

"It's her!" he gasped without regard to grammar. "By all that's wonderful, it's her. This is the greatest piece of luck I've ever had in all my life."

He rushed out of the door like a madman, and reached the other side of Herald Square just in time to see the hansom, with the girl inside, starting up Broadway at a slow rate of speed.

"Stop! stop!" he cried frenziedly, attempting to give chase on foot and running in the middle of the street in reckless disregard of the many vehicles hurrying in all directions. "Stop! stop! For the Lord's sake, stop!"

But his voice was drowned in the roar of the traffic and the cab kept on its way. Observing which, Simple Simon groaned despairingly.

"What's the trouble, mister?" cried a voice above his head.

Simple Simon raised his eyes and saw that it was a cabman seated on the box of an empty hansom who had addressed him.

"That there cab!" gasped Simon, pointing to the other hansom which was now almost out of sight. "It's got a young woman inside that I'd give a fortune to get hold of, and she's getting away—blast my lubberly luck, she's getting away."

"Pooh!" exclaimed the jehu. "That's a cinch. You want to catch that cab, eh? Well, get into my hansom, mister, and we'll give chase. I've got a better horse than that guy and we're bound to overtake him."

Simple Simon lost no time in accepting this invitation. He jumped into the vehicle with a single bound, the cabby urged up his horse with an ostentatious flourish of his whip, and the chase was on.

The first vehicle had a good start and the intervening traffic of Broadway forced Simple Simon's cabman to proceed with caution; but they were able to keep the other hansom in sight all the time. Finally the latter turned down a side-street and proceeded up Seventh Avenue, a much less crowded thoroughfare than Broadway.

Here there was a chance for Simple Simon's driver to put on more speed and quickly bring the chase to an end.

The first cab was not going particularly fast, and a sudden spurt undoubtedly would have enabled them to overtake it.

Observing this, Simple Simon leaned out of the cab at a dangerous angle and yelled to his driver: "For land's sake, man, go faster. Put on full speed and we'll overhaul her in a jiffy."

Now, Broadway cabmen are world-famous for their cunning, and this one was no exception to the rule.

He was fully aware of the fact that at the rate the first cab was going it would be an easy matter for him to overtake it; but he also figured out that the longer the ride, the more money he might expect to receive from his grateful fare and, therefore, not having the slightest suspicion of the latter's impecuniosity, he secretly resolved to prolong the chase as much as possible.

"All right, mister," he replied. "I'm making my horse go as fast as she can. We'll catch them pretty soon, never fear!"

But, as a matter of fact, he was secretly reining in his steed and taking good care to see that they did not get too near the object of their pursuit.

Just then, the driver of the first cab glanced around and saw that he was being pursued. He lifted the trap on the roof of his hansom and imparted the information to the young woman inside.

Apparently the latter enjoined him to go faster and outdistance the pursuing cab, for Simple Simon suddenly saw him whip up his horse and proceed up the avenue at breakneck speed.

"She's getting away!" shouted Simon to his driver. "She's getting away! She's given the signal for full speed ahead and they're leaving us badly astern. For the love of Mike, comrade, put on more steam or we'll never catch her."

His jehu saw that at the rate the first cab was now going he could safely afford to urge on his own horse without any danger of overtaking the former, so he slackened his hold on the reins and they began to make better time.

For nearly an hour the exciting chase continued, the first cab making frantic efforts to throw off the pursuing vehicle, and Simple Simon's cab all the time managing to keep the first one within sight, although never overtaking it.

More than once Simon leaned out of his hansom and hoarsely shouted to the driver of the cab ahead, beseeching him to stop.

But the latter paid no heed to his cries. In fact, every time he yelled the driver of the fugitive vehicle would whip up his horse and increase the pace.

At length, however, Simple Simon saw to his joy that the first cab was slowing down. A second later, it came to a full stop and the young woman alighted.

His own hansom was about thirty yards away, and before they could draw nearer the young woman had handed some money to her driver, stepped hastily across the sidewalk and entered the doorway of a big building.

When Simple Simon's cab drove up to

this building, he jumped out hastily and rushed to the door through which he had seen the young woman enter.

The door was ajar, and he was about to step inside when a young man, attired in a blue uniform with brass buttons, barred his way.

"Well, sir?" the latter demanded aggressively. "What do you want?"

"I want to see that young woman who came in here just now," Simple Simon explained.

"Well, you can't see her. She told me she doesn't want to see you. She left a message for you, though."

"She did, eh?" exclaimed Simple Simon eagerly. "What was the message, son? Speak quick."

The youth grinned.

"She told me that, if you came in here after her, I was to tell you that if you attempted to follow her or bother her any more she would be compelled to have you arrested."

"Good Heavens!" gasped Simple Simon. "Did she really say that? Then she can't know who I am or what I want to see her about—that's certain."

"Oh, I guess she knows you all right," snickered the young man. "You're the guy who follered her from down-town in a hansom cab, ain't you? If I was you I'd cut out bothering her in future; for she's the kind that means what they says, and first thing you know you'll land in the coop."

"But I must see her and have a talk with her," persisted Simon earnestly. "She's got it in her power to save my comrade from prison—perhaps from the electric-chair. All I want her to do is to testify in his favor. Surely that ain't asking too much of her."

But this argument was lost upon the youth in the blue uniform.

"Well, the lady doesn't want to see you, so that's all there is to it," he declared with an air of finality. "You can't make people see you, if they don't want to, you know. This here is a free country. I advise you to go away and not annoy her any more. It's too late at night to be coming around here to see people, anyway."

Simple Simon realized that further efforts to speak with the young woman just now were useless. He therefore decided to abandon the attempt for the present; but secretly resolved to obtain an interview with her the next morning, even if he had to force his way into her presence.

"I suppose she lives here, eh?" he inquired cautiously.

"Oh, yes, she lives here all right," was the reply.

"And what is her name?" went on Simple Simon.

The young man answered this query by a sly wink of his left eye.

"Ain't you a Foxy Quiller?" he jeered. "But, smart as you may think yourself, you ain't getting any information out of me."

"Well, tell me whose house this is. She don't live in this big place all alone, does she?"

"All alone—of course not. Stop your kiddin' now. There's over sixty families lives here."

"Sixty families!" gasped Simple Simon. "Is it a hotel?"

"No, 'tisn't a hotel. It's the Gondola Apartment House. Now that's all I'm going to tell you. You'll have to go out now, for I've got to lock the front door."

Simple Simon walked dazedly out of the place.

"Sixty families living there!" he muttered. "Gee whiz! Seems to me I'll have a mighty hard job to-morrow morning finding out which one of the sixty she belongs to. Is it possible that, after having such a stroke of luck in finding her, I'm going to lose her again without accomplishing anything?"

As he reached the sidewalk he was accosted by the driver of the hansom.

"Hello, mister. I was beginning to think you was never coming out. Suppose you got hold of your party all right, eh?"

"No, I didn't," replied Simple Simon moodily. "She wouldn't see me."

"Gee! That's too bad. And after such a long and excitin' chase, too. But of course it ain't my fault, mister. You wanted me to catch that other cab, and I caught it all right. You can't say that I didn't carry out my contract."

"Of course not. I'm not blaming you at all. I'm very much obliged to you for your kindness, old feller," replied Simple Simon heartily.

"Don't mention it, mister. Consider-

ing the distance and the way I had to whip up this poor old horse of mine, I guess I'll be pretty reasonable if I ask you for twelve dollars."

"I guess twelve dollars would be reasonable enough, if I had it," replied Simon. "But, I'm sorry to say, I haven't got a red cent."

At this the cabby's manner changed and he glared at his fare.

"Come, now," he said gruffly, "don't give me a game of that sort. You ain't going to try to do me out of my hard-earned money, are you? Why, I've almost killed this here horse of mine on your account. Don't give me any trouble, mister. Pay up like a gent."

"But I tell you that I haven't got a cent," protested Simon. "I didn't think you were going to charge me anything for riding in your cab. You didn't mention anything about paying, you know. You invited me to step in, and I stepped in. I thought you was driving me as a favor."

"Aw, go on. You didn't think anything of the kind!" shouted the cabby furiously. "You've got enough sense to know that you can't expect to ride in cabs free, gratis, for nothin'. Stop your kiddin' now and pay me my twelve dollars, or I'll call a cop and have you pinched."

"But I tell you I haven't any money!" cried Simple Simon. "If I had, I'd gladly pay you. I would indeed."

It was plain from the cabman's manner that he did not believe this statement.

"Now, see here, mister," he said with forced calmness. "I can't afford to waste any time with you. If you ain't goin' to pay me that twelve dollars like a gent, you'd better step into my cab and drive around to the police-station. If you refuse to come with me peaceably, I'll holler 'Police!' until a cop comes, and have you dragged through the streets."

"All right, I'll go with you," said Simple Simon with a sigh. "If you want to have me locked up, you can go ahead; but I can't see what good it's goin' to do you, my hearty. I can't give ye any money if I haven't got it. You can't get blood out of a stone. I'll get in your cab and go with you to the police-station, though."

"One minute!" cried a voice. "You won't do anything of the sort. Simple Simon. I'll pay this fellow his twelve dollars—if you are sure that he isn't charging you too much."

"Leffingwell!" cried Simple Simon in amazement. "Well, I'll be jiggered. How the deuce did you get here and where, by all that's wonderful, did you get hold of twelve dollars?"

"I'll explain everything to you afterward," replied Leffingwell. "Here, cabman. Here's your money. Now, be on your way. Come with me across the street, Simple Simon. I've got something important to show you. I'm awfully glad you've come, for I need your help mighty bad."

CHAPTER XII.

"HANDS UP."

THE cabman hastily grabbed and pocketed the bills which Leffingwell held out to him. Then, after directing a glance—half reproachful, half forgiving—toward Simple Simon, he jumped on the box of his cab and drove off.

Simon accompanied his friend across the driveway to the stone embankment overlooking the Hudson.

"I've got some important news to tell you," he said to Leffingwell as they crossed the street. "Things have been happening since I saw you last. I've found out something about that feller in the hospital."

"You have, eh? Anything that will help Al?"

"No. I'm afraid not. Quite the contrary, in fact. I've discovered that, in all probability, his name is Tom Clark; and that if so, he's a detective, and had a right to be following that girl."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Leffingwell. "That looks bad for our friend. Perhaps, however, the fellow, even if he was a detective, had no legitimate excuse for following the young woman," he added hopefully. "If only we could find her and learn the true state of affairs."

"That's another piece of news I've got for you, messmate. I've seen the young woman and found out where she lives. That's how I happen to be here. I followed her from Herald Square in

that cab. She lives in that big building across the street."

"Great guns! You don't say so!" cried Leffingwell. "Why, that's the Gondola Apartment House. It's mighty queer."

"Queer that she should live there, do you mean?" inquired Simple Simon.

"Yes. Do you know who else happens to live in that house? R. A. himself. Isn't that a strange coincidence?"

"Strange! I should say it was," gasped Simple Simon, greatly astonished.

"Perhaps, though, it may be more than mere coincidence," muttered Leffingwell, speaking more to himself than to his companion. "Perhaps she is connected in some way with Mr. Addison's ward and with that cad, Mitchell. Perhaps that is why she was out alone so late at night and why that detective was following her. I must ask Mr. Addison about her to-morrow morning. He didn't mention anything about any other young woman in the case."

"Who's Mr. Addison, comrade?" inquired Simple Simon, to whom Leffingwell's words were meaningless.

"I'll explain everything to you later. If you are positive that that girl lives across the street, where we can get her at any time, we can afford to dismiss her from our minds until to-morrow morning. There is another matter which needs our immediate attention. Look across the river, old man. Do you see that light over there?"

"I see several lights," replied Simple Simon, gazing at the Jersey bank. "Which do you mean?"

"I mean that tiny light directly opposite to where we're standing."

"The one that's a short distance inshore, eh? I see it. What about it?"

"Notice anything queer about it?"

"Why, it keeps going in and out—like—like as if somebody was signaling. By Jingo!" he cried excitedly. "That's just what it is. Somebody is flashing a message to somebody over here. There's no doubt of it."

"Exactly what I think!" exclaimed Leffingwell with a smile of satisfaction. "Old man, we've got to get a boat of some sort and get over to that light right away."

"Why? What business is it of ours?" inquired Simple Simon. "It's probably some love-sick chap sending a spoony message to his sweetheart over here. Let 'em go ahead. It's no concern of ours, comrade. Why should we go to the trouble?"

"I'll tell you why," replied Leffingwell excitedly. "I happen to have a pretty shrewd idea who's manipulating that light. Who do you think it is, Simple?"

The other shook his head in perplexity.

"Well, the chances are a hundred to one that the fellow who is doing the signaling is Dick Mitchell, the deserter."

"Mitchell!" gasped Simple Simon. "Well, I'll be jiggered. What makes you think that?"

"I've the best of reasons for believing that such is the case. I'll explain it all to you later on. Now, don't you think it's worth while for us to get to that light as soon as possible?"

"Worth while? I should say so. We must get across to the other side—even if we have to swim."

"I can't swim it. I understand the tide of the Hudson is pretty strong, and I'm not a good swimmer. We must find a boat of some sort."

"All right. We'll climb down to the water's edge and walk along a bit. No doubt we'll come across a craft of some kind a little farther up or down stream."

They descended through Riverside Park and walked along the tracks of the New York Central Railroad, which run along the edge of the river.

After walking some distance, they came to a boat-house, to the plank landing of which several rowboats and naphtha launches were moored.

Simple Simon was in favor of appropriating one of these boats without asking leave; but the more prudent Leffingwell proposed that they apply at the boat-house first and ask permission.

For some minutes they knocked on the closed door of the wooden structure in vain. They had just come to the conclusion that the place was deserted, when suddenly the door was flung open and a sleepy looking watchman appeared, carrying a lighted lantern in one hand and a formidable-looking club in the other.

"What do yez want?" he demanded indignantly.

"We want to borrow a rowboat for a little while," Leffingwell explained.

"Well, yez can't borrow any boats here. This is a private clubhouse, and we don't loan out our boats. The pair of yez have an awful nerve knocking like that and waking me out of my sleep."

"We're sorry to have waked you up, old man," said Leffingwell soothingly. "We wouldn't have dreamed of doing it, I assure you, if it wasn't a case of great urgency. We must have a boat to get across the river immediately. If you'll be kind enough to loan us one of those you've got moored over there, we'll promise you to take the very best of care of it and to return it to you in a few hours."

The watchman shook his head emphatically.

"No, yez can't have any of our boats. I tell you this is a private clubhouse. I wouldn't drame of—"

He stopped suddenly, for Leffingwell was holding up a crisp five-dollar bill before his eyes.

"You see this five-dollar bill," he said in a confident whisper. "Well, if you'll be a good fellow and grant our request, the money is yours. You shall have the boat back before daylight, and nobody but ourselves will know that it was used."

"Huh!" growled the watchman, perceptibly wavering as he eyed the five-dollar bill longingly, "I'll warrant the pair of yez are after no good, anyway. Why be yez wanting to cross the river at this hour of the night?"

"We live on the other side," Simple Simon explained shamelessly. "We've been over here having a good time, and if we don't get home pretty soon our wives will scold us. Maybe you're a married man yourself, old boy, and realize what it is to have a scolding missus?"

He winked at Leffingwell, as though to invite admiration of his cleverness. It occurred to the latter that if Simple Simon's explanation had been the truth, the watchman would have stood a mighty poor chance of having his boat returned to him that night; but, luckily, the latter was either too slow-witted to perceive this point or else his eagerness to get possession of that five dollars dulled his sense of logic.

"Well, all right," he said, "I'm running a risk of losing my job by doin' it, but I guess I'll accommodate yez. 'Tain't for the money, of course," he added, taking the five-dollar bill, folding it very small, and putting it carefully in his vest-pocket. "I'm an honest man, and ain't to be bribed; but I'm that good-natured I can't refuse to do anybody a favor. Ye can have that end boat there. Here are the oars. Ye'll be sure to take good care of her and bring her back before daylight, eh?"

"Of course we will," Leffingwell assured him; and a few minutes later they were seated in the rowboat, Simple Simon at the oars and pulling across the river with a powerful stroke.

"I guess we'd better land right opposite to here and walk along the other bank until we come to that light," Leffingwell suggested. "Otherwise Mitchell may see us land, and, becoming suspicious, get away before we can get to him."

Simple Simon thought well of this idea, so they made directly for the opposite shore and tied up the boat.

They tramped the Jersey shore until they came to the point opposite the tall Gondola Apartment House. Glancing across the river, they could see the light in the window on the top floor of the apartment-house still flashing its replies to the other light on the Jersey side.

This was a surprise to Simple Simon, for Leffingwell had not mentioned anything to him about the light in the Gondola; but the latter did not now stop to do any explaining.

"This is the place," he whispered. "See, there's Mitchell's light still flashing over yonder. I hope he doesn't catch sight of us until we can get up close."

The light was situated much farther inland than they had supposed. It was on top of a hill, and this had given it the appearance from the other shore of being much nearer to the water's edge than was actually the case.

Leffingwell and Simple Simon climbed this hill without difficulty. As they drew near to the light, they discovered

that the latter shone from a wretched-looking wooden hut.

They were able to make out, too, that the light itself came from a powerful acetylene lamp, such as is used in carriages and automobiles, and that its intermittent flashes were effected by a dark slide, which somebody was continuously opening and shutting.

Who this person was they could not perceive; for, being behind the lamp, he was invisible; but Leffingwell did not entertain the slightest doubt that it was Richard Mitchell, the deserter, and his heart beat wildly with excitement and expectancy as they gained the summit of the hill and walked rapidly toward the hut, taking care to approach it from the rear.

They had reached the ramshackle structure which stood alone on a desolate stretch of land, and were about to break in the door and spring upon its occupant, when they were suddenly startled by a series of ominous growls; and a second later a ferocious bulldog sprang unerringly toward them, despite the darkness, and with a snarl of rage buried his teeth in the calf of Simple Simon's right leg.

The latter gave a howl of pain as the sharp teeth sank into his flesh. He tried to free himself from the hold of the savage brute; but the latter held on with the pertinacity characteristic of his species, indifferent alike to his victim's frantic struggles and to the vicious kicks which Leffingwell bestowed upon his body.

Suddenly the door of the hut was thrown open and two men sprang out.

"Throw up your hands!" cried one, and Leffingwell saw, to his dismay, that both men held revolvers of formidable caliber, and that the one who had spoken was Richard Mitchell, the deserter.

In his rage and despair, he felt a wild impulse to throw himself upon the latter and seek to wrest his weapon from him, but the muzzle of Mitchell's gun was leveled straight at his head and he realized that such a move would be equivalent to committing suicide.

"What fools we were not to have armed ourselves before we came over here!" he groaned, as he held his hands above his head.

Simple Simon's long arms were also extended skyward.

"All right, my hearties," he gasped, "I guess I know when I'm licked. I'm willing to strike my colors; but for the love of Mike, call off this confounded dog of yours, or I won't have any leg left."

(To be continued.)

GETTING THERE FIRST.

By GEORGE M. A. CAIN.

What happened when Martin Moore sought to beat the crowd in obtaining seats on a packed train.

"WILL I ever get a chance to say it?"

Martin Moore mournfully put the question to himself as they came up to the long platform at the station.

"Here I've spent this whole blessed day out here in this country with her, and I can't seem to make things come around that way. Well, maybe there'll be a show on the train."

"I guess he doesn't love me, after all," Nellie Nugent was thinking mournfully to herself at the same moment. "If he did, he surely would have said something to-day. Or—I wonder if he can be as bashful as all that?"

"Oh, dear, what an awful crowd!" she said aloud.

"Isn't it terrible?" Martin groaned. His chances of getting in the important question in such a mob looked slim. About two thousand other young people seemed to have utilized the first warm holiday to come to this very spot.

"Mr. Moore, couldn't you put my purse in your pocket? I'm always afraid of losing it in a place like this," went on Nellie.

"Why, certainly," Martin blushed with pleasure at this opportunity to do her a service.

They pushed their way through the throng toward the front of the platform, just as the long train with eight Pullmans and three day coaches came hissing up the track. Suddenly Martin discovered a new possibility of service.

"You'd better let me jump on ahead and hold a seat for us. Otherwise we'll be standing all the way."

Suiting the action to the word, he shoved forward and seized the rail of the first day coach before it had come to a standstill. The train had taken on the three extra cars for the resort station, and the car in which Moore found himself was quite empty.

He made sure that its rear platform would stop about where they had been standing. Then he stood with his face to the rear of the car and watched, with a contented smile, for Nellie to come in.

In poured the crowd of young folk. It was but the work of an instant to fill the car to the limit of its capacity. Other young men seized seats and held them for their sweethearts just as Martin had beaten them in doing.

Laughing, calling to one another, bantering acquaintances on being too slow to get anything better than the arm of a seat, they were a merry throng.

"This seat is taken," Martin smiled to the man who looked at him inquiringly after every other seat had been filled.

"This seat's taken," he smiled again to another.

"This seat's taken," he was repeating for about the twentieth time, when there was a sudden jerk under his feet, and he realized that the train had started.

He took another glance through the standing crowd in the aisle. Nellie, he reflected, was tall and wore a rather high hat of reddish color. He could see nothing of either the girl or the hat.

With an unpleasant feeling that he might have to give up his seat to find her, he tried the expedient of standing on the cushion. He nearly toppled over into the lap of one of the few matrons aboard —one who already had a lapful of smaller people than Martin. But he saw nothing of Nellie.

Great heavens! Suppose she had not got aboard! But she must be in the next car. Well, he would have to stand. It was only half an hour's ride anyhow.

His seat was instantly seized by two young men who began to quarrel for the right of exclusive possession with their respective girl companions.

As fast as he could he pressed toward the rear of the car and through the crowd on the platform. And then his heart sank lower and lower as he wormed his way through the next car, looking at every face on either side, but not seeing Nellie's.

The third car was the last. As he reached the rear platform his heart was beating violently somewhere in his boots. Nellie must be back there on the station platform and would have to wait an hour and a half for the next train and fight her way aboard it alone, and they would have only the ferry ride in a crowded boat together, and—

"Great Scott, I've got her pocketbook and all her money and both tickets!" was the sudden, awful recollection that now swept over him.

Only one thought now took possession of his brain. He must get off the train and go back to her. The engine had been slowly gaining headway with its eleven cars and an upgrade. But by this time it was well into a thirty-mile swing.

Martin climbed deliberately over the men on the steps, took one glance at the six-foot embankment, noted that it had soft grass at the bottom, and then jumped before any one of the crowd had quite grasped his purpose.

Rolling, rolling, rolling — bump! — blackness.

But he was only stunned. He opened his eyes just as they got the train started again after picking him up and carrying him aboard.

"Are you hurt?" some idiot asked.

"N—no," he answered slowly. "Where am I?"

Before his question could be answered he was fully conscious and on his feet.

"Let me off," he cried. "I don't want to go on this train. I've left a girl back there. Let me through."

"You don't try any more stunts like that, sonny."

It was the conductor who blocked his way to the platform and held him by both his shoulders.

"You'll stay right here till this train stops in Jersey City," he went on. "You'll get killed next time. You're lucky you weren't badly hurt this time."

"But I can't leave her there. I've got her purse and tickets."

"You'll have time to telegraph from the terminal—the agent will fix it up."

Martin thought a moment on this plan.

"But there isn't any telegraph office open in Midwood to-day," he suddenly exclaimed.

"Well, I can't help it. You're not going to get off this train till it stops. Here, Mike, just keep your eye on this chap. He's crazy or drunk, I guess."

The last two sentences were addressed by the conductor to a stalwart brakeman.

"I guess I kin hold him," Mike grinned.

But he didn't have to hold Martin Moore. Martin was feeling too much shaken up to attempt any dispute about the right of way. A man who had held his seat up to this point looked into the pale face of the brakeman's ward and calmly arose and forced Martin to take his place.

But his fall was no longer the cause of Martin's weakness. He was picturing the forlorn condition of the girl he had left behind him.

Each moment he recalled some new detail of painfulness in the situation. And, whether she ever managed to reach home or not, whether she was lost to all her friends, or would find some scheme for rescuing herself—even though he should get back to that miserable station and fetch her on the next train—she was lost to him forever.

She would never forgive him for leaving her thus. Perhaps that was not the worst possibility involved—it was certainly the most painful.

"Jersey City!" the brakeman suddenly bawled almost in his ear. "Now you kin get off if you wanter," he added to Martin.

It was time to get active. He must try to telegraph. He must see if there was another train back. Even if his hopes were dashed for good and always, even though the girl was rightfully angry with him—past all chance of forgiveness—he must do what he could to get her out of her trying position.

He arose stiffly. His knee hurt him slightly, and he put down his hand to rub it. He felt drying mud there. As he joined the pushing mob once more and had to bide his time in reaching the platform, he tried to brush the spot away.

He managed to get a peep at one or two other mud-spots and get them brushed off by the time he got to the steps of the car. Then he thought he was all right once more and hurried past the people in a mad rush for the telegraph office and a time-table.

"*Mr. Moore.*"

He turned half about as he ran, then stopped short and stood petrified.

Nellie Nugent was standing at the foot of the steps of the second car through which he had passed.

"Why, you look as though you had been through a mill—and seen a ghost. What have you done to yourself? I saw you go through the car looking for me, but you went right past without seeing me. Dear me," she kept rattling on, "that crowd was awful. They pushed me up into that other car before I could tell what was happening to me."

"But—your ticket—how did you get here?"

"I don't know. You remember that sudden stop just a little after we pulled out? Well, the conductor was coming right for me then. He went back to see what was the matter, and when he came again, somehow he began at the seat behind me and never came near me at all. But, oh, my, I'm all mussed up. Is my hat on straight?"

And then Martin Moore's temper got the best of him. It was too much of an anticlimax.

"*Your hat!* Thunder! You're enough to make one mad. Ask about your hat when a fellow's been near killing himself and worrying himself to death for fear something had happened to the only girl he ever loved. It's—"

Martin suddenly paused, grew red, stammered, stuttered, then gave up trying to say anything more. He had let the cat out of the bag.

His temper had got the best of his embarrassment. Nellie blushed too. She looked so pleased that Martin forgot his anger.

"Yes, Nellie, I really did mean it," he finally heard his voice saying quite tremblingly.

And then he had got so far he had to say the rest.

"Say, Martin," she laughed gaily, when they were both out of words for telling how happy they were, "I don't believe you'd have ever got up courage to say you loved me if I hadn't asked about the hat."

But she didn't quite dare tell him how she had hidden behind the seat in that second car when she saw him coming—just to see whether he really cared enough to worry about her.

NOT FOR SALE.*

By ELBERT D. WIGGIN,

Author of "Nobody's Fool."

The series of misadventures set on foot for one Austrian lieutenant of hussars after he had fallen in with an American party of three.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Count Laszlo Chegnay, of the Austrian hussars, meets and falls in love with a young American actress named Muriel Bonner, an intimate friend of the beautiful heiress, Joy Van Brunt. Chegnay's friend, Captain Felix von Altdorff, is in love with Miss Van Brunt; but through a misunderstanding, aggravated by Max Horowitz, the gossip of the regiment, the two men come to consider themselves rivals.

Old General Chegnay, who wishes his son to marry Miss Van Brunt, reproaches Laszlo for his attentions to the actress and threatens to disown him. Laszlo, in a rage, resigns from the regiment and renounces his father.

Shortly after Laszlo has gained Muriel's promise to marry him, an American named Caxton, seeing her on the stage, declares that she is not Miss Bonner at all. Chegnay persuades him and Horowitz to keep silent on the subject. In seeking Muriel for an explanation, Chegnay is attacked at the stage-door by two men and carried off.

Owing to a temporary trouble with her throat, the girl, who is passing under the name of Joy Van Brunt, has persuaded her cousin to impersonate her on the stage. She asks Muriel to put off telling Chegnay of the deception, believing that a continuation of the jealous misunderstanding between him and Von Altdorff will hasten the latter's proposal. Von Altdorff asks Van Brunt for his daughter's hand, and Van Brunt, with Muriel in mind, tells him she is engaged to Chegnay. Von Altdorff vows to prevent the marriage.

Caxton searches through the town for Chegnay, but can find no trace of him. At the theater entrance he meets Max Horowitz, who informs him that Laszlo has eloped with the heiress, Joy Van Brunt. Muriel, who is just leaving the theater, overhears the remarks and swoons.

CHAPTER XIII.

"BELIEVE THAT HE IS TRUE."

"GET a cab, there," commanded Caxton sharply to Horowitz, who was standing as though stupefied at the unexpected interruption. "And be in a hurry, too, or we'll have a crowd around here before we know it."

Already, indeed, one or two persons had stopped to gaze and offer suggestions, while a newsboy had pelted off to inform the policeman at the end of the block that his presence was required; but, luckily, one of the funny little Vienna cabs hove in sight at that moment, and drew up at the curb in response to the American's energetic hail.

Gathering up his unconscious burden in his arms, Caxton stepped into the waiting vehicle, but paused with his hand upon the door as he recollected that he did not know the actress's stopping place.

"Here," he hurriedly called to the hussar, who had followed him to the edge of the sidewalk, "tell him where to go. You know the name of her hotel, don't you?"

Max rattled off a direction to the driver, then lifted his foot toward the

carriage-step; but to his surprise found a brawny arm barring his progress.

"No," insisted Caxton uncompromisingly, "I guess you've done enough damage for one afternoon with that gabby mouth of yours. Stand back, there!" He gave the little fop a push which sent him staggering half-way across the pavement, and with a slam of the door, and an imperative, "Drive on there, *Kutscher!*" the cab dashed away up the Ring.

Horowitz, his cap fallen off, his dignity so grievously assaulted, the center of a jeering crowd, seemed for a moment unable to find words to express his emotions, but stood gazing after the disappearing vehicle in silent rancor.

Then he drew himself up to the full height of his meager inches, and with every hair of his stiff pompadour quivering in his terrible rage, he choked out thickly:

"Oh, I shall spank him for this! Yes, I shall give him the—what is it, he says? —the spank such as his mama used to manufacture!"

Happily oblivious, however, of the awful fate in store for him, the American was meanwhile employing all his resources in the effort to restore his charge to consciousness; and so well did he succeed, that before they had traversed half the distance to the hotel her lips parted in a little sigh of returning sensibility, and her eyes fluttered open.

For a breath or two she made no movement, merely staring up with uncomprehending bewilderment into Caxton's face; then, as she recognized that it was a stranger bending over her, she gave a slight, startled exclamation and struggled to arise.

"What has happened?" she questioned confusedly.

"There, there. Don't get frightened. I am merely a fellow-countryman who fortunately happened to be on hand to render you some assistance. Better lie back against the cushions, and not try to sit up just yet. You have had a bit of a fainting spell, you know, but you are all right now, and we'll have you safe at home in a very few minutes."

Her eyes, which had closed under his quieting reassurances, opened wide of a sudden, and again she started up.

"Ah, I remember now!" she murmured. "And I remember you, too. You are the man who was talking to Max Horowitz when he—when he—"

"When he turned loose his last instalment of balderdash, you mean?" the other interrupted with a scornful sniff. "My dear young lady, you surely are not going to allow yourself to be distressed or annoyed by anything which that little beast may have to say? His scandalous assertion is absurd upon the face of it."

"You know Lasz—You know Lieutenant Chegnay, then?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, I know him, and a splendid chap he is, too. It is an outrage that the reputation of such a man should be at the mercy of this jackal!"

In the attempt to calm her, Caxton waxed warm in his championship, quite forgetting how recently he had indulged in various suspicions on his own hook.

"You do not believe this accusation against him, then?" she questioned.

"Believe it? Why, I tell you it is simply ridiculous. Pardon me for my plain speaking, but it don't take more than half an eye for anybody to see that the count is backing one favorite with his entire pile, and she is the woman sitting beside me."

Muriel blushed hotly at this direct allusion, but her companion's purpose was so evidently friendly that she could not well take offense. Besides, it cleared the ground in a way, and rendered easier the discussion with him of several questions which had been troubling her.

"Have you seen Laszlo to-day?" she asked, therefore, without attempting to disguise her eager interest.

"Seen him? No, but I would like to. Can you tell me where I might most probably find him?"

Again her face clouded.

"Where can you find him?" she cried passionately. "That is the question which everybody is asking. Nobody has seen him; nobody knows anything of him! Where is he, then? Why does he not come to me? How can I help but doubt, when he remains so unaccountably away? And she, too, is gone! She said last night that Captain von Altdorff was jealous of her in regard to Laszlo. How do I know that he did not have cause?"

"Your cousin, Miss Van Brunt, is really gone, then?" struck in Caxton, his own face suddenly growing grave.

Could it be, he wondered, that Max Horowitz had hit the nail on the head with his gossip, after all? Certainly, this assurance of the beauty's flight, coupled with Chegnay's inexplicable absence, gave decided color to the supposition.

"Yes," assented Muriel, "she is gone; or, at least, she did not return home to luncheon, and she was still away when I set out for the theater. Papa—that is, *her* father, Uncle Cyrus, was in quite a stew about it; but I was as worried at not hearing from Laszlo, and so anxious to get away to rehearsal in the hope that he would come there, that I paid very little heed to her disappearance until I heard what that little wretch of a Horowitz was saying, and then it all came over me at once what her leaving meant."

"But you may be entirely mistaken," argued Caxton, although he felt himself there was hardly a ring of sincerity in his voice. "She may have returned by this time, for all you know; or, if still away, she may be detained by an accident; or—or— Oh, a dozen things might have happened."

"No," and the girl shook her head, "she is gone; and I feel certain is gone for good. She left the house this morning for a ride in the automobile; but, when some distance out in the direction of the Arsenal, sent the chauffeur back with the machine, telling him that she felt like taking a walk and would pick up a cab when she got ready to return to town, which would certainly be, she assured him, in time for luncheon. But twelve o'clock came, one, two, and half past, when I started for the theater, and there was still no sign of her, while—"

But by this time the cab had drawn up in front of the hotel, and Mr. Van Brunt, who had been notified by some one over the telephone, hastened out to the curb to meet them.

He was full of anxiety and solicitude; but Muriel, hastily assuring him that she was all right, demanded to know if he had heard anything yet of her cousin?

"Not a thing," he returned perplexedly. "We know that she went to the Arsenal, but Captain von Altdorff assures us that she left there before eleven o'clock, and from that time not a trace of her have we been able to discover. Nobody saw her along the road, no report has come in to the police of any accident or casualty in which she might have been concerned. There is a silly rumor afloat," he added hesitatingly, "that she and Count Chegnay have gone away together; but—"

"Then he, too, is still absent?" broke in Muriel sharply.

"Yes, no one has seen him, according to the report, since Max Horowitz left him talking to some American at the theater last night."

Caxton, glancing up quickly, took a step forward; and Muriel, recalled by the action to his presence, hastened with many apologies to present him.

"No relation by any chance to my old friend, Peter Caxton, are you?" queried the millionaire, as he cordially grasped the young man's hand.

"Only his son," smilingly. "But you will pardon me, Mr. Van Brunt, if I revert to what I overheard you saying just now, that no one had seen Count Chegnay after he was observed talking to me at the theater last night.

"Surely," he added as he turned to Muriel, "surely, you yourself saw him subsequent to that, Miss Bonner?"

"I? Oh, no. I expected him to meet me at the end of the performance, but he did not come."

"What?" The New Yorker was almost brusk in his excitement. "He did not come back to you on the stage shortly after the curtain had risen on the second act?"

"He most certainly did not. We parted when he brought me to the theater, and I have never seen him from that moment to this. But why do you ask, Mr. Caxton?" Her face had turned pale, and her hands were clasped together in startled agitation. "And why do you look so strangely? Do you know more than has yet been found out?"

But, fearing the effect of any fresh shock to her already overwrought nerves, Caxton choked back the exclamation trembling on the tip of his tongue and sought to allay her trepidation by an affectation of indifference.

"Oh, no," he said carelessly. "When you come to know me better, you'll not be surprised at some of my abrupt changes of mood. It was merely that a suggestion came to me from something Chegnay said last night which may serve to account for his prolonged absence. I have not time to explain now; but, if you will permit me, I will drop in later in the evening to let you know whether I have achieved any results."

"Do so by all means!" exclaimed Van Brunt heartily. "We will welcome you, news or no news; for I have yet to express my appreciation of what you've done for my little girl here, and then, too, there are dozens of questions I want to ask you about your father."

But Muriel only lifted to him eyes which were still full of fluttering interrogation-points.

"No," Caxton said, as he took her hand in parting, "I swear that there is nothing I can tell you now; but I hope to have good news before long. In the meantime keep up your spirits, and—believe that he is true."

Then he stepped into the cab, which was still waiting, and gave the curt direction:

"Back to the Burg Theater."

CHAPTER XIV.

A DUEL A LA AMÉRICAINE.

A NARROW, littered alley choked with débris of all descriptions may present no unusual appearance to the casual passer-by, and yet be replete with significance to the man who studies it aright, and who knows just what he is looking for.

So, a thousand men may pass over some rocky stretch of land and unwittingly go their ways, while the thousand and first, noting with expert eye the signs of petroleum, buys it in and reaps a fortune.

And in the investigation which he had on hand, Caxton emphatically "struck ile" in a very brief space of time.

The daylight was still good when he arrived at the theater, and, consequently, although many feet had trodden the way that day, he had small difficulty in deciphering the marks of a struggle still written in the ooze and slime upon the bricks of the passage.

Here he could see where some one had slipped and fallen, leaving a broad smear across the muddy pavement, while all around it were the prints of hands, and knees, and feet, and close at hand, upon the side of a box, drops of dried blood, showing plainly the nature of the desperate encounter which had been waged.

Nor was this all; for at a little distance away Caxton found a spot behind a heap of barrels where two men had evidently lurked in ambush, waiting for their intended victim.

The mire here was trampled as with considerable vigor, and there were cigarette-butts and burnt matches strewn about, some of them hastily extinguished as though the smoking had been interrupted by the approach of an occasional passer-by.

Moreover, the footprints at this point, as Caxton discovered by a careful examination, were the same as those which gave such telltale testimony about the scene of the conflict.

Following them up, then, from this latter situation, he found that they led in a procession of pairs—but slowly and heavily as though the two men had been carrying a cumbersome burden—into a diverging and still narrower alley, and thus out to a side street, where all trace of them was lost.

He glanced up at the surrounding buildings and studied the locality carefully, wondering if by any chance the captive had been immured so close at hand.

But it required only a brief scrutiny to decide that this notion was unlikely. The structures all around were solid, respectable warehouses and business places, closed at night, and not at all of the sort to lend themselves to such illicit transactions.

"No," concluded Caxton shrewdly, "there was probably a cab or vehicle of some kind waiting in this dark thoroughfare, and he was hauled off to some other part of town. The trail undoubtedly ends for me here, and I shall have to pick it up again as best I can—a task which means that I shall have to obtain more information than I possess at present; for, although it's as plain as the nose upon one's face that the poor chap has

been kidnaped, I will have to gain some idea why, and by whom, before I can set about finding him."

Having thus summarized the situation, and satisfied himself that there was nothing more to be learned by lingering about the somewhat malodorous passageway, the amateur detective turned his steps toward his hotel; for he felt that he had put in a rather exacting day, and that a bath and dinner were necessary to his welfare, ere he should delve any deeper into the investigation.

However, as he strode briskly up the wide, tree-embellished avenue, he could not keep his thoughts from dwelling upon the strange tangle of circumstances into which he had so involuntarily been drawn.

"Nice little riddle, ain't it?" he mused, instinctively lifting his hat and rumpling his close-cropped hair. "One of the kind that comes in a pound of tea with an elegant, silver-plated water-pitcher as a prize to the lucky guesser.

"First, there is the mix-up of the two girls; but that isn't hard to unravel, now that I have got a line upon it. If I had nothing else to go on, old Van Brunt's attitude would have given me the cue there; for a man isn't ordinarily more concerned over the fainting fit of a mere niece than he is over the disappearance of his daughter, and Cyrus, I am bound to say, was bearing the loss of his supposititious ewe lamb with remarkable equanimity.

"I can see, too, how he came to stand for the deal, which is the thing that chiefly puzzled me at the start. He was not willing that his daughter, for all her voice and talent, should go openly upon the stage, but has permitted himself to be wheedled into sanctioning this arrangement off here, where her identity was not likely to be spotted, and she could indulge her stage-struck yearnings under cover of her cousin's name.

"Yes, that is all reasonably plain. The actress is the heiress, and the heiress is the lady who, in ordinary times twinkles before the footlights. The little romance of Muriel is also in evidence, and the fact, as well, that 'Cousin Joy' has been using Chegnay to stir up the jealousy of a certain Captain von Altdorff.

"But from that time on the strings are so inextricably mixed and interwoven that it would take a Philadelphia lawyer or a 'mystery novelist' to successfully straighten them out.

"Chegnay is kidnaped and carried off. Why? 'Cousin Joy' also mysteriously disappears. Again we ask the reason. Is there any connection between the two incidents, or are they simply coincidences?

"Did the woman leave of her own free will, or was she, too, constrained by force? If of her own free will, is she then a party to Chegnay's seizure? Or, if through force, for what reason—ransom, or another motive?

"Oh, I could go on asking questions from now until doomsday," he broke off impatiently, "and still come no nearer an answer. It all seems like a maze, to which one can find neither beginning nor end.

"And, really, I am not particularly concerned about the girl," he reflected. "Not so much as I should be, perhaps. But, somehow, I have a feeling that she is in no particular danger, and will come out on top all right.

"It is poor Chegnay's predicament which worries me, for there is no doubt that he is gone because he could not help himself, and Heaven alone knows what peril he may be facing in this old, 'Dark-Ages' country.

"Why was he set upon, I wonder? It couldn't have been for money, since they say the family is poor. What, then, was the motive? An old grudge, or a present injury? Love, jealousy, fear, or revenge? I shall have to puzzle out an answer to that before I can decide who is back of the affair, and what has become of him."

Absorbed in these meditations, the American had been proceeding steadily along with his eyes upon the ground and all his faculties engrossed; but now as he came into the shadow of the stately *Stadthaus* with the sunset gilding its Gothic spires, he heard his name spoken, and, glancing quickly up, found himself confronted by the frowning visage of Max Horowitz.

"*Mein Herr,*" said the little hussar haughtily, "you are offensive to me!"

Caxton gave him a half comprehending stare.

"Offensive to you? Why don't you keep away from me, then?"

Caxton strove to pass around the fellow and continue on his way, but Horowitz kept sedulously thrusting himself in front.

"But you do not understand," he jabbered excitedly. "I say, you are offensive to me. That means I resent the insults you have shown me—one push upon the chest and words of no uncertain meaning. Hence, I demand from you immediate satisfaction."

"Oh?" At last the New Yorker caught his intention. "You're after hitting off a duel with me, eh?"

"Yes, *mein Herr,* I hereby formally challenge you to one spank!"

For a moment Caxton tried to retain his gravity, but it was no use. The contrast between the little chap's deadly seriousness and the ridiculousness of the proposal was too much for him, and after almost strangling himself in the effort to desist he broke into a hilarious explosion which lasted until the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he gasped. "You challenge me to one spank, eh? Well, if this isn't comic opera for you with a vengeance! What are the weapons to be, lieutenant—slippers, or paddles?"

But his mirth found small echo in the breast of the doughty challenger. Realizing now that he had made a dreadful mistake of some sort which would expose him to derision in all the clubs and cafés, Horowitz was stirred up to a pitch of almost insane fury.

He danced around the American like an enraged mosquito, pouring out a torrent of mouth-filling German oaths, and piling one insult after another upon his enemy, until at last, exasperated beyond control, he dealt the other a vicious kick upon the shin, and at the same moment jerking out his sword, exclaimed:

"Now, Yankee dog, I shall kill you!"

Caxton had laughed steadily throughout all his gyrations, nor is it likely that the production of the weapon and Horowitz's sanguinary threat would have checked him. But that kick hurt.

He drew up his foot for a moment with a half exclamation of pain; then, a quick glance of ire coming to his eye, he reached out and, twisting the sword from his adversary's grasp, tossed it contemptuously to the ground.

"Challenge me to a spank, do you?" he gritted from between his teeth. "Well, you shall have it all right, you little cur; and, by Jove, it shall be such a one, too, as will teach you never again to hit below the belt, or to draw a knife when you are having a dispute with a gentleman!"

Whereupon, suiting the action to the word, he seized his now terrified assailant by the ear, and, dragging him squealing and protesting to the convenient steps of the *Stadthaus,* proceeded to lay it on in good, old-fashioned style, to the astonishment and awe of a rapidly assembled crowd of citizens.

"There," he said, releasing the disheveled officer when his hand at last began to grow weary, "I guess you'll find your trousers have been dusted sufficiently to last you quite a spell," and would have started off again toward his hotel.

But at that moment a couple of *gendarmes,* pushing their way through the press with drawn swords, ranged themselves on either side of him and sternly bade him halt.

"Do you desire to have him taken into custody, lieutenant?" questioned one of them respectfully, addressing the hussar, who was standing at one side, trying to readjust his rumpled raiment.

Horowitz nodded vengefully.

"And to press the charge against him?"

Again a nod of acquiescence.

"Ah, a fine for me, eh?" broke in the American cheerfully. "Well, lead on, my merry men; it will have been worth all it costs, and I guess I have enough in my pocket to settle. Or, by the way, what is the customary charge here for assault and battery? I may have to stop in at the hotel."

"But this is not assault and battery, *mein Herr,*" gravely interposed one of the officers. "You are guilty of having raised your hand against an officer in the active service of the emperor!"

CHAPTER XV.

SUSPICION FINDS A TARGET.

MR. VAN BRUNT and Muriel waited impatiently at the hotel long after din-

ner that evening for the American's promised return.

The girl had already sent word to the theater that it would be impossible for her to appear that night, and that her understudy would have to go on; for, even though there had been no other reasons to prevent her taking her part, she would never leave the house while she remained in expectation of Caxton's returning and giving his reasons for that whispered, "Believe that he is true!"

When ten o'clock had struck, however, and still there was no sign of the man, both of the watchers felt inclined to despair, and Muriel at last consented to pay some heed to her father's oft-repeated importunities that she should retire and take some rest.

Then, just as they were giving up the final hope, came a penciled note from the municipal prison, explaining the cause of the delay, and setting forth the predicament of the writer.

"Since, therefore, it will be impossible for me to come to you, Mr. Van Brunt," the missive concluded, "I am taking the liberty to invite you here. Not on my own account, I assure you; but to acquaint you with certain facts I have unearthed, and which have a rather serious bearing on the problem we are trying to solve."

"By Glory, he must have found out something about her," commented Mr. Van Brunt, glancing up quickly.

"Her?" repeated Muriel contemptuously. "It's about Laszlo he is speaking. And, oh"—her face growing pale—"he says it is something serious. Hurry, father, hurry! We must go to him and learn what is the trouble at once!"

"H'm!" Mr. Van Brunt was again examining the communication. "I guess you are right, my dear; for here, at the bottom, is a line telling me not to alarm you. Why, I wonder, can't people give directions of that sort where a person will see them before one goes blundering ahead into what he isn't intended to read— Yes, yes, my dear, I'm starting right away," for Muriel was tugging impatiently at his arm.

"What?" he exclaimed a moment later, when he reentered the room with his coat and hat and saw her hurriedly arranging her veil before the glass. "Surely, you are not thinking of going, too?"

"Certainly I am," she insisted. "Do you think I could wait here quietly for you to bring me the news, when all the time Laszlo may be in some deadly peril?"

Nor from this purpose could all his protests and objections swerve her, until finally, seeing that, as she asserted, fretting at home would be worse for her than any shock she might meet, he gave a reluctant consent.

Indeed, she was all impatience to get to the station-house, and resented every second of delay, coming even to the point of a quarrel with her father, because he insisted on stopping at detective headquarters to offer a new reward and instigate still more strenuous measures in the search for Joy.

"Why, daughter, you certainly want me to make every effort toward the finding of your cousin, don't you?" he asked reprovingly.

"Ye-es," she assented; then broke out with a sudden burst of honesty: "I suppose it is horrid of me, and maybe I am all wrong about it, but, somehow, I can't work myself up to any particular alarm over her. It is a puzzling affair; but, somehow, I can't get the idea into my head that she is in any especial straits, or that she won't turn up in due time as right as a trivet."

Almost exactly the words which Caxton had used in regard to the missing beauty; and now it appeared that there was a third sharer in the sentiment, for old Cyrus, after a pause, confessed:

"Well, do you know, girlie, I've been feeling a good deal the same way myself, and I have been more than half ashamed of it. Of course, I've rushed around and pretended to be concerned all right; but—dash it all! a man can't put enthusiasm into a job of the sort, when he doesn't really believe that there is any danger.

"Fact is, I've been pretty well convinced in my own mind all the time that the gossip was true, and she'd lit out with young Chegnay."

"Papa!" exclaimed Muriel indignantly, forgetting that only a short time before she had inclined toward the same theory herself.

"Well," muttered Van Brunt, "if it isn't that, I'm free to confess that I can't make head or tail of her leaving in this way. For, as I tell you, I am almost willing to take oath that she left of her own accord.

"Yes," he continued, "and, what's more, girls don't leave in that sort of fashion unless there is a man at the bottom of it. Now, if that man wasn't Chegnay, who was it? He was the only one I ever saw philandering around her to any extent."

"Why might it not have been Captain von Altdorff?" suggested Muriel.

"Von Altdorff? Pooh! He is head over ears in love with you!"

"Captain von Altdorff in love with me? Why, I never dreamed of such a thing."

"Nevertheless, it is true. He spoke to me about it this morning, and when I told him you were already betrothed, he acted like a crazy man."

Now, Muriel, sweet, modest girl that she was, was still a woman; and no woman is ever surprised at hearing that any man, no matter how unlikely a one, has fallen a victim to her fascinations.

On any other subject of equal improbability she would almost certainly have cross-questioned her father and speedily have detected his error; but, since there was nothing remarkable to her in the statement so positively made, she accepted it at face value.

True, she wondered a little that Von Altdorff had given so few signs to her of his consuming passion; yet that was easily explained, too, by the man's natural repression and ceremonious regard for etiquette. Doubtless, he had deemed it in bad taste to show any evidence of his preference before he had first spoken to her natural guardian.

At any rate, she had little opportunity to ponder over the matter, for by this time they had reached the entrance to the big prison, and were soon being conducted down the long corridors to the cell of the "spankologist."

"Well, this is certainly kind of you, Mr. Van Brunt," Caxton greeted them, poking a grateful face up to the bars. "And Miss Van Brunt, too. That is more than I had expected; for I thought ladies never came to visit a prisoner unless he was a murderer, and I, worse luck, didn't have the gumption to finish my job."

He rattled on in this way, joking and making fun in the hope of getting a word in private to Van Brunt; for he feared to tell his discoveries in front of the girl, lest she should be overcome.

Muriel, however, had braced herself for the reception of bad news, and she speedily gave him to understand that she was there to learn and act upon whatever information he had been able to find out concerning her lover.

Even with this plain intimation, Caxton still hesitated to speak out; but receiving at last a nod of assent from the father in response to his own furtive glance of inquiry, eventually consented to unburden himself.

He told the whole story without reserve, commencing with his unlucky recognition, or rather lack of recognition, of the *Mlle. Modiste*—a revelation which brought forth sharp exclamations of excitement from both his hearers.

Unheeding their interruptions, however, he rapidly recounted the choking-off of Max Horowitz, the appearance of "Cousin Joy" upon the scene, Laszlo's hurried dash toward the stage, and his own fruitless waiting and subsequent unavailing search throughout the city.

Then in a considerably graver tone, and with fuller details, he took up the story of the discoveries he had made in the passageway, describing so vividly the evidence he had uncovered, and drawing his deductions so clearly, that as they listened his audience of two could almost see the jaunty form of the young officer hastening through the noisome alley, the crouching forms of his assailants ready to spring—could almost hear the impact of the shock, the stifled cry and slipping fall, the hoarse breathing of the struggle, and the sigh of satisfaction from the ruffians when their captive was made fast.

Muriel never removed her glance from his face all the time his story was in progress, only her big eyes grew wider and wider, and Caxton could see that she occasionally had to bite her lips in order to repress a moan.

She did not give way or swoon, but listened unblenchingly and with an almost strained interest to the very end.

So, at last, the tale was concluded; and, with only the briefest pause, Caxton turned to them for their verdict.

"It seems to me unquestionable from all this," he summed up, "that Chegnay was overpowered and abducted; but whither he was taken or to what end are questions that, I must confess, are still beyond me. Do either of you know of any enemy that he had, or of any person with a strong enough motive for wishing him out of the way? In short, of anybody who would have been likely to do this thing?"

Muriel and her father gazed at each other with a common suspicion dawning in their eyes; and then, as though by a mutual impulse, their lips framed in unison the one name:

"Von Altdorff!"

CHAPTER XVI.

PLANS AND PURPOSES.

THE three talked over the matter together for a long time. Both the millionaire and his daughter felt that it was not a time for false reserve or half confidences, and they therefore unbosomed themselves freely to this new friend.

As a result, Caxton could not help but agree with them that Von Altdorff was at the bottom of the villainy.

"But what of the disappearance of 'Miss Van Brunt'?" he suddenly asked, reminded that there were still some loose ends to the problem upon which they were working. "That we must regard as a separate incident, I take it, not connected in any way with the Chegnay affair? At least, Von Altdorff had no motive to spirit her off?"

"Well, I don't know," rejoined Van Brunt thoughtfully. "He was the last person to see her. Ha!" struck by a sudden suggestion. "Might it not be that he has kidnaped her, too, in order to quiet the apprehension of Chegnay's friends by giving color to this elopement story which has been so industriously circulated?"

Caxton started to look incredulous; but changed his mind, and drew a deep breath instead.

"By George, I believe you are right!" he burst out excitedly. "I remember now that that little reptile of a Horowitz, when he first repeated the scandal to me, mentioned something about having got it from Von Altdorff, or Von Altdorff being his authority, or something of the kind.

"Yes, sir," starting to his feet and beginning to pace up and down his cell, "I'll bet that is just what has been done. Oh, the crafty, scheming hound! The cold-blooded scoundrel! To drag a woman into his dirty business, and an American girl at that! If Uncle Sam doesn't demand his head for this, and on refusal blow the whole Austrian empire off the map, I shall feel almost like renouncing my allegiance."

Caxton was working himself up into quite a frenzy, for the idea of an injury being inflicted upon a woman, and especially one of his own countrywomen, roused all his chivalric ire; but Muriel's voice, cold and clear, broke in upon his outburst.

"I don't think there is any necessity for you to get so excited, Mr. Caxton," she said; "for, if matters are as you suspect, I fancy my cousin is much less worried than you. It would simply mean that Captain von Altdorff would have to marry her at the end of her imprisonment; and, since that is what she has been angling for ever since she came to Vienna, nothing would suit her better.

"I am not harsh or heartless," she averred, answering the glances of reproach which both of them cast toward her; "but I know my cousin as only one woman can know another, and I am not in the least degree alarmed about her. She is amply able to take care of herself, it is reasonably sure that no accident has befallen her, and if she has stumbled into Von Altdorff's clutches, I say again that it is just where she would wish to be, and that she wouldn't thank any one who attempted to rescue her.

"It seems to me that we would much better devote our time to devising some plan whereby to help Laszlo." Her voice softened, and her face lost the asperity it had assumed when speaking of her cousin. "His peril, as we know, is a very real one; for there is no telling to what lengths Von Altdorff's hatred may not carry him. And every moment may count now in his need for succor.

"Oh, is there nothing that we can do?" She lost control of herself for a moment, and began wringing her hands. "We must do something! Something right away!"

She raised her eyes in tearful appeal to Caxton; and he, feeling a lump of pity rise in his throat, kicked savagely at the door of his cell in order to relieve his feelings.

"There is, of course, nothing that I can do, Miss Van Brunt," he said huskily, "caged up here as I am by my own foolishness; but even if I were free, I don't see that I could do any more just at present. We can't go to Von Altdorff and charge him with this thing on mere suspicion, don't you know; we can't even have him get onto the fact that we suspect. He is a deep one, and we must be just as deep to catch him.

"No," he went on; "it strikes me that, at present, our only play is to lay low until we find out definitely where he has Chegnay confined, and what his intentions are concerning him. And, unless the chap gets frightened, that ought to be no very difficult task; for he will almost certainly visit his prisoner from time to time. Of course, skilled detectives should be employed to shadow him every moment; but I have no doubt that your father will attend to that."

"You bet I will." Mr. Van Brunt nodded a hearty assurance to his daughter. "The best that money can procure shall be at your disposal. And now, dawtie"—throwing an arm about her shoulder—"don't you think we had better be going? This has been a long and trying interview for you; so let us thank Mr. Caxton for his kindness and—

"Er—by the way, my dear boy," interrupting himself with a considerable show of compunction, "how about your own plight? We have been terribly thoughtless, running on here concerning our own troubles, and paying no attention to the hobble in which you are placed. You must have bail at once, of course. Just wait until I can get the little girl here safe home, and I will be back at once to arrange about it."

"No." Caxton stayed him with a gesture. "It would do you no good to come back. As it happens, I am in on a non-bailable charge."

"Non-bailable? You don't mean to tell me that you injured your man to that extent?"

"Only in his feelings and the seat of his trousers," the New Yorker smiled ruefully; "but that, it seems, is a grievous transgression over here. I have lifted my impious hand against one of the bulwarks of the empire."

"But this is ridiculous, unbelievable!" sputtered the millionaire. "The idea of holding a man without bail on such grounds! I'll bet there is an attempt at graft in it. Have you seen counsel yet, my boy?"

"Oh, yes. I've had a couple of lawyers here, and the secretary of legation, and I don't know who all; and, as near as I can find out, the thing is regular enough. They tell me I can't hope to get out under six weeks, anyhow; and, indeed, that I'll be lucky if I don't get a year or so in one of their jolly old fortresses."

By this time, Mr. Van Brunt was worked up almost to the explosion point, and Muriel, all her compassion stirred, was eagerly beseeching him to intervene.

"You won't let them do that, papa?" she entreated. "You'll find some way of keeping Mr. Caxton from going to a fortress, won't you?"

"You bet I will! Six weeks here, and send him to a fortress, indeed! Why, I never heard such poppycock in all my life!

"What time is it?" snapping open his watch. "That makes no difference, though. I'll see the minister of public justice before he's an hour older, if I have to drag him out of bed. Come on, Muriel; we have no time to waste. Peter Caxton's boy staying here six weeks, and then going to an Austrian fortress, for slapping over a little, puffed up, epauleted toad! Not if the court knows itself. Come on, my dear; we've got to be stirring our stumps, and get him out this very night. Why, they couldn't have tried to do much worse to him if he had gone up and pulled the whiskers of old Franz Josef himself!"

The little man was in a perfect "sweat" now to be off; but Caxton, naturally anxious though he was to be released, still detained the pair to add a word of farewell to Muriel.

"Don't permit yourself to get worried now, Miss Van Brunt," he urged. "It looks a shade ticklish for Chegnay, we'll all have to admit; but there's a good deal gained in knowing that we are on the right track, and whether I get out to help in the work or not, I am very sure that he'll be found.

"Just you keep up your courage and feel, as I do, that everything is going to come out all right. Remember that I told you, this afternoon, not to doubt, and I've proven to you that I was not mistaken. Well, now I say to you with just as much certainty: Do not be afraid!"

CHAPTER XVII.

CAXTON'S RASH PROMISE.

NEITHER Mr. Van Brunt nor the prisoner himself had any real doubt that, with the powerful influence of the great financier exerted in his behalf, Caxton would speedily be free; but they had failed to take into account the leisurely processes of a highly formal and bureaucratic government.

The minister of justice did indeed descend in dressing-gown and slippers in response to the copper king's imperative demand to see him; but, although he was all deprecation and regret, he could not be brought to the point of issuing an order for the American's release.

"If it were a murder, now, or a burglary, or a matter of that sort," he observed, tapping his fingers on the table, "something might be done; but this, you must understand, *mein Herr,* is a grave dereliction. It will have to take the regular course, I am afraid, although I think that I can safely promise you no stringent penalty will be inflicted upon your young friend. And, of course, we will do all in our power to expedite the process of justice."

"Er—yes—hum," commented Cyrus, realizing at last that this was the best he could get. "And how much longer would you say, then, that the poor boy will have to stay in jail?"

"Oh, not more than a few days. Ordinarily it would take six weeks or more before a hearing could be arranged, but under the circumstances I think that we can hasten that up quite a deal. Or, indeed, we may possibly—only possibly, mind—discover a way to permit of bail, which would let him out even sooner. Trust to me, Mr. Van Brunt, I will exert every energy in his behalf."

Perhaps he did, for really every one about the ministry seemed awestruck at the speed with which the case was accelerated. But to the Americans watching the process, it all seemed wofully slow and cumbersome, and Van Brunt, before the arbitrament was finished, declared witheringly that enough red tape had been used to carpet a road forty feet wide from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon.

He spent half his time gyrating between the American embassy and the cabinet offices, but although he fumed and fretted, besieged and even tried to bribe high officials, stormed, protested, actually carried his complaint, against all precedent, to the Kaiser himself, the case still stretched to a weary length.

Papers went from one clerk, and from one bureau, to another, to be signed, countersigned, *viséd* and indorsed, and this all consumed time, until at last the "few days" so blandly promised by the minister had extended themselves into pretty near a month.

Meanwhile, the captive was bearing his fate with more resignation than might have been expected of him.

"It is not just exactly the way I planned to spend my vacation on the 'beautiful, blue Danube,'" he would say philosophically, "but there are compensations. If this had not happened I would never have known how deliciously, picturesquely profane Mr. Van Brunt can be over the pig-headedness of these foreigners, nor would I have had the pleasure of these daily visits from Miss Van Brunt. The only thing I can really regret is that I am shut off from taking an active part in the search for poor Chegnay."

And, indeed, he did get along surprisingly well, for although the confinement naturally chafed on one of his stirring temperament, he found plenty to occupy his time.

There were the reports of the detectives shadowing Von Altdorff to be gone over, for one thing, and new suggestions

and directions to be contrived in order to improve the system of espionage. Mr. Van Brunt had turned over all this business into the hands of himself and Muriel, and there were consequently long consultations between them each day, and eager discussions as to the steps which ought to be taken and the methods followed.

Yet, for all their careful planning, and for all the money and effort which was expended, Caxton had to admit that the results achieved were surprisingly meager.

Not a scintilla of evidence had been found to disclose the present hiding place of either Chegnay or "Cousin Joy;" not a suspicious move, a questionable action, were the sleuths able to report upon the part of Von Altdorff.

He went about his business in quite his usual way, they said, calm, staid, repressed, all his time spent between his lodgings and the Arsenal, for the big new air-ship recently constructed had sustained a serious accident, and he was pushing the repairs upon it with the utmost energy.

As for the rest, claimed the detectives, he sent no notes or messages, conferred with no persons who could not be easily accounted for, received no mysterious correspondence, conducted himself in every respect as anything but a man engaged upon a secret or illicit enterprise.

"Can it be that we have made a mistake in suspecting him?" questioned Caxton, glancing up with a frown from one of these daily reports of such provoking similarity. "He ought certainly to have done something to show his hand by this time."

"Oh, no, no," protested Muriel earnestly. "We have made no mistake, I am sure. Who else would have had any motive?"

"Then, it must be," decided the American, "that he has fallen to the fact that he is being watched. We will have to call off our spies and adopt some new plan in order to outwit him."

"What sort of a plan?" she queried.

"Well, I don't know just what, exactly," Caxton confessed, at a loss for the time being himself. Then, as he saw the despairing look come over the girl's face, grown so white and wan during these days of anxiety and suspense, he caught himself together, and feigned an assurance which he did not feel.

"That is," he hurried on with a buoyant air, "I have a scheme in mind which I think is almost certain to bring success. Really, a sure thing at last, I verily believe. I have been considering it for some time, and—"

"Why haven't you suggested it before, then?" she demanded with some asperity.

"Well—er—why, you see, it requires my personal participation, and while I was caged up here I thought the best thing we could do was to use the detectives, but now, since I am to be released to-morrow—"

"What is the plan?" she questioned eagerly.

"Ah, don't ask me that just yet. I want to turn it over in my mind this afternoon and consider all the details first. But to-morrow morning, just as soon as I am free, I will come to you and arrange for immediate and more active operations."

She was still curious, but he eventually managed to put her off with the caution that walls—prison walls, especially—have ears, and that perhaps the failure of some of their previous plans was due to their having been too openly discussed.

So, after making him repeat his promise that he would come to her the moment he was free, she consented to bide in patience until then, and took her departure.

Left to himself, Caxton gazed after her retreating figure in unmistakable quandary.

"A brand-new plan to trip up Von Altdorff and locate Chegnay at once, eh?" he ejaculated. "And where in Sam Hill am I going to get one which hasn't been thrashed over and discussed between us a thousand times?

"Well," wrinkling up his brows and taking a fresh hitch upon his suspenders, "I guess it's up to me, somehow, to make good."

But he had little notion then of the plan which did finally suggest itself, or of the startling adventures into which it was going to lead him!

(To be continued.)

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

By ROBERT RUSSELL.

A strange story of apparently every-day happenings, with something back of them at which the reader is not likely to guess before the finish.

THE woman's attractive eyes smiled on the three urchins as they picked up their hats and started for the door. The youngest seemed to be about twelve, and the other two somewhat older.

"Remember all I have told you, boys," she said, "and don't forget about the great men of whom you have all heard. If you want to be like them, just remember."

The door closed and the boys stood for a moment in the bright summer sunlight.

"Ain't she a dandy, Mike?" This from the youngest of the trio.

"She kin have all I got—an' me too," answered Mike with enthusiasm.

The third boy seemed satisfied to express his admiration for their preceptress by a lifting of his eyes and a low whistle.

There were so many things to attract the boys this Saturday afternoon; and their tastes seemed to differ so widely that it was not long before they separated, each seeking the sources of enjoyment that appealed to him most.

They were shabbily dressed, and their pinched faces gave little indication of many pleasurable hours; but the keen intelligence noticeable in their eyes made it evident that in some manner amusement would be theirs.

The two older lads hurried off in one direction; while the youngest, apparently debating a moment, finally began to saunter leisurely toward the crowd that stood waiting for a down-town car. Wedging his way between two very large men, he remained nonchalant until the car came along; and then, as quick as a flash, darted into a seat, and became apparently extremely interested in the scenery about him.

Finally the conductor came along.

"Your fare, son," he said.

"What?" exclaimed the boy.

"Fare," repeated the conductor, a little less kindly.

"Gee," said Joe, in apparent disgust, "wot cher t'ink I am, a millionaire? Didn't I pay me fare long ago?"

"None of that, kid," replied the man in uniform. "Come, get off; you can't string me."

"An' me givin' ye me last nickel," wailed the youngster, "an' me mudder sick."

But the conductor was obdurate and seized the boy roughly by the shoulder.

"Come, off you go!" he said.

But an old gentleman who had heard the colloquy from a rear seat now took a hand in the proceedings.

"Hold on, conductor," he called out, "I'll pay the boy's fare."

The conductor's hand was instantly withdrawn, though perhaps with some reluctance; and he turned to the old gentleman, who, to Joe's great gratification, handed the man the necessary five cents. It did not take the boy long to slide back into a seat next that occupied by his benevolent friend.

"Say, mister," he began, "I'm t'ankful to ye. Ye see me mudder's sick, an' I been fur de doctor."

"All right, my boy; even if you're not telling the truth, the loss of a nickel won't hurt me—and, perhaps, you can point out some of the important buildings we pass. I'm a stranger here."

It was with great delight that the boy thereupon became a veritable guide-book for the credulous old gentleman; and there was little about the city upon which the youngster, born and brought up here, could not expatiate. And occasionally, too, with a sense of humor not to be expected in one of his years, he intentionally misstated some unimportant fact, to the great amusement of some of the other passengers.

They were passing one of the great life-insurance buildings, when the boy remarked:

"Now, dis here buildin' is de home of a company wot protects de savin's of de widows an' orphans. De Governor of de State has said dey was sompin' wrong 'bout de management; but de Governor wuz playin' to de gallery—an' not'in' ain't been done 'bout it, dey say."

On another occasion a well-known figure in the financial world whizzed by in an automobile, and the boy quickly attracted the old gentleman's attention to him.

"That guy's bubble looks like it wuz goin' faster dan de law allows—but dat's a mistake — it ain't — and, 'sides, de 'thorities feel sorry for him an' don't want to fine him—he's just lost a million dollars playin' de stocks in Wall Street."

"And how do you know all this, my boy?" finally exclaimed the old gentleman.

Joe looked up at him with a natural, wondering expression.

"Ain't ye got to know all ye kin? Don't it all help ye to be a big bloke—ain't ye got to keep yer eyes open? An' askin' questions—an' listenin' w'en de guy dat's talkin' don't pay no 'tention? Say, mister, who wuz de biggest bloke wot ever lived?"

It was rather a poser for the old gentleman; but, after a moment's consideration, and with the benevolent spirit which had prompted him to pay the boy's fare, he entered into a short dissertation on the great characters of history. He was a well-informed man, and the boy's eager mind drank in every word with surprising interest.

At last Joe's friend reached the street where he desired to alight, and, thanking the boy for the valuable information he had given him, took his leave.

Joe's eyes followed the portly figure as the old gentleman became lost to sight in the hurrying crowd. The boy then surreptitiously took from his pocket a large fifty-cent piece and gazed at it a moment.

"An' I made him pay me fare," he soliloquized. "Wid dis shiner in me pocket all de time."

The figure of the teacher he had recently left rose before him, standing beside the old gentleman who had just befriended him, and the youngster shook his head in puzzled doubt.

"I wonder if wot dey bot' say is true?" he mused.

Down the avenue the car sped on; and when it had reached the end of the line, Joe alighted and sought a bench in the little park which marked the city's limits.

Before him stretched the waters of a great harbor, its shore lined by wharves, over some of which were huge signs telling of the destinations of the boats which sailed from them.

One sign especially attracted the boy's attention, as it always did—the sign of the Mecca of all pleasure-seekers in this great city. But even its allurements did not dispel the thoughts which crowded into the brain of this urchin of the streets, wise far beyond his years, but ignorant until recently of the knowledge which the streets do not bring.

"It's too much for me," he muttered at last, and then his bright eyes began to take in the things about him.

II.

JOHN STUART was rather an imaginative young man; and it was often his unconfessed pleasure to sit on one of the benches of the park which faced his office, and speculate as to the thoughts and aims of those poor forlorn persons who, for hours each day, would sit there in the sun, or perhaps rain, with scarcely a movement.

Nor was it all imagination which wove the stories concerning them that his brain would conjure up, for Stuart had not always been as prosperous as he was this Saturday afternoon when he stepped from the door of the great building. Toward the park he took his way, and sought a bench where the sun was not quite so hot and where the breeze seemed to penetrate.

As he seated himself, the other occupant of the bench, a boy of about twelve, looked up at him, and Stuart returned the glance with interest.

He was prone to like or dislike a countenance at first sight, and Joe's intelligent eyes at once aroused his curiosity.

"Fine day, my boy," he remarked. "You ought to be playing baseball or something like that."

"I got fifty cents," observed Joe, with amazing irrelevance.

"So have I," replied Stuart.

But the answer seemed to displease the boy, for he was quick to resent sarcasm; and, with a comprehensive look from the other's feet to his head, he turned away, and again was lost in a contemplation of the huge and attractive sign telling of the delicious destination of the boat, due to sail in a short time.

The boy's reception of his tactless remark was just the thing to interest the young man, and he again sought to open a conversation.

"But I want to spend mine," he said. "Let's have some—some—peanuts."

Again Joe looked at Stuart with a disdainful glance.

"Say, mister, wot cher t'ink I am—a beggar?"

"Of course not, my boy—only can't one gentleman treat another? What is your name?"

"Me name's Joe," replied the youngster firmly, "an' let me tell yer dat if yer want ter talk ter me, it ain't no use ter jolly. I'm wise—see?"

Stuart was really interested now, and he was learning a lesson which his previous experiences had not taught him; he intended to profit by it, too.

"All right, Joe, we understand each other. You say you've got fifty cents—perhaps you'll treat me to some lemonade, which I see they sell over there, and after that I'll suggest that we do something at my expense which will cost just as much. How about it?"

"I don't want no lemonade," said Joe.

There was silence for a few moments, and finally the boy, with something of the manner one would expect in one of his years, turned to Stuart.

"Did you go to college?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the young man in surprise. "Why?"

"Wot wuz de biggest bloke you ever heard of?"

As the old gentleman in the car had been puzzled for an answer, so now this young man was equally at a loss for an immediate reply. For a few moments he sparred for time, with the boy's bright eyes upon him all the while, but at last he was forced to go into detail and mention the different names which were bywords in history.

But Stuart was neither learned nor religious, and he soon sought to change the drift of the conversation, his interest having in no way abated, however.

"Say, Joe," he said at last, "I like you, and think it would be great sport to take a sail on that boat. I—I've got money enough for us both—if it costs more than your fifty cents for your part. Come on."

"I'll come," replied the boy eagerly—and then added shrewdly, "if I kin keep me fifty cents."

"All right, come along."

The big boat was not crowded, and Stuart and Joe found places where they were practically alone. The lively music of the band seemed to get into the boy's blood, and it was with apparent willingness that he left the serious subjects they had been discussing. He became for the first time that day a youngster alive to the pleasures about him.

In this mood Stuart knew how to entertain him, and entertain him he did with all the stories in his repertoire.

The boy seemed to be thoroughly familiar with such historic characters as Jesse James, the highwayman, Old Sleuth, the detective, and was perfectly willing to hear new and imaginative accounts of their doings.

The trip to the pleasure resort was all too short for them both, for Stuart really felt the consciousness that he was giving this lad a day of real enjoyment. But the greatest heights were reached when the pair landed at the boat's destination and began a round of the wonderful shows installed there for the delectation of visitors.

Nor was Stuart backward about spending his money. The two of them raced around the tan-bark arena on tired ponies; had the delicious sensation of "shooting the chutes"; were thrown against each other in "bumping the bumps"; and, in fact, tried everything that seemed to offer the least prospect of pleasure. Finally they were both so exhausted that Stuart's tentative suggestion that they return to the city was readily accepted by the boy.

But their last visit to one of the gaudy booths brought seriousness to Joe again.

For some reason he was attracted by a fortune-teller's sign, and asked his companion if they might try the skill of the

foreign-looking woman who presided over it.

The boy was very solemn when he emerged from behind the mystic folds of the tent.

"She said dat I wuz to be a great man," he announced slowly.

"And so you probably will," quoth Stuart encouragingly.

"A feller's got to mind wot he's told to do dat—ain't he?" went on the boy in all seriousness.

"He certainly has," returned the young man.

With a slight sigh Joe followed the other onto the boat, and they secured places in a remote quarter.

It was dark now, and Joe became very tired. Stuart thrilled him with all the exciting tales of the great outlaws and criminals, but it seemed of no use, for at last the little fellow curled up against the young man's breast and went to sleep.

Stuart himself was quite worn out, and it was upon a slumbering pair that the first lights of the distant city shone.

Joe was the first to rouse himself, and he lay there for some time gazing out over the water at the brilliance beyond.

"Say, mister," he said at last.

"Yes," responded Stuart.

"Dey wuz one great man you didn't tell me 'bout. A old guy in de car today told me 'bout a bloke wot got hurted onct an' a feller comes along an' looks at him an' den goes on—an' den, says de old guy, anodder feller comes along an' picks up de feller wot got hurted an' takes care of him. De old guy said he wuz a great man—Smyrden, I thinks he called him."

As had occurred often during the day, the young man had to think quickly for a moment.

"Of course," he said at last, "the Good Samaritan—yes, Joe. he *was* a great man. It would be a lot better for us all if there were more like him."

"An'—an'," went on the boy slowly, "can a bloke get ter be great if he's like dat?"

The whole question of this world's rewards for good deeds flashed through the young man's brain. Could he put a doubt in this boy's mind?

"That's what we believe, Joe," he said at last. "At any rate, a man will be far happier if he's like that."

"'Cause," continued the boy, "I ain't heard much 'bout them kind of fellers—till to-day—an'—an' you wouldn't fool a bloke, would yer?"

The boat was already in the dock and Joe and Stuart were pushing along with the crowd as the young man, now quite serious, gave his reply:

"No, Joe," he said, "I would not fool you."

"Den," began the boy, "ain't you somethin' like that Smyrden feller, I—"

But a sudden movement of the crowd, a shifting of the gangplank, and a sharp cry of warning from one of the boathands interrupted Joe in his sentence. And, then, diving after Stuart onto the pier, he saw the latter fall, his leg crushed between a pile and the plank upon which the excited crowd stood.

Immediately many hands were outstretched to lift the unconscious form of the young man and to release his leg from his pinioned position. The crowd reached shore in safety, but Stuart was laid on the ground, his face pale, his right leg twisted and broken.

It was the boy who took immediate charge of the situation.

"Git a kerridge, quick!" he cried.

"An ambulance would be better," said some one. "Perhaps he can't pay for a carriage."

"Git a kerridge, I tell ye!" again shouted the excited little fellow; "he's me friend."

The very earnestness of the boy was compelling. A carriage was at hand, and Stuart carried to it and placed inside in as comfortable a position as possible. Joe in the meantime was instructing the driver.

"Drive to de nearest horspital—an' be blamed quick about it," he said.

With a slight smile at the boy's commanding manner, the cabby started off, Joe inside, trying his best to ease the injured limb of the unconscious man.

The hospital was soon reached and Stuart carried up the broad stairs.

"Say, you," said Joe to the orderly, "ain't dey some corner, er sumpin, where dis feller kin be alone—he wouldn't want ter be lyin' 'mong all dose hoboes," pointing a dirty finger at the

unfortunates who occupied the public ward.

"We have a private room, my boy," replied the orderly, "but it costs twenty-five dollars a week in advance."

"Put him dere, den," replied the young commander at once.

While they were carrying out Joe's instructions, the boy descended to the cabby.

"How much fur bringin' us here?" he inquired.

"Three dollars," answered the driver.

"Aw, come off. I'll give ye dollar an' a half," and the youngster pulled some bills from his pocket and handed the required amount to the man, who was too surprised to object.

He drove off, shaking his head in wonder.

Next Joe sought out the orderly and handed to him the amount he had said the room would cost, and again there was great surprise.

Then into the room where Stuart lay hurried the boy. The young man had regained consciousness by this time, and though the pain from his leg was still severe, he was eager to ask Joe how it had all happened.

"I didn't know where ye lived," concluded Joe, "an' so brought ye here."

But the entrance of the doctor put an end to the conversation.

"Come, my boy," said the surgeon, "you must go out till we have set this gentleman's leg—then you may come back if you want to."

It was a very impatient boy who waited during what seemed like hours to him, but at last the doctor told him that he might return to his friend, and eagerly he reentered the room.

Stuart was conscious and comparatively free from pain.

"Now tell me all about it, Joe," he said. "I suppose I was hurt getting off the boat and was brought here in an ambulance. It's tough luck, but a broken leg is not as serious as a crushed skull."

It seemed hard for the boy to begin his story, but the words came to him at last, and as he continued, Stuart listened eagerly, lost in wonder at the tale.

"Yes," began the boy slowly, "you wuz hurt gettin' off de boat, but dey's sumpin else I want ter tell ye. I allus wanted ter be a big man — like Jesse James—er somebody wot just *took* wot dey wanted. Comin' up in de boat I pretended ter be asleep—an' pinched yer roll of money. Den I begins ter t'ink 'bout de odder great men dat de old man in de car told me 'bout—and wot you told me 'bout—an' den 'bout dat Smyrden feller —an' I t'ought I'd rudder be like him —an'—an' *you*. So I wuz goin' ter give yer money back—w'en ye got hurted. But here it is now. I spent some for de kerridge."

"Oh, Joe, my boy, how could you do it after I'd given you such a good time?"

"I dunno—'cept dat it wuz de only way I knowed ter be big. An' den I got t'inkin'—and—yer see, Mrs. Burns has been teachin' t'ree of us—Mike, Humpty, an' me how ter do it—how ter steal. We t'ought she wuz *fine*—but—but I'd rudder be like *you* and dat Smyrden bloke."

There was a moment's silence. Then:

"I'll try to help you, Joe—and you've helped me."

A MATTER OF CHOICE.

I SAT me down 'neath the hill of sorrow—
  And sorrow's a high hill, covered with stones—
I sent to the neighbors for trouble to borrow,
I wept to-day for the woes of to-morrow,
  And all of my friends might hear my groans;
  They stopped their ears, for they heard my moans.

I hurried away where joy's stream is flowing—
  Joy's is a full stream, that never is spent—
I waded in without any showing,
I laved me deep where its tide was going.
  Now my friends would share in my deep content;
  Where I borrowed trouble, my joy is lent.

Grace MacGowan Cooke.

TROUBLE IN BUNCHES.*

By SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "By Bullet Persuasion," "Taking Big Chances," "The Hoodoo Ranch," etc.

A matter of one American obliging another starts with a mistake, opening the way to crimes, casualties, and catastrophes galore.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ROBERT FRASER, a young American doctor who is stopping at the town of Santa Rosa, in South America, is persuaded by a fellow countryman, Jim Balover, to aid his elopement with Isobel Fernandez, the daughter of old Don Manuel Fernandez, Santa Rosa's banker.

Arriving at a deserted *casa*, where Balover is to meet him, Fraser finds, to his consternation, that he has made off not with the *señorita*, but her cousin, Miss Kate Arnold, who has been turned out of Manuel's house for taking Isobel's part in her love-affair.

Balover arrives with the news that Manuel has disappeared, and that orders are posted in the town to shoot either himself or Fraser on sight.

Fraser, riding in pursuit of Miss Arnold's maid, Mary O'Donnell, who has left the party on some mission of her own, is held up by bandits and led off to their lair in the mountains. Here he finds Don Manuel, who is being held for ransom. He is promised his freedom if he will go to Santa Rosa and bring the ransom money from the bank. He does so in safety, learning in the town that Isobel Fernandez has disappeared. Balover and Miss Arnold, too, are gone from the deserted *casa*.

In the mountains again, he finds that the brigands have left their fortress, and on a second trip to Santa Rosa he learns that they have been attacked by the soldiers, the leader having shot Fernandez before being captured. Fraser returns to the *casa* to spend the night. He is awakened by the touch of a hand feeling for the bag of ransom money which he has hidden in his shirt.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ATTACK IN THE FOREST.

IT was with the greatest difficulty and exercise of will-power that I kept my breathing regular, like a man asleep.

My mind was in a turmoil. I had no wish to be killed, nor did I feel like lying there, supine and nerveless, and letting a miscreant of a brigand get away with the bag of money.

I did not know how much there was in the sheepskin bag. I had not been interested enough in the matter to look at the order Don Manuel had given me. Nor had I paid any attention while Señor Pinero was counting it out.

I knew, however, that the amount demanded of Don Manuel must be large. And I now regarded myself as the custodian of that money for Isobel Fernandez. If Pinero had fled with the funds of the bank, that bag might contain all that Isobel had in the world.

While my whirling brain was thinking of these things, I felt a gentle touch of fingers on my throat, then the point of a dagger.

Like a flash, it came to me that not only was I to be robbed, but murdered as well. There was now no hesitation. With a sweep of my arm I brushed aside the two hands and sprang to my feet.

There was a muttered curse from the man, who had not expected a sudden movement of this kind from a fellow he supposed to be asleep.

I did not wait for an attack. I struck out in the dark, and, happily, aimed true. My fist caught his face, and I heard him fall.

But he was up again, with a growling sort of continual curse, and I had no time to do anything but guard myself as well as I could in the dark.

Fortunately, my assailant was clumsy at the assassin business, and his rage was so great he now made no attempt to keep

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quiet and hide his movements. His curses were so constant, and his breathing so heavy, I could tell where he was as well almost as though I could see him.

I kept striking out, sometimes hitting him and sometimes not, and never stood in the same spot more than a second. I could hear him grunt as he made terrific lunges at where he supposed me to be, and at last he grew more careful.

As his care increased, so did my danger. He now seemed to be adopting my own tactics. And I had greater difficulty in finding him.

Then there was a sudden lunge, an exultant cry from him, and I felt the knife jab into my shoulder.

The pain, and the knowledge that my life was in such danger, maddened me, and drove all the caution I had from me. Unmindful of what the consequences might be, I leaped forward with both hands outstretched before me, and by good luck clutched him at the throat. He struggled, and I felt the knife again in my arm.

Driven now to a desperation I had never felt before, I put all the strength I had into my hands and pressed my thumbs against his windpipe. There was a choking, gasping sound. He wriggled in my clutch, but I had him firm, and he seemed to have no more fight in him. Then I heard the knife drop on the floor.

"Mercy, *señor!*" he gasped with a gurgling sound. "Do not kill me."

"Mercy—to you!" I cried, shaking him like a rat. "You were showing me mercy when you were about to murder me in my sleep. And you dare beg for mercy?"

"No, *señor*—no!" he said. "I was but going to cut open your shirt. You have the money from Don Manuel's bank."

"But it isn't your money," I retorted.

"It is nobody's. Don Manuel is dead."

"It is his daughter's, and she shall have it," I told him. "I'll soon put you where you won't need money."

Even as I spoke I could feel his throat stiffening, and he began to sink. With a terrific grasp, I gave him the last clutch and hurled his body from me.

I heard him fall with a groan.

I hurried and lit my bull's-eye lantern to have a look at him. His face was somewhat familiar. He was one of Pedro's gang. If Pedro was captured, this fellow would take the money for himself. I looked at him again. It was the fellow I had seen rifling Pedro's chest.

"So," I said, "it seems that those who said there was honor among thieves were mistaken. Well, he is still breathing. I have no wish to commit murder, so out of here I go."

Making sure that my revolver was loaded, I shut off my light with the slide, without putting out the flame, and went outside.

At first I wished I had a horse, but reflection told me that even if I had I would be no better off. A horse could not take me far enough to get out of the danger zone, unless he took me too far away for me to be of any assistance to the others I wished to find and help.

I knew the land was level on the plantation, and started off across the fields, keeping my lantern and revolver ready for instant action. But nothing interfered with my progress.

I walked on and on, until I struck some woods. I could not expect to make my way through these without a light, so I risked using the lantern. After going in a crooked, winding path through these woods, I heard the ripple of a little stream and halted.

Here was as good a hiding-place as any I knew of. I knew a dry, grassy plot near the stream, and fixing my lantern on a stick, to throw the light on me, I took off my jacket and shirt to bathe my wounds.

These, though not dangerous, as I knew, were becoming painful. My arm was growing stiff.

I felt better, though, after laving the wounds with the cool, clear water of the stream, and then, tearing off a strip from my shirt, I bandaged my arm as well as I could.

The wound in my shoulder I could not handle so easily, and, in fact, it did not need it. The knife had struck a glancing blow there, whereas it had gone almost entirely through my arm.

The bleeding having been stopped to a great extent, I sat down, feeling weak and exhausted.

I need not say again that I sat there thinking over the mess I was in, all owing to my own blunder. Yet it was not all my blunder, either. If the brigands had set out to watch for an opportunity to capture Fernandez that night, they would have taken him just the same, whether the girl in the carriage was Kate Arnold or his daughter Isobel.

Daylight was coming. What I had to think of now was my future. I could not roam the woods and accomplish anything for those upon whom I looked as my friends, although I had seen so little of Kate and Balover, and had never seen Isobel at all.

I remembered what had been said about Padre Miguel and his little mission. I had never met the *padre*, but I had met others of his cloth, and had found them universally kind-hearted men, and ready at all times to help a person in distress regardless of nationality or religion. I resolved to find Padre Miguel and ask his advice, even if I did not succeed in getting his assistance.

I did not make any attempt to shoot anything for my breakfast, believing that Padre Miguel would give me a meal at the mission.

I put out the light of my lantern when daylight became strong, and stowed the little toy in my pocket. Then, with my revolver in my side-pocket grasped by the hand of my uninjured arm, I started.

I had not gone more than a hundred feet along the stream when I heard a shout, and a rifle-shot, and a bullet went whizzing past my head.

"The American! The American!" came a cry, and there was another shot.

I could not see the new assailants, and did not know whether they were soldiers or bandits. And, in fact, I didn't care. I could not look for any mercy from either. There wasn't intelligence enough among the common soldiery for me to expect them to listen to a long explanation of affairs, and the orders had been to shoot me on sight. As for the mountain robbers, they wanted my life and Don Manuel's gold.

I could hear several voices shouting back and forth among the trees, and knew that fighting was out of the question.

So, dodging in and out, keeping in the shelter of tree-trunks as much as possible, I started to run. If I could only reach the mission of Padre Miguel before I was shot, I felt that I would be safe.

I was as good in the woods as my pursuers, for they seemed to be dropping behind.

After I had traveled in this difficult manner for some time, hearing shots and shouts, I found that the trees were becoming scarcer and the ground rising. I had not taken the correct course to the mission, but had gone to the very strongholds of the robbers.

As I sprinted across a bare space about three hundred feet wide, I heard several rifles fired. They seemed to be behind me, before me, and on either side.

I was hit. With a gasp, I fell headlong and knew no more.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARY'S FATHER.

WHEN I first began to recover consciousness, I felt a bewildering sense of being somewhere I never was before. I heard a confused murmur of voices all around me, and, after my straining ears had listened a few minutes, I was astonished to find that they were speaking English.

It was still daylight, and the place I was in was light enough, but strange-looking. Then it dawned upon me that I was in a tent.

And while I was listening to the voices of men talking, there came a gentle footfall near me, and a soft hand touched my forehead. I glanced up, and the sudden spasm that sent my heart to beating at a terrific rate almost made my wounds bleed again.

I was looking up into the lovely face of Kate Arnold.

"Miss Arnold!" I murmured.

"You are yourself, then, thank Heaven," she said. "We didn't feel sure you would ever know us again."

"But where — what place is this? How is it I am in the same place you are?"

"That," she answered, "is more chance than anything else, but a very fortunate chance it is."

"What's this? Fraser conscious?" came the voice of Balover, and his boyish face was soon bending over me.

"Sure, an' I hear talkin'," said the voice of Mary O'Donnell, and the courageous Irish girl joined the other two.

"Am I delirious?" I asked. "Is this all a dream? Now bring Isobel Fernandez, and you'll be complete."

"I wish we could," said Balover. "I only wish Isobel was with us in this safe retreat. But the poor girl is on her way to Spain now."

"Well, then," I replied, trying to decide whether it was my own voice I heard or a dream voice, it sounded so queer, "if it will do you any good to know it, Isobel Fernandez is no more on the way to Spain than you or I."

"What? Did the old don relent after all? Did the Cristobel sail without her?"

"The old don didn't relent and, so far as I know, the Cristobel hasn't sailed. And the old don is dead."

"Dead!" cried Kate Arnold. "My uncle dead?"

They drew camp-stools near my cot and listened with staring eyes as I related all that had befallen me, and all I had learned in Santa Rosa about Don Manuel and Isobel.

Balover was the most affected.

"My poor girl—my Isobel!" he murmured as he paced the narrow limits of the tent. "Alone with her dead! I must go to her."

"But you will be shot!" exclaimed Kate.

"Then—I'll be shot, that's all," said Balover. "I was afraid of a bullet when I thought I was to meet Isobel, but now I'll risk anything to go to her."

"But didn't you listen to me?" I asked, almost in anger. "Didn't I tell you she had gone? Either run away herself or been captured by somebody and carried off?"

"I don't believe anybody would try to harm Isobel," said Balover. "She was always good to the poor. Nobody would or could have a grudge against Isobel. She may have gone away to escape the ship to Spain, but when she hears that her father has been taken home dead she will return. I shall find her at home."

Mary said nothing. This was a circumstance in which she could not advise.

"I'm off," went on Balover. "I can't wait another minute. I'll take care of myself, never fear. I'll bid your father adieu and thank him, Mary, for all he has done."

"Sure, he'll call ye foolish for goin'," said Mary.

"What was that Balover said?" I asked wonderingly, as Balover went out, "Mary's father? What does that mean? I never heard of Mary's father being here. Anyway, I don't know where 'here' is."

"Do ye remember the time I asked ye where was the source of the Rio Rico?" asked Mary.

"Yes. You told me that one saw his sweetheart there."

"Well, now *alanna!* Ain't ye lookin' straight into the eyes o' Kate Arnold?"

"Mary!" cried Kate in reproach.

Her face became suffused with blushes.

"Sure, it's only a joke I'm after gettin' off, miss. But true it is for me."

Kate laughed at this.

"How many of the expedition are your lovers, Mary?"

"All of thim," said Mary with a laugh. "There's luck in havin' plenty. You're beholden to none."

"But quench my curiosity, somehow," I insisted. "Why is Mary's father here, and what place is it?"

"Well, it's two places," replied Kate. "Ostensibly it is the camp of the Urapara Mining Company, operating under a concession. As a matter of fact, it is just as much the headquarters of a force of filibusters who make a living stirring up strife and having revolutions in such countries of South America as are in a state of unrest, as most of them are all the time.

"Mary's father, I believe, has nothing to do with the filibustering part, but is the boss of the mining operations. He has very little liking for the natives, and no objection whatsoever to anybody getting up a revolution who wants to do so. He says that things are so bad now that no revolution can make them any worse, with just a little possibility of improvement."

"And is there an army encamped so

near Santa Rosa and I not know it?" I asked in amazement.

Kate laughed merrily.

"No," she replied. "Who ever heard of an army of filibusters in South America? They only carry on a war with talk. There are three or four of the crowd here—not to fight, but because the government of the United States has urgent business with them. The others are up there now, trying to obtain contributions to buy unlimited munitions of war to bring down on gunboats and overturn everything in sight.

"But don't worry," she went on. "There is not the least probability of war. They will get some money from people in the United States who are ready to give to any crazy project, and they may, by diplomatic and skilful correspondence, intimidate the government here into buying them off. But there will be no war. I heard the matter spoken of at Don Manuel's."

Just then a tall, powerfully built man entered the tent.

"How's the doctor?" he asked.

"This is Mary's father, Mr. O'Donnell," said Kate.

"You had a narrow squeak, boy," explained the mining boss. "When we reached you they were almost on you. You fell in the open space with two bullets in you."

"I am too bewildered to understand," I answered. "I remember running, but when I was struck I lost all consciousness."

"You needn't be telling us that," he said with a laugh. "You wouldn't be hollering about Miss Arnold's beauty so loud if you had your senses."

Kate blushed again.

"Did I?" I asked her.

"I believe you said several incoherent and ridiculous things," she answered. "But, never mind, you are in your right senses now."

"I am," I admitted. "And just as ready to sing about your beauty."

"There! I'm going," she said, and she walked out of the tent.

"How did you all get here, Mary?" I inquired.

"You remember whin I left the old ruin? Well, I rode farther than I thought, and missed the road to the left where you told me to turn, but found another one that brought me here. It was that way I missed the robbers, no doubt. I told my father all about the business and he set out with three or four men and horses and brought Miss Kate and Mr. Balover here. He missed you, and we couldn't imagine what had happened, although Mr. Balover and Miss Kate said you had started after me. An' my father an' his men have been out hunting for you ever since. He came upon a band of robbers and had a battle with them, but you weren't to be seen."

"Nor Don Manuel?" I asked.

"Nor Don Manuel," said Mr. O'Donnell. "I know him well. He was not with the band I met. I would have rescued him had he been with them."

CHAPTER XV.

A LETTER FROM PRISON.

THE days passed pleasantly. Convalescence is always pleasant. And with Kate Arnold for a companion, and Mary O'Donnell's ready wit, and the good food with which the mining-camp was supplied, my lot seemed, for the time being, to be cast on pleasing lines.

For several days Miss Arnold sat and read to me, or talked about New York, and sometimes to the accompaniment of a guitar she borrowed from one of the miners, she would sit near the foot of my cot and sing.

And then when I could move about we took short but exceedingly pleasant walks along the Rio Rico, there but a tiny, rippling stream, and would stop and rest under great spreading trees before we walked back to camp and dinner.

Under these agreeable circumstances I could not help getting well. And there's another thing I could not help—falling in love.

By the time Balover had been gone long enough to make us anxious concerning him, I was in a fever of love. But the conditions, the uncertainty in which we lived, made me hesitate to declare that love, and Kate's own modest bearing gave me no idea of what her thoughts were toward me.

I felt that to force my attentions upon her now would seem like taking undue

advantage of the unfortunate situation we were all in.

"I wonder," I said one day, as Kate and I were strolling along by the riverside, "where Balover is. I hope he hasn't got himself in any more trouble."

"I don't know," she answered dubiously. "I felt when he went away that it was not for the best. But, then—what could one say? I could not attempt to dissuade him from going to the girl he loved. I'm sure I would not think much of a man who professed to love me who would not risk something to come to me if he thought I was in trouble."

"Wouldn't you?" I asked. "I would—"

I almost had said it—had almost declared myself, when I had resolved not to do so until we were in safety, when she clutched my arm and pointed to some bushes not far away.

"Look there," she whispered. "I am sure I saw a man skulk behind those bushes."

"Are you sure?" I asked, taking my revolver from my pocket.

"Certain. But give him a chance before you shoot."

"Yes, and let him shoot us first? I'll have him out of there."

I was just leveling the revolver to fire into the clump of brush when a dark face showed above the branches.

"Don't shoot!" he called out, holding up his hands to show that he had no weapon. "I come as a friend from a friend of yours."

"A messenger from Balover," I said to Kate, lowering the weapon. "He's in trouble, sure as blazes. Come here, then, and give your message."

The fellow advanced, hat in hand. He looked weak and hungry.

"*Señor* and *señorita*," he began, bowing particularly to Kate, "I have had a terrible time finding you. I suppose, of course, I speak to the American medico, Señor Fraser?"

"Yes, I am Dr. Fraser," I answered. "This is Miss Arnold."

"Good. Well, I have been two days and nights searching the hills. Señor Balover had no chance to tell me just where you were, and I did not know. I dared not ask, or I would have been sent back to prison."

"Prison!" I cried. "Is Balover in prison?"

"He is, *señor*," said the messenger. "And, if the reports are true, they intend to shoot him. But of that I have no proof. We have little opportunity to speak to one another in the prison at Santa Rosa. But Señor Balover managed to write a letter. He couldn't escape because he is in an underground dungeon from which there is no outlet.

"He called to me one day as I was walking over an iron grating that lets light into his cell. He knew I was a prisoner. The keepers wear a sort of uniform. Well, *señor*, he handed me this letter, and asked me to see that it was carried to you in Señor O'Donnell's camp. Then a keeper came along, and we could talk no more.

"It just happened that I had plotted to escape that night, and I did. But I did not see Señor Balover again. I had to search for you, and now I am pleased to find you and deliver the letter."

"You must be half famished," I said. "Go right on till you find a little encampment with two or three tents and a few log houses. Ask for Mr. O'Donnell. Tell him we sent you for a square meal. He'll give it to you."

I also gave him a coin.

"Thank you, *señor*," he said, bowing again as he started toward the camp.

"Sit down here," I told Kate, finding a favorite seat of ours near the riverbank. "Let's see what poor Balover has to say."

I opened the letter and read it aloud:

"MY DEAR FRASER:

"I shall probably never see you, Miss Arnold, or Isobel again, so take this method of bidding you all farewell. And I thank you for trying to help me when I needed help. It wasn't your fault that you ran away with the wrong girl. I should have told you Kate Arnold was visiting Isobel, but I had no idea she was to start for Buenos Ayres the same night that Isobel was to start for Spain.

"I regret now that I asked you to take the risk, for you and Kate are in trouble and danger, and Isobel and I are worse off than if we had kept still and she had gone on to Spain. It must be easier to get out of a convent in Spain than it is from this dungeon.

"I will explain what happened. If you can't read the scrawl very well, do the best you can. All the light I get is from an old iron grating that covers a hole in the ground above my dungeon. I suppose I could knock out the rusty grating, but the hole is too small for me to crawl through, so it would do me no good.

"Well, here goes: When I left you I walked into Santa Rosa, big as life, having been two days on the road. I lost my way.

"Nobody seemed to pay me any attention, as sensations are short-lived here. They follow each other in such rapid succession that one drowns the other out. The latest is the arrival of a gunboat from Holland, or Germany, or some European power, with the threat that a good portion of the country will be plowed up with cannon-balls if this government doesn't pay its debts.

"I went direct to the house of Don Manuel. Say, if anybody ever tells you again that the old dub is dead, just give him one for me while you are at it. If he's a dead one, I don't want to meet his kind any more alive than he is at this very minute.

"He was wounded in a skirmish the robbers had with a bunch of soldiers Señor Pinero sent out to find the don. Well, the soldiers got him alive and brought him home, and he's the most enraged lunatic I ever saw. When I went in he sat in a big chair, and when he saw me I thought he'd burst a blood-vessel cursing at me.

"Isobel is not yet found. I can't imagine what the girl did with herself. Anyway, she'd better keep away from her father now. If you see her, tell her he will kill her.

"He says you stole the money you got from the bank. He says Kate stole the money he gave her to take to New York. He thinks you and Kate eloped with each other.

"Well, you did, but not as he means.

"He called some servants and had me held. Then he sent for officers and soldiers, and I was marched off to the Santa Rosa prison. It's a delightful place. Rats in the cell, and slimy walls, and wet floors. I don't get half enough to eat, and every time a keeper brings me my miserable food he gives me a punch in the face or a kick—just for an appetizer, I suppose.

"I don't know how long I'll be here, or what they intend to do with me. But from what prisoners have told me from the prison-court, or *patio*, through the iron grating, the talk is that I am to be shot.

"So, if you do not hear from me again, good-by. You will know what my fate has been. Give my farewells to Kate and Mary and Mr. O'Donnell. And if you ever see Isobel, tell her I died with her name on my lips, bravely, and would die a hundred times for her dear sake. Yours,

"JIM BALOVER."

CHAPTER XVI.

A RESOLVE.

I SAT gazing vacantly toward the little river, the letter hanging from my hand.

"Well?" said Kate, as though to recall me from a dream.

"That," I replied, "is what I call a manly letter. Not a whimper about his fate: No regrets except that he got us all in the scrape. He's a fine fellow, Balover."

There was a quick indrawing of her breath, and I turned my head to look at her. She was looking at *me*.

And such a look as she was giving me! I cannot describe it. But I shall never forget the complex emotions that glowed from her eyes, that sat on her quivering lips, and showed in the pallor of her cheeks.

There was something in it that seemed to rebuke me—something that stung me into life.

"You are right," I said, although she had not uttered a word. "Instead of sitting here doing nothing, I should be in Santa Rosa trying to help Balover. You are right, Kate—Miss Arnold. I'm off at once."

She put out her hand and placed it on my arm as if to detain me.

"You are mistaken," she said. "You think that I was—was—"

"You looked it, and you were right. It is cowardly for me to remain here with Balover in such terrible danger. I shall go to Santa Rosa at once."

"You—are dreadfully mistaken," she said again. "I—"

Her voice seemed choking.

"What is it, then?" I asked more gently, for I saw that the girl was almost in tears.

I fancied for a moment that she might even be in love with Balover herself.

"I—knew you *would* go," she said falteringly.

"Yes," I told her, "I will go. Balover must not be left to die like that."

"But—what can you do?" she asked. "You will be shot yourself. It was that that almost—almost—"

"Almost? Almost what, Miss Arnold? You surely would not have me remain here in safety when Balover is suffering as he is, and the prospects of a speedy death are before him."

"If you could accomplish anything I would not say a word against your going," she answered.

"And do you now?"

"Yes. I cannot see where you will be of any service to Balover. You are even worse in the estimation of the *alcalde* of Santa Rosa than he is."

"We have not tried the American consul."

"Of what use?"

"I'll try. I'll either have Balover out of that prison or—"

"Or what—what will you do?" she asked.

"I'll join him and be shot with him."

She seemed to gulp down a sob. Then her eyes took on a strange look, and before I could even guess what her real emotion was she had fallen flat on the grassy bank in a dead faint.

"Kate! Dear Kate!" I cried. "What is the matter? Don't you want me to help Balover?"

Of course she made no answer. I rushed to the river and got some water, and worked over her. In a short time she returned to consciousness, and as she did so she grasped my hand.

"I knew you would go," she said, in a low voice. "I cannot tell you not to. It would be useless, I know. But—oh, be cautious. Don't get into their hands."

"Why, Kate!" I said. "Do you—care?"

She turned her face away from me, but from her lips came the whispered word: "Yes."

"Come back to O'Donnell," I said, as I helped her to her feet. "You will be safe with him, no matter what happens to me."

She suddenly burst into tears.

"Kate!" I said. "You didn't cry when Balover went to find Isobel. Why do you cry now?"

I received no answer. Her sobbing increased.

"Kate," I said, stopping her, "is it because—dare I think it is that you care for me?"

The tear-dimmed eyes looked straight at mine. But not a word came from her trembling lips. Yet there was something in her look that gave me my answer.

"Kate," I said, "I was never going to speak of my love for you until we were in a position where it would not appear that I was taking advantage of your helplessness. But, Kate, in our short acquaintance I have learned to love you. It is scarcely the time to speak of that now, nor is it the place. But a word to show that you do like me will strengthen me in what I have to do."

The hand she had on my arm trembled, but grasped me closely.

We reached the camp, and I motioned to Mary's father that I wished to see him alone. He came to me at once.

"Mr. O'Donnell," I said, "that man you are feeding brought me a letter from Balover. He is in the prison at Santa Rosa. I suppose the man has told you."

"Yes, he told me all he knew about it. He seems to think they have determined to shoot the boy."

"So Balover says. I am going to leave Miss Arnold in your care, while I go to Santa Rosa and see what I can do."

"Oh, no. I can't agree to that. You are brave enough, certainly. But with all that is hanging over your own head you will be in greater danger than he."

"Still, I can't leave him there without an effort in his behalf."

"I can't consent."

I looked at him in surprise. I was certainly the master of my own actions. O'Donnell, whatever he might feel as a friend, had, of course, no authority over me.

"I am sorry you wish me to be a coward," I replied.

"I don't. I know you are not a coward. I don't want you to be a fool. Look at her."

He nodded toward Kate. I saw at once that the spirit of dejection had come upon her with more force than ever.

"The girl loves you," said O'Donnell. "You cannot throw your life away."

"I will talk to her," I told him, and I walked toward Kate.

"Kate," I said, "please don't take it so. You don't want me to be a coward, do you?"

"You couldn't be."

"Then let me go to help Balover with your smiles instead of tears to remember."

"But if you are shot?"

"I don't think it will come to that. I must try to help Balover."

"Well—I know you will go," she said. "And—whatever happens—if you are—"

She could get no further. Her voice broke, and she leaned heavily against me.

"Kate," I said, "do you love me?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"Then your love will strengthen me, and I'll come back to you. Kiss me, Kate, and let me go."

I kissed her. There was no more weeping, no murmurings, no objections.

"Mr. O'Donnell," I said, "isn't there a suit of clothes in the camp that would fit me? The things I have on are too well known."

"Yes," he said with a grave face. "If you will go, I'll fit you out. But I fear this, my boy! I fear it."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE HANDS OF ENEMIES.

It did not take me as long to reach Santa Rosa as it had Balover. I knew the roads better than he did, and Mr. O'Donnell lent me a horse.

It was toward the close of an oppressively warm day that I rode into the town. Everything was quiet, and I smiled as I thought about what Balover had said concerning the short life of a sensation in Santa Rosa.

Even the threatened bombardment of the place by a foreign ship was not enough to keep the gay and careless people excited.

Nobody seemed to pay me any attention. Had I not been chained with ties of love and friendship, I could have gone straight to the station and boarded a train for Buenos Ayres without being molested.

But it was far from my purpose to escape into Argentine alone. If I could not take Kate with me I would not go.

I found the consulate closed.

Just what to do then puzzled me. I wanted particularly to see the consul first. I asked a bystander where he lived.

"The American consul," he answered, "lives on the hill back of the school. But he is not there now. There are foreign ships in the harbor, and he is busy with matters of state."

Disappointed in this quarter, I rode along the street, pondering as to what my best plan of operation should be.

I had the money I had taken from Don Manuel's bank. As he had escaped the bandits without the use of this, it should, of course, be returned to him.

I rode to his house. I had no fear of Don Manuel, as returning his money would undoubtedly place me on a better footing with him.

By the time I reached the house it was quite dark. I had just dismounted when somebody rushed from behind a large tree.

"Ah, at last!" I heard a voice exclaim. I reached for my pistol; but before I could use it I felt a sudden, sharp pain, as a knife was driven into my side, then withdrawn and driven in again.

Gasping and trying to call out for help, I sank fainting to the ground. There was a quick examination of my clothing.

The sheepskin-bag was found. With a muttered expression of pleasure, the robber hurried away.

The house of Don Manuel was in a lonely spot. I lay there for some time. There were moments when I lost myself, and at others I felt strong enough to rise.

At last, with a great effort, I did get on my feet.

There was no use trying Don Manuel now. I had lost his money. The return of that had been the only talisman I had to win anything like friendship from him.

Where to go I did not know. It would never do, certainly, to go to Henrique's inn. I did not know how seriously Henrique had been wounded; but he had been robbed, which was worse, in the estimation of these people, than to be stabbed or shot.

My mind was befogged; I was weak, and my steps irregular and uncertain. I staggered along till I came to a small café. This I entered and called for a drink of brandy. If I could find a native surgeon, I knew he would help me and keep my identity a secret.

While I sat at a table sipping the cognac, a man entered. He glanced around, evidently seeking a place to sit; and finding my table in use only by myself, he sat down there.

"Pardon. By your leave, *señor*," he said.

There was something about his voice that was familiar. I looked at him carefully. He was well dressed, but the dark face was one I knew.

It was the man who had worked for me, and from whom I had taken the clothes to disguise me when I drove Don Manuel's carriage to the old ruin.

I dared not address him as an acquaintance. There was no doubt in my own mind, having seen what he used to wear and the expensive way he was dressed now, that he had stabbed and robbed Henrique and laid the blame on me. He did not want much, just a drink; and, having drained the glass, he walked out.

I finished my cognac and asked the proprietor where I could find a surgeon. He told me, and I started off.

No sooner had I reached the street than heavy hands were laid on me.

"You are wanted," said a voice. "You are a prisoner."

"Unhand me!" I cried. "I am an American citizen."

"You are, indeed," said my captor with a sneer. "You are one who robs a banker, runs away with young women, and stabs an innkeeper. Here, you, José, follow up close, and stick him with a bayonet if he lags behind."

I saw that I was in the power of a number of soldiers, and was too weak to make any attempt to fight.

"To the *alcalde*," said the leader. "This will please him much."

I had never spoken to the *alcalde* of Santa Rosa, and had no idea what sort of man he was. I had seen him, driving about in a fine carriage; but, beyond the fact that he was rich and powerful, I knew nothing about him.

I felt myself growing weaker, after the stimulating effects of the cognac had worn off; and by the time we reached the house of the *alcalde* I could scarcely stand, and my wounds were still uncared for.

At the door a few words from the leader among my captors gained us admission. We were taken at once to a spacious library, where the *alcalde* — a stern, sour-faced man—sat reading.

When he saw soldiers entering with a prisoner he faced them.

"What is this?" he demanded angrily. "You disturb me in my hours of retirement? Who is this man? Why did you not lock him up till to-morrow?"

"Excellency," said the leader, "we are but obeying orders. Do you not remember that we were to bring him to you at once when he was caught, if he was caught alive?"

"What? Who is this?"

"The American who has played so many tricks, your excellency. He ran away with the niece of Don Manuel Fernandez, and then obtained a large amount of money from Don Manuel's bank and disappeared."

"Ah! I remember. So, instead of a professional gentleman, you are a thief," said the *alcalde*, eying me coldly.

"I am not a thief," I answered. "The money was taken from the bank on an order from Don Manuel himself to get him free from some mountain robbers who had him in their clutches. When I returned there was nobody in their stronghold. The soldiers had been there, and they had captured some of the robbers and set Don Manuel free.

"I had the money—that is true. I returned to Santa Rosa, intending to give the money to the bank. I learned that Pinero had gone with the funds, and the bank was closed. I also heard that Don Manuel was dead.

"The money then belonged to Don Manuel's daughter, and I did not know where to find her."

The *alcalde* looked at me sharply, and in no friendly way.

"You tell a story that sounds well, but I do not believe you. If you do not know where the *señorita* is, who does?"

"I don't know. I never saw Isobel Fernandez in my life."

"You stabbed and robbed Henrique, the innkeeper."

"I did not."

"You ran away with the niece of Don Manuel."

"I fancied it was Isobel, and I thought I was driving her to meet her sweetheart."

A heavy look came on the *alcalde's* face.

"Where is Don Manuel's gold now?"

"It was stolen from me this evening. I am wounded—the robber drove a knife into me twice."

"Lies—all lies. I do not believe your countrymen. I do not believe you. Take him to the Santa Rosa prison. We will deal with his case to-morrow."

And without further ceremony I was dragged away.

(To be continued.)

CARRIED BEYOND.

By F. K. SCRIBNER.

The trifling misadventure with a satchel that threatened disaster to an important business deal, capped by an encounter in the woods as the finishing touch.

"DAVISON," said the senior partner, "it is up to you to take those plans and specifications up the river; I would go myself, but an important engagement puts that out of the question."

"But I thought—Mr. Dawson was—" I ventured.

"Mr. Dawson has just phoned down, or, rather, his wife phoned, that he fell over something before breakfast, and is laid up with a sprained ankle. This is too important an affair to trust to any one besides ourselves; as Dawson and I are out of it, it's up to you."

I had been for eight years with the firm of Bridwell & Dawson, architects, when Fortune smiled and I was admitted to partnership as junior member. This had occurred only two weeks before the conversation given above; and for that reason it was, as Mr. Bridwell put it, up to me to take the drawings up the Hudson.

And the entire staff had been at work upon those drawings for a good month back, under Mr. Dawson's generalship. There was a big contract coming to some one of the various architects in the metropolis, and we proposed to be in the running.

Some months before, there had appeared out of the West a personage with a bank-account as long as the Erie Canal and an ambition not to hide his light under a bushel. He had rented a place forty miles up the Hudson, looked over the ground at his leisure, and then invested in acres of meadow, hill, and forest, which should form an immense park; a setting befitting the modern palace which he proposed to erect in the midst of it.

And the plans upon which we had been working for weeks were to be submitted that afternoon, with probably a score of others from rival architects, to the critical eye of the man who would not permit a few hundred thousand to stand in the way of his latest ambition.

That was the situation in a nutshell; the labor on which we pinned our hopes was finished and resting in the big safe behind Mr. Bridwell, and it was up to me to carry the bulky package to Maplewood and return either a victor or among the vanquished.

"I wish," I ventured a trifle nervously, "that Mr. Dawson could handle this affair; you see, he understands just how to put up the best explanations and—"

My companion was polishing his eyeglasses vigorously, for perhaps he, too, was a little nervous.

"But Dawson is out of it, and, after all, I don't fancy the explaining will cut so much figure. I understand this Farrington knows his own mind, and it's the drawings and specifications he'll look at. They'll speak for themselves, and perhaps the less said the better. I'm told he is a bluff, hearty chap; and if he does

not like what you show him, all the talking in the world will be so much wasted energy."

On further consideration, the task did not look so very difficult; I even began to feel a sense of satisfaction that I was to be in at the finish. Had I known what Fate held in store for me—but that will appear later.

My companion referred to a memorandum.

"He has set the hour at seven this evening, when all the plans are to be submitted; there will be a crowd of you, and a good long session probably, but it's seven he's made it. I'm told he is strict about keeping an appointment, and any one who fails to show up won't stand much show with him. There is an express leaving the Grand Central at five this afternoon, first stop Maplewood. That will give you time to get dinner there and be on hand at seven. I need not caution you to make no misses, for you understand the importance of this thing as well as I do. I've a fancy Dawson's ideas will carry the day; if they do, perhaps we'll all take a trip to Europe."

"I'll be on hand, sitting on his gatepost before seven; trust me for that," I answered lightly.

And then I got the plans out of the safe and studied them carefully, sheet after sheet, although I knew every line, curve, and square by heart.

During the lunch hour I went home and dressed for the journey; I even took the precaution to drop in at the station to assure myself my train left at five o'clock, and to purchase my ticket. There was going to be no mistake there.

A little after four I went to the safe again and took out the package. It was, as I have said, rather bulky, and I decided the safest way to carry it was in a satchel. I locked the latter carefully, got into my overcoat, and had a parting word with Mr. Bridwell.

"Good luck!" said he. "And wire to the house if the thing is decided by midnight. I fancy, though, it may be an all-night session; why Farrington does not choose to do his business in the daytime I don't know, but I suppose he has his own hobbies. Of course, you'll stay at the hotel up there, in any event."

I called a cab and started for the station. I did not propose to get blocked in the Subway, or anything of that sort. If I had been carrying a bag of diamonds I would not have felt more responsibility than I did with the contents of that satchel.

There was a fair-sized crowd sifting through the gate when I joined it and presented my ticket; ahead of me I saw several architects, making for the line of waiting coaches, and it was not difficult to guess their point of destination. I found a comfortable seat in the smoker, lighted a cigar, and, with the satchel on the cushion beside me, felt pretty well satisfied with things in general.

The train was due to reach Maplewood at 5.40; I should have time and to spare between then and seven.

It was three minutes to starting time; as is usually the case, there began a rush of belated passengers into the car. There were plenty of seats, but one of the strangers, drifting up the aisle, halted beside my own and gazed down upon the satchel at my elbow.

"If you don't mind!" quoth he, and took a step forward.

I did mind, for there was plenty of room elsewhere, but I could not deny him the privilege of occupying the seat with me. I removed the satchel with as good a grace as possible and set it upon the floor between my feet and the underside of the seat.

He removed his coat, laid it over the back of his half, and dropped down beside me. He was a bulky personage, and I squeezed nearer to the window, and in doing so pushed the bag a little farther under the seat.

The air in the car was close, and it did not require many seconds to tell me my companion had imbibed liberally before boarding the train. He settled himself comfortably, passed a few remarks, and looked at his watch. Just then the train began to move slowly.

"Going to Albany?" he inquired.

I replied in the negative.

"Well, I am," said he, "and I'm going to take forty winks right off the reel; was up all last night, and can't keep my eyes open," and he yawned vigorously.

I puffed away on my cigar and looked

out of the window, being in no mind to enter into an extended conversation with my bibulous friend.

He thrust his ticket into the top of the seat in front, settled himself more comfortably, and closed his eyes. By the time we had crossed the Harlem, he was breathing heavily, in gulps and jerks.

The train swung along at a merry pace, and I became preoccupied in thinking of how fine it would be to secure the contract. All sense of time must have slipped away from me, for before I realized we could have covered forty miles, I felt the speed of the train diminish. Then came the grinding of the brakes, and a loud voice announced — "*Maplewood!*"

I made a grab for my overcoat and reached down for the satchel. The motion of the cars had jammed it under the seat, with the handle out of reach; but I grabbed it by either end, and pulled. The thing wouldn't budge.

To get more room, and without standing upon ceremony, I elbowed the sleeper roughly; he grunted and jerked one foot sidewise against the bag, wedging it more firmly between the floor and the bottom of the seat. And just then, from outside, came the warning cry "All aboard!"

In desperation, I dropped to my knees and clutched the satchel in both hands, tugging at it with all my strength. But it might as well have been nailed to the floor; I could not move it an inch.

I felt the first quiver as the train began to move.

I hurled myself against the leg of the sleeping brute who had unwittingly added to my wo. I tugged and pulled, but the bag remained as though held in a vise; and the express was gaining headway.

The occupants of the seat in front heard the commotion and looked around, craning their necks to see what was the matter.

"Something stuck?" remarked one pleasantly.

"Yes!" I almost yelled. "and I want to get off *here*."

"Better hurry up, though I guess it's too late, anyhow," observed the other man in front.

Then he did what might have mended matters had it occurred a minute sooner: and that was to proffer a suggestion.

"You can't get that bag by pulling and yanking, young fellow, but if you'll lift the cushion I reckon you can reach down and shove it out."

I had not thought of that, but clutched at the idea as a drowning man would clutch at a straw. The yokel snoring on the seat must have weighed in the neighborhood of two hundred and twenty-five, but I dumped him over with an ease which would have astonished me had I had time to think of it.

It certainly surprised him beyond measure. He sprawled half into the aisle while I jerked up the cushion and, reaching down, gave the bag a violent push. It slid from under the seat, free and clear.

With a gasp of relief I grabbed the handle, brushed past my angry companion, and rushed down the aisle toward the door. The express was now under good headway.

At the door I plunged into the brakeman.

"Let me off!" I panted.

"You can't get off, *now*. Do you want to break your neck?" he growled.

I had collided violently with his stomach, and he was annoyed.

"But I've got to get off at Maplewood —get out of my way, will you?" I yelled.

"Maplewod is a mile back: you'll have to go on to the next station. Why didn't you get a move on you when I called?" he retorted, still blocking the doorway.

"Then stop the train—I've got to get off!" I shouted.

"Stop nothing, friend," he answered. Then, as an afterthought: "Do you think, because you fellows fall asleep and pass your station the company's going to stop an express to accommodate every Tom, Dick, and Harry? Go and cool off, and wake up in time next trip."

The train was now rushing forward at a rate which put an end to all thought of making a jump of it. I gazed wildly up and down the aisle; most of the passengers were looking at me, grinning broadly. I saw the conductor at the farther end and rushed toward him.

"For Heaven's sake!" I panted, "stop and let me off. I've got to keep an appointment in Maplewood within an hour."

"Sorry," he replied calmly, "but you know we can't stop an express on such an excuse as that. Get off at the next station and take a train back."

"I'll give ten dollars—" I began.

"Couldn't do it for a hundred," he answered, and pushed past me down the aisle.

Desperate, I followed.

"What's the next stop, and when can I get a train back to Maplewood?" I demanded.

"Glendale—eighteen miles up the line." He looked at his watch: "You'll miss the six-fifteen, for we're late, but there's a local leaving Glendale at seven; it will get you to Maplewood in an hour."

It would bring me to Maplewood at eight o'clock; hope awoke again in my breast. Even if I was an hour late it could probably make little difference: we would still be in the running with Mr. Farrington.

I dropped into a seat and counted the minutes until we should arrive at Glendale. When the express came to a stop I was the first to reach the station platform.

I made a bee-line for the ticket-agent.

He was busied with the telegraph instrument, but after a few moments left the table and came to the window. The express had already pulled away from the station and the rear lights were disappearing in the distance.

"I want to get back to Maplewood; the first down train leaves at seven?" I queried.

The reply of the ticket-agent came like a dash of ice-water.

"It should leave at seven, but there will be nothing doing to-night. There is a wreck above us on the *down* track, and no trains can get through under five or six hours. If you can get away from here by midnight you'll be lucky."

"And I can't get back to Maplewood?" I hardly recognized my own voice as I put the question.

"Not before midnight," he replied briefly, and went back to the telegraph-key again.

For several moments I stood motionless, too dazed to think coherently.

I was eighteen miles from Maplewood, it was after six o'clock, and there was no possibility of a down train for five hours or more. At the end of that time there could remain no hope of submitting our plans to Mr. Farrington.

I felt a lump rising in my throat and little chills creeping up and down my spine. I walked over to the cooler and gulped down a swallow of tepid water; then dropped the bag on a seat and stared at it blankly.

Half an hour before its contents might have been worth thousands of dollars; now the bundle of papers would not bring the value of a twenty-five-cent necktie.

But presently I recovered my nerve a bit and returned to the window, a last desperate expedient in my mind.

"My friend," I asked, "do you know of any one in this neighborhood who keeps an automobile? I want to get to Maplewood, and I want to get there quick."

The agent shook his head.

"There *were* three or four in town, but I reckon they are not in commission now: gone to the city, or laid up for the winter," he replied shortly.

"And it's eighteen miles to Maplewood?"

"You've hit it; and say—you can't go by train, nor in an automobile, but you might drive over: the roads are pretty good all the way."

I had thought of that, but not seriously, for my experience of livery horses was not encouraging when it became a question of racing against time. But now it must be that or nothing; by driving the eighteen miles I *might* reach the Farrington place in time to put in our plans. By staying where I was until a train came along was to surrender all hope of accomplishing anything.

In fact, I felt I should go under altogether if I waited in that stuffy little station half an hour longer; I wanted air and action of some sort.

The agent was leaning on the inner side of the window, smoking a cigarette and looking me over.

"Traveling-man?" he queried nonchalantly.

"No—nor a book-agent," I replied savagely.

"Train carried you beyond Maplewood? Perhaps you missed a dinner engagement?"

"The train certainly did carry me beyond Maplewood," I managed to get out.

"And you want to get back there—p. d. q.?"

"I'd give twenty-five dollars to be there now," I answered, and felt like kicking him, he looked so comfortable and satisfied with things in general.

"If you'd be willing to give up ten, I reckon you might fix it," said he, emitting the words and a cloud of smoke in unison.

"I presume a livery *would* take me over for that, and I might reach there by daybreak," I retorted.

"Livery nothing! There is a man up the road has got a horse that can do a mile in the best time you ever saw—for a roadster; he isn't in the livery business, but I reckon a ten-spot would fix it for you. Short of the down local, which isn't coming, or an automobile, that horse will deliver the goods better than anything in these parts. Might try it—if you want to put up the ten."

He delivered himself of this information much after the manner of a judge rendering an important decision.

I grasped at the hope eagerly.

"If it can get me there in—" I began, but he interrupted with a wave of the cigarette:

"Don't worry, you'll get there; go straight up the road half a mile. It's the first big white house on your left. Ask for Mr. Frost, and mention that I sent you."

The telegraph instrument began to click, and he turned abruptly. I caught up the satchel, buttoned my coat, and bolted through the door. I think I covered that half mile in record time, and presently stopped, panting, before the door of the Frost domicile.

Luckily the fellow was at home, and was nothing loath to make ten dollars. He assured me the horse was fresh and could get me to Maplewood before I had half begun to enjoy the ride. His son, a youth of fifteen, would drive, and bring the horse and buckboard back in the morning.

There was a watery moon, and the sickly atmosphere matched my feelings, but as we sped along and I saw the horse could really go, some of the depression left me. With the satchel held securely on my lap, under the robe, and the mare making the pebbles fly, I even tried to be cheerful.

We must have covered six miles or so, and the light buckboard was bumping and rattling merrily along, when we struck the foot of a steep hill. It was just light enough to distinguish the road ahead fairly well and to see that we were in a pretty lonely section of the country; not a house in sight, and a strip of timber along one side of the highway.

The boy eased up the horse and we began to climb the hill; I promised myself to make up for the delay when we reached the top. But we never reached it; at least, not as I expected.

From the right, out of the shadow of the grove, two figures suddenly darted; before I could realize what was happening one had the horse by the head and the other was at the side of the buckboard. We came to a sudden stop.

"Get out!" ordered a gruff voice, and the speaker laid a hand on the robe.

Then it flashed upon me that we were the victims of a hold-up. I remembered having read in the papers of the frequency of such operations in the section through which we were driving, but until that moment I had forgotten it.

I looked down at the man beside the buckboard, and what I saw was not overpleasing under the circumstances. He was a big, burly fellow, with the shoulders of a prize-fighter, and, besides, was armed with a good-sized club as long as my arm.

"What do you want?" I asked in as calm a tone as I could muster.

"Get out, and we'll talk it over; perhaps we want to show you a bit of beautiful scenery—scenery by moonlight," he growled with a harsh chuckle.

"But I'm in a hurry," I ventured; "it's necessary to—"

It was a feeble attempt under existing conditions, but I blurted out the first thing which came into my mind. The man holding the horse began to swear.

"Jerk him overboard, Dave; we can't fool here all night. If he won't come down give him one where it will count," he added impatiently.

"Oh, he'll come down quick enough," the other replied.

I could see that he had sized me up as

possessing little nerve, judging probably from my inane remark about being in a hurry.

This aroused me to action and I did what was doubtless a decidedly foolish thing under the circumstances. I grabbed the reins and whip from the boy's hands, yelled to the horse, and brought the lash smartly down upon its back.

The beast plunged and strained at the lines, but the man ahead held on firmly, though I believe he was dragged a dozen feet or more. At the same moment his companion grabbed me by the leg and, despite my struggles, pulled me roughly from the seat into the road, the robe and satchel sliding after me.

Fortunately, I was not hurt, and was up in a minute, only to be seized by the collar in a grasp I realized there was no shaking off.

"Played funny, didn't you?" laughed my captor harshly.

And then the thing happened, which, had it occurred before the fellow seized my leg, might have saved the situation. The horse, a high-strung animal, jerked its head loose from the clinging fingers; the man went backward into the ditch, and beast and buckboard—the frightened boy clinging to the seat—dashed up the hill.

A volley of oaths followed them, but, as the man crawled out of the ditch and limped toward us, his companion gave me a sudden twist.

"Let 'em go, Bill. We don't want to pinch the nag, and the boy hadn't a nickel in his jeans; we've got what we wanted *here*," said he triumphantly.

Then, when the other had taken a position which must cut off retreat if I tried to run, he let go my collar.

"Shell out, and be quick about it!" he commanded savagely.

There was nothing else to do, for I preferred that to having them go through me.

I handed over my watch, a handful of change, and my wallet, containing in the neighborhood of fifty dollars. Perhaps I should not have given up these things so readily had it not been for the bag lying under the robe by the side of the road. I hoped, having received my valuables, the fellows would be satisfied.

But my experience with gentlemen of their kidney was limited. The man to whom I handed the articles looked them over and dropped them in his pocket, then nodded to his companion.

"Go through him, Bill, there may be another wad on him; and I reckon there's a scarf-pin and such trinkets lying loose somewhere," said he shortly.

Before I could remonstrate he grabbed me from behind and held on while the other followed out his suggestion. The letters and papers I carried in my pocket they tossed into the ditch; even a small knife and a couple of lead pencils went to make a part of their plunder.

When the fellow let go I backed off, biting my lip to keep back the words which might have got me into more trouble. My foot touched the robe and a sudden resolve possessed me.

I realized they would not leave it lying in the road and must discover the satchel; that they would appropriate the latter was now a certainty. Possibly, having examined its contents, they might throw the whole after my other papers, but I was not certain. The thought that they might carry away bag and plans filled me with desperation. I resolved to take a chance, no matter what happened.

And, unsuspecting, they furnished me the opportunity. It was "Dave" who issued the command:

"Get out of that coat; I guess we can make use of it!"

It was my overcoat they wanted, and just then I was perfectly willing to dispense with the article in question. When one contemplates sprinting down a lonely country road with two determined tramps in pursuit a heavy winter overcoat is a hindrance.

I did not move quickly enough, and the command was repeated, this time with a savage snarl.

"Shed the coat! Do you think we can stand around here all night?"

I unbuttoned the garment and slipped off one sleeve; then I pretended something had stuck and the other sleeve would not slide off easily. I went through various contortions, and they watched me, unsuspecting.

Suddenly, I bent down and slipped my arm from the sleeve, and, as I felt myself free of the coat, made a quick dive, hurled aside the robe, and caught

up the bag. Another instant and I was sprinting down the road, teeth tightly clenched, my heart pounding like a trip-hammer.

I fancy the pair of highway robbers were the most surprised men in Westchester County. I had covered a dozen yards before they realized there had been a shift in the program.

I heard a shout behind, the clatter of feet, and knew they were after me.

Looking back at it, I do not remember feeling any serious doubts as to the outcome of the race along the lonely highway. I had a fair start, and it was no great trick to outdistance the lumbering tramps following in my wake. But I remember that the thought flashed through my mind that I was running the wrong way—away from Maplewood.

For a quarter of a mile or so the road was straight, and beyond a rather sharp turn; we were racing toward it, the tramps losing gradually, when suddenly something happened. Around the turn ahead rushed a pair of glaring eyes, and the thrum, thrum of a speeding automobile came to me through the night.

Blinded, I swerved to the side of the road; there was a rush of air, a medley of voices, and, turning to look behind, I saw the red and green of the rear lights of the machine.

For a dozen rods it kept on its course, then slowed down and stopped in the middle of the road. I turned in my tracks and walked slowly back.

A man in a great fur coat and goggles greeted me. He had been puffing on a big cigar, and waved it in the air as he put the query:

"Training for the Marathon, or what the devil are you up to? Another moment and we might have run you down."

I was breathing in short gasps, and for several moments could not answer him. Then, disjointedly, I explained the situation. He gave a low whistle, puffed for a moment on the cigar, and proceeded to look me over.

"Fancied I saw some one take to the fields ahead of us; must have been your late friends of the road," said he, and I fancied I detected a trace of humor in his voice.

This nettled me.

"You may consider it a joke," I retorted hotly, "but I fail to see the fun in the thing. I've been robbed of about everything except my clothes, and I'm stranded here, with the prospect of having to walk the rest of the night before finding a hotel which will put me up."

"Which way were you going?" he asked shortly.

"Maplewood! and if ever a man was in a hurry I am," I answered, and I fancy my voice broke a little.

He waved the cigar toward the machine.

"Going to Maplewood myself, and there's always room for one more. Come, get aboard; I'm in something of a hurry, too," he jerked out in a friendly tone.

Then his glance traveled to the bag.

"Saved something from the wreck?" he queried.

"Yes, thank the Lord," I muttered, and followed him to the car.

The huge machine was panting and quivering as we boarded her. I took the vacant front seat, while my companion climbed into the rear, beside another figure, muffled in furs. The chauffeur pulled a lever and we shot forward at a bound, covering the ground over which I had raced a few minutes before, up the hill, and past the spot where the tramps had stopped the buckboard.

The wind whistled past my ears and penetrated to the marrow of my bones, but I could have raised my voice in a pæan of thanksgiving. The satchel was safe and I was speeding toward Maplewood at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

A hand rested on my shoulder, and the voice of the man of the goggles sounded in my ear.

"Here, take this!" said he shortly, and threw a fur robe over my shoulders.

Then we sped on, past silent farmhouses, up and down hill, across the levels; and, after a time, I saw the glimmer of lights far ahead of us.

I knew it must be Maplewood, and, instinctively, my hand went to my watch-pocket; then I swore softly and dropped it again on the precious bag in my lap. A voice came out of the gloom behind.

"That is Maplewood. We will make it in twenty minutes," it said cheerily.

It could not have been more than fifteen when we entered the outskirts of the town and slowed down a trifle.

I leaned forward and looked at the clock fastened to the front of the machine. I could not see the dial distinctly, but the hands seemed to point to ten, or after. Three hours or more late for the appointment with Mr. Farrington! I groaned inwardly.

We turned into the main street and approached an illuminated building, which I judged must be the hotel. I turned my head toward the back seat.

"Thank you," said I, "if that is the hotel would you mind putting me down here? My indebtedness is perhaps greater than you realize. Words are inadequate to express—"

"Then don't try to," interrupted the owner of the car cheerfully. "I am only sorry we could not catch one of those rascals. Hope they did not strip you completely."

"Like a fowl prepared for the spit, but they didn't get the satchel," I answered; and something in my voice, perhaps a note of triumph, aroused his curiosity.

"I'd like to know your name. It's rather out of the ordinary—rescuing a fellow citizen pursued by highwaymen. You will pardon the curiosity?" said he.

And I told him my name, adding that I was a member of the firm of Bridwell & Dawson, architects. Then, as the car came to a stop, and I arose to descend, I asked:

"The Farrington place? Might I inquire if it is within quick walking distance, so that I can save the time of getting something to take me over at the hotel?"

It was a polite hint that he might accommodate me further. Under ordinary circumstances I would hardly have made the suggestion, but the minutes were flying, and all I considered was to reach my objective point in the shortest time possible.

His reply was short, and to the point: "Stay where you are!" and he motioned to the chauffeur to go ahead.

"Thank you," I murmured. "You see, I have an important engagement with Mr. Farrington, and it's very late already, else I would presume no further on your kindness."

He did not reply, and the car, gaining headway, dashed along the wide street of the town. For half a mile we followed this, then swept to the left around a wide curve, into another road, and the lights of a big house gleamed some distance ahead.

The sight of them was at least encouraging. Had the millionaire's place been in darkness I had scarcely ventured to call on him that night.

We turned in between two huge stone pillars and swept up a wide drive; the chauffeur brought the machine to a stop at the foot of a flight of stone steps. At the same moment a door was thrown open and a figure in somber black appeared on the veranda.

He came down the steps quickly and opened the door of the machine. A voice behind me asked sharply:

"Get my wire, Dobson?"

And the butler answered:

"Three hours ago, sir. The gentlemen are waiting in the library, according to your instructions.

For the moment I could not fully grasp the situation; then it dawned upon me, and I could have shouted for joy in the relief which came to my distracted mind. I turned to the figure in the fur coat, which had already descended from the automobile.

"You are Mr. Farrington?" I managed to ejaculate.

"Right you are, and it would appear that each of us is a trifle late for his engagement. I presume you have come to submit plans from Bridwell & Dawson," he added, and motioned me to accompany him into the house.

In the hall the sound of voices came to me through an open door at the farther end.

"You'll find your friends in there, and I'll have to apologize for keeping them waiting these three hours or more, but it was the machine did the mischief," explained the millionaire. "We broke down five or six miles beyond Glendale, and I had to wire to hold the gentlemen here until we could get straightened out and start the thing again. As luck would have it the railroad went out of business, or I could have taken a down local at a little station near the scene of the breakdown," explained the millionaire quietly.

Then, with a faint smile:

"And, pardon me, but I'm a little curi-

ous to learn how I came to pick you up on that lonely road between here and Glendale. I imagined all you gentlemen were coming from New York—to keep the appointment at seven."

Then, in a burst of confidence, I told him just what had happened, and how the train had carried me past Maplewood while I was struggling to pull the satchel from under the seat in the smoker.

"And that's why you were sprinting up the road, hanging onto the bag. Well, perhaps it was fortunate I came along," was his only comment.

We found a dozen architects waiting in the library. If they were surprised to see me enter in the wake of Mr. Farrington I did not notice it. After a few words of explanation the millionaire looked at his watch.

"I've ordered some light refreshment, gentlemen, which will be here presently; then, as it is rather late, I would suggest you leave your papers here and I'll look them over. In the morning—say at nine—we can get down to business. I can promise you I won't be late for *that* appointment."

In the Maplewood Hotel I slept soundly that night, for it seemed as though a thousand-ton weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I even forgave the tramps the indignity I had suffered at their hands, and the loss of my watch and money; for, had they not held me up, Mr. Farrington's machine would have whizzed past that buckboard, and I must have put in the most miserable night of my life.

I kept the appointment at nine the next morning, in company with my fellow architects. Mr. Farrington promised to announce his decision in the afternoon.

He did—and we won. But whether he was prejudiced in my favor, or Mr. Dawson's ideas carried the day, I have never been able to determine to a certainty. I did ascertain, however, that the boy got back safely with that horse. As for my money and jewelry, I was too happy over securing the Farrington contract to worry long over their loss.

CHICAGO BY THURSDAY.*

By EDGAR FRANKLIN,

Anthor of "Washington—or Worse?" "The Price of Silence," "In Savage Splendor," etc.

The thunderbolt suddenly dropped in the path of a business man on his last lap to a ten-thousand dollar goal.

CHAPTER XIII.

BY BACK WAYS.

CLIFFORD rubbed his eyes and stared again.

There, emphatically, it was—the abbreviated racing machine they had left standing beside the road. Or—perhaps—he might be mistaken; his excited eyes might have taken a mere coincidence for startling fact, and—he turned to his driver:

"Is that the car we started with?"

"Yes."

"Sure?"

"Just as sure as I know I'm standing here."

"But how—"

The chauffeur advanced into the room, carefully closing the door behind him, and planted his hands on his hips.

"I went down there to see whether Bowers had anything ready to eat," he announced, almost in a whisper. "They were making the coffee, and I was going to wait for it, when I heard the noise of that motor."

"And—"

"Well, you can't fool me on that motor. I've driven it too many times, mister. I chucked the coffee and rolls game when I heard that thing stop in front of the house, and started for the front myself. And—there—he—was!"

"Who?"

"The feller in the gray duster that

* *Began January* ARGOSY. *Single copies,* 10 *cents.*

held us up last night," said Clifford's chauffeur, in melancholy triumph.

"Are you positive of that, too?" Clifford almost gasped.

"I couldn't swear to it in court, because I didn't see his face. But he was standing out there on the porch a minute ago, talking to Bowers and with his back to me; and if it wasn't the same guy we tied to the tree last night, I'll eat my hat."

"But—"

"And they've got a woman with them now, what's more!"

"A woman!"

"Um-um!" said Bill. "Young woman with blond hair. She's all done up in motor-togs, too, and she was just getting out of the car when I spotted them. And there was still another chap got out from the little seat in back, and he looked as if he'd got his in the way of a soaking last night, and—"

He stopped, for Clifford's face was working, and Clifford had broken in with a solemn, tense:

"Bill, are you absolutely positive that that is the car we abandoned last night, and that the man you saw was Elthorpe?"

"As near as a man can be."

"Then how in blazes are we going to get out of this and get away from them?" Clifford demanded.

The chauffeur sat down on the edge of his rumpled bed and smiled meditatively. Bill, apparently, was a phlegmatic person, addicted to slow thought; for a minute passed before he answered:

"You don't want to meet 'em?"

"No."

"Well, then, the car's out back—our car, I mean — and it won't take more than thirty seconds to start her going."

"But is there any way of getting out without passing the front of the house?"

"We can walk out to the back-porch roof and climb down the posts," Bill suggested calmly.

"And after that?"

"Beat it by way of the back lane here. I know the place, all right, and I know how to get clear." The chauffeur smiled in almost childish satisfaction. "If we *do* get clear without being discovered, we can hit the highway half a mile from here and—then for Chicago!"

Clifford was struggling into coat and duster, and as he buttoned the latter he smiled grimly:

"Bill, one day you're going to be President. Lead the way. It's all beyond me. You can take charge. Go on!"

By way of reply, the driver arose and opened the door without a sound. He glanced back at Clifford—perceived that he was following actually upon his heels—and started on tiptoe down the short hallway.

Half a dozen yards, and the chauffeur was raising a window soundlessly.

Outside, a corrugated iron roof was revealed, and on to it Bill stepped quietly. A momentary survey of an extremely untidy yard, and he dropped flat and silently slid over the edge.

His feet kicked for a while—and with a contented smile Bill's face disappeared as he slid down a post.

Clifford followed suit rapidly. Such small considerations as possible broken arms or legs were hardly to be noticed now, for that "Chicago-by-Thursday" notion was working into his head again. If they could only get down alive and get away without being noticed—

A pair of arms grasped him about the shoulders and lifted him to the ground, and in the rosy dawn Bill whispered gleefully:

"Say, some lobster's even run the car out for us. They're cleaning the barn and—"

His whispering died away as he stepped stealthily into the big gray machine and turned the throttle. Clifford, without instructions, took his own place as the other stepped out again with the big crank in his hand.

In the infinite stillness a roar went up.

With a jerk, the crank came loose, and Bill was back in the car and with his hands on the wheel. The big car backed for a few feet, wheeled, shot through some open bars in a fence, and—

And after that, for a little space, Clifford lost track of things in general.

He knew that he was sitting on Elthorpe's soft hat, that being the only practical method of keeping it with him. He knew that he was trying hard to put on a pair of goggles, and that somehow his head declined to remain in the same position for sufficient time to accomplish

the desired result. He knew that Bill was leaning over the wheel, secure in goggles and wind-shields, and that the car must be making at least a thousand miles an hour!

And then they slowed down for an instant — whirled to the right — struck macadam road again—and whirled on!

After which Clifford's mentality subsided altogether for a while. At this rate, they'd reach Chicago in time for breakfast easily. They could hardly be taking more than five minutes to cover a county, because isolated farmhouses shot past so swiftly that they looked like a row of suburban villas.

Towns were mere dots, with an occasional constable waving his arms—with an occasional shot fired wildly at their tires—with an occasional shriek ringing in their ears. Some one, here and there, seemed to be protesting, but—what did it matter? The gray car careered on happily.

There was a slowing down; then, as Bill turned to his employer and remarked:

"This machine ain't got a gasoline corner on the country. We'll have to go into Fort Wayne nice and respectable, and get something for her to feed on. She ain't goin' sweet no more."

"*Fort—Wayne!*" gasped Clifford.

"Sure! We went over the Indiana line some time back. We can get a meal there, too, if you—er—insist."

"Well, I insist," said Clifford grimly.

Like some other places in the country, Fort Wayne has one or two unostentatious eating saloons.

For one of them—an abnormally quiet place on an abnormally quiet side street—was able to furnish really eatable food at a price not calculated to ruin the appetite.

Beside a table at one of the little curtained windows, Clifford sat and yawned.

The steak was cooking somewhere in the near neighborhood. A volatile hint of frying potatoes came pleasantly from somewhere, and a faint aroma of coffee filtered into the tidy apartment, with its half dozen deserted tables.

Bill was attending to water and gasoline in the garage next door, and for the moment Clifford could dream lazily if it pleased him — and it certainly pleased him just now. He rested an elbow on the table, and he rested his chin on his hand and speculated sleepily on things in general.

They—he and Bill and the car—were winners.

They were able to beat all the trains in existence! They could take twelve or fourteen Elthorpes and eat them alive! They could get to Chicago despite all the general alarms that could be sent out by all the police in the country.

In fact, the triumvirate was just about right; and, as a waiter appeared with a tray piled high, Clifford gave a last delicious yawn and leaned back.

The steak was perfect. The potatoes would have roused hunger in a wooden Indian. The coffee fairly—oh, the coffee was beyond words! Clifford grinned at the entering Bill as he would have grinned at a brother.

Bill sat down with scant ceremony, redolent of gasoline and the brown soap that had removed the grease from his hands, as Clifford carved. He received his portion of good things with enthusiastic thanks and went purringly to work with knife and fork.

For Clifford's part, he attacked the edibles with a little less delicacy than was customary. As a matter of fact, he hadn't seen real food since that fatal meal yesterday with Elthorpe, and as the first bit of meat touched his tongue he—

He started violently! Bill was out of his chair and staring toward the street with a husky, excited:

"Say! For the love of— Say, mister! Look!"

Clifford gulped and stared out of the window.

Below—and empty—stood the white car once more!

A minute that seemed an hour finally came to an end!

The two men looked at each other, and Clifford was the first to speak.

"Bill," he said solemnly, "is that thing our particular hoodoo, or—"

"Well, whatever it is, it's here!" the chauffeur responded, as he tugged the napkin from his collar and laid aside knife and fork.

"But—"

"And the bunch that came in it must be in the dining-room down-stairs!" the driver went on. "D'ye want t' duck 'em this time or not?"

"Duck them?" cried Clifford. "Of course I want to! I want to get away, but—" And another look at the car all but staggered him!

How under the sun had it managed to keep such track of them? The little thing hadn't been able to escape the big gray automobile last night; how, then, had it developed sufficient speed to overtake them now? How—

"Well, then, there's some more porch-climbing for ours, I guess!" Bill suggested tersely. "And if you don't want to talk things over with the crowd in that car, you'd better hurry!"

Clifford followed speedily. The chauffeur stepped into the corridor of the upper floor and glanced about. He turned with a grim smile.

"There's no back way here, mister!"

"Then—"

"Then we'll have to go down the side stairway to the street and make the big run for the garage next door."

"Go first!" said Clifford.

Bill descended swiftly and without a sound.

"I'll blow the horn once when she's ready!" he called back softly.

Whereupon he disappeared—and Clifford spent two anxious minutes wondering whether any one was coming out of the side door of the ground floor dining-room — wondering whether the courts would ever impose a penalty upon him for leaving unpaid meals and hotel bills —wondering whether—

A single blare of an automobile-horn split the air, and he raced down to the street and into the car!

The machine whizzed away without another sound. It rounded the corner and made up the avenue. Five or six blocks, and the restaurant was a mere memory, and they were spinning through the business section of the town.

Ten blocks, and a cloud of smoke over a big, red brick structure impressed itself suddenly and violently upon Clifford's mind!

"What's that place, Bill?" he inquired.

"Railroad station, I guess. Looks like it."

"Pull up there, then. It's just possible I can make better time to Chicago on the train, if there's one due, and—"

The car stopped, and he stepped out.

"Bill," he said quickly, "if I can get a train, can you run on to the city and throw people off the track, if they're trying to follow in that little white car?"

The chauffeur nodded.

"And if you land—here—at this address—" Clifford handed him a card—"and ask for me, I'll make good to you. If there's no train going, I'll be back in half a minute."

He darted into the station, and steered straight for the ticket-office.

Somewhat excitedly he confronted the gentleman behind the barred window with:

"When does the next express leave for Chicago?"

The man sat up and stared.

"It came in about half a minute back, and it'll be leaving in another half-minute. It's waiting now, and—"

"Give me a ticket!" said Mr. Clifford. "Quick!"

There was a sudden tugging at the ticket-rack, and a long strip of stiff paper went toward Clifford.

He grasped it, and thrust a ten-dollar bill through the little opening under the brass bars. Without thought of change, he raced toward the train-gates where the gateman was shouting forth the news that the Chicago express was about to depart.

And in some forty seconds he was settled in a Pullman chair, and the train was pulling out.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHICAGO ON THURSDAY.

WHEN Charles Henry Banderson, president of the company, who abhors railway travel, will journey from New York to Chicago, and settle down comfortably in the latter office of the firm, and even smile, there is something afoot!

Mr. Banderson, on this particular morning, smiled broadly.

It was early, unconscionably early—too early even for the arrival of any one

but the junior office-boy. The big suite of big rooms were grave-like in their utter stillness.

But Banderson smiled on and enjoyed the calm, for this was the day of peace and calm in that particular company. This was the large, glorious day when Clifford would arrive with his huge task finished.

This was the day when the directors would come together, and the lawyers, and a little army of stenographers; and all the final transferring of property would be done—and the concern would at last have realized the dream of Banderson's latter years, and would have become a trust.

And it was worth every bit of the expense and the struggling to which they had gone! It was worth even the wild rush which Banderson had made from his sleeper to his hotel, and from his hotel to the office; and for Banderson, with his luxuriously lazy personal tastes, that meant something.

Now it was all, *all* right! Clifford had covered everything splendid, bright youngster that he was! Clifford would be here by ten, to an absolute certainty, with every last detail perfected. Everything was satisfactory as mortal could desire, and—

Mr. Banderson sat up! What sort of office management allowed the employees to race through the rooms like a pack of wild horses? And the steps were coming through the anterooms to his own sanctum, and—

The door went open with a wild crash, and into the private office plunged John Lester, secretary of the company! His eyes were rather wild, and his breath was coming hard.

He gave to Banderson a handshake, as perfunctory as if they had parted yesterday instead of nearly a year back. He fairly kicked a chair to the side of the big desk as he opened the conversation with a violent:

"Well, what the devil are we going to do about it, anyway?"

Mr. Banderson removed his glasses and polished them as he stared at Lester and demanded:

"Do about what?"

"Eh?" Lester mopped his brow and stared. "Say! I raced to your hotel this morning and found that you hadn't even gone to your room, and that you were down-town here, and—good Lord! Haven't you read about it in the papers?"

"I haven't even opened a paper yet. I—"

"Well, you don't have to open this one! It's all on the front page! Here!"

Banderson accepted the sheet in mild reproof and adjusted his glasses once more; and then he dropped it to the floor with a little shriek!

For before him, in big, black type, stood:

"GEORGE CLIFFORD, ALLEGED MURDERER, NOT YET APPREHENDED!!"

"Well, what in the name of—" Banderson began.

"It looks like an infernally clear case against George!" Lester said, as he found a fresh handkerchief and mopped anew.

"But—" Banderson removed his glasses again. "Why—bosh!"

"Bosh all you like! It seems he had to room with somebody else, back there at Downsford, Ohio—and they found the other fellow with his skull crushed in; and George had all his money and rings and watches, and God alone knows what else!"

Lester paused for breath, and then raced on.

"And not only that; but he got clear from jail somehow or other, and left the town without leaving a trace behind him; and now he's loose—somewhere or other—with all the papers in the case—and Austen wired that he'd closed up everything, and that Clifford had every blessed document—and now he's a fugitive from justice, and he's got—"

Mr. Banderson picked up the dictionary, which reposed at his elbow, and banged the desk. Lester came to an abrupt stop, and heard:

"Lester, there are times when it pays not to be so hysterical. George has been with this concern for several years. I know him well. I know perfectly well that he hasn't murdered anybody, whatever all this darned nonsense may be about. I know that he'll turn up here—to-day, Thursday—with his papers, if he's alive. I know—"

"Well, you know a blamed sight more

about it than anybody else in this section of the country then. I—"

"Hush!" Mr. Banderson placed his glasses very precisely on the end of his nose and scowled. "The clerical force seems to be arriving out there, and it isn't necessary—"

A violent knock came at the door of the big private office. Banderson himself arose and opened it—and it was no more than half-opened when a youth in goggles and long duster, plentifully covered with dust, stalked into the office and looked about.

"Mr. Clifford here yet?" he inquired.

"Mr. Clifford is expected momentarily!" said Banderson icily. "About what do you wish to see him?"

The young man straightened up and stared slightly. Bill was a person not always awed by wealth or authority.

"I'll tell him when I see him!" he smiled, with entire respect. "He ain't got here yet?"

"He is not—"

"Well, I'll wait, sir!"

The automobile visitor touched his cap and backed straight out. Banderson watched him take a place on a bench in the waiting-room, and—closed the door.

"Lester, who the — er — blazes was that?" inquired the president, as he returned to his chair.

"Well, how on earth do I know?" demanded the secretary.

"He was after Clifford, and—"

"And there are apparently a dickens of a lot more people after Clifford, too, Banderson! That fellow's put the biggest crimp in us that any man in the country could to-day!"

"Nonsense!"

"He has, I tell you! He's got every paper that we want. If we don't get the bunch together and put through those blasted options—why, the other side of the game's going to walk in and offer enough coin to cover all we've paid, and more; and then—"

Mr. Banderson pointed a white and well-kept finger at his associate.

"If you'll sit down for a minute, and tell me what it's all about—" he began.

"But, Banderson! Don't you understand that Clifford's only closed contracts, if it comes down to facts—don't you understand that the other side of the deal positively *have* the coin, and that they're able to make blamed near every one back up on his option, particularly when they're taking all sorts of responsibility on lawsuits? Don't you understand—"

"Lester, I've been in this business since perhaps five years before you were born, and I understand one or two of the elementary details. And now—"

"Yes, now—"

"Now" presented itself in the extremely informal opening of the door!

An extremely tall and extremely haggard man walked into the office without announcement. He also was arrayed in a long duster, with goggles shoved to the top of his cap. He also looked around with:

"Is Mr. Clifford here yet?"

"He is not!" snapped Banderson. "And if you'll have the goodness to—"

"I know I had no right to come in unannounced," said the stranger. "In fact, I had to nearly macerate your office-boy in order to have him allow me to come up the corridor. But I want to see Mr. Clifford, and—"

Banderson rose.

When Banderson rises it is really slightly impressive. Banderson had risen once or twice in a fashion that made financial czars shake violently. On this particular occasion he rose to several inches more than his normal height, and transfixed the tall and dusty visitor with:

"Get out of this office, sir, or I shall have you thrown out!"

"Well—"

"If Mr. Clifford comes this morning, and wishes to interview you, I shall advise you of the fact. Leave your name with the boy at the desk."

"My name is—"

Banderson advanced hurriedly. The tall, thin man hesitated a little while—chuckled under his breath—turned, and walked out of the office.

When Mr. Banderson reached his desk again there were little beads of perspiration on his forehead.

"Lester!" he said. "You know more about the geography of this office than I do. Isn't there some way of getting Clifford up-stairs without his being seen by these confounded idiots? Isn't it possible—"

"If a man can get a flying machine he doesn't have to use the elevators. That's about all I can suggest."

"But there *must*—why, it's all so utterly absurd—George Clifford never—"

"George Clifford may never have done anything more awful than swatting an occasional fly, Banderson, but he's got about the clearest case of murder in the first degree against him that ever was, and—"

Lester paused abruptly.

In the big, square outer office, which formed the anteroom for all the private offices, a Kansas cyclone seemed to have gone astray.

There was a crash! There was another crash! There was a third crash!

And the glass door of Banderson's private office added to the amusement by breaking into several thousand small pieces.

The head of the thin man appeared for the twinkling of an eye. A large hand followed it and dragged it back. A still larger hand appeared and took a new grip—and the thin man vanished!

The crashing went on for perhaps half a minute.

Whereupon, the door opened and Clifford himself strolled in; eyes wide, and perspiration pouring from his brow.

He walked straight to Banderson's desk. He brought from his pockets two huge bundles of thick envelopes, and he threw them on the desk.

"There," he almost roared, "are all the deeds, options, mortgages, assignments in the country that apply to us!"

"George!" Banderson all but licked his lips.

"And I'll guarantee that they're all in good form, too. I dug out a notary when I landed here around five this morning, and I've assigned every blessed thing to the concern, and—" a little gulp came into his voice— "now I'm going back to Downsford, Ohio, and face a few murder charges, and have a man released from a tree in the woods, and—"

"*My dear Clifford!*" Banderson began, in his calmest of all calm tones. "If—you—will—be—so—kind—as—to—sit—down! There seems to have been introduced into this office, on this particular morning, an element of hysteria which—"

An entirely new crash drowned his voice.

Mr. Banderson shot to his feet with a roar.

"Lester!" he shouted. "Is this a prize-ring or a business office? Is there supposed to be no discipline here, or—"

The door crashed down—a wreck.

Clifford, staring almost frantically toward the outer office, saw his chauffeur sitting dazedly upon the floor in the big anteroom; while the tall, thin man, whose duster he had taken the liberty of tearing as he passed to the private office, was walking through the shattered timber into the private domain of Mr. Banderson.

The tall man also was distinctly angry. He made for Clifford, and paused within a yard of him with:

"*This* is Mr. George Clifford?"

"It is!"

The thin stranger straightened up with a groan of very genuine weariness.

"My name's Barton!" he announced. "I'm a detective. I was hired by Harding, in Downsford, in the murder case. Since I started work I've been chasing you all over the Middle West in automobiles."

"You—"

"Yes, and I got all the work done before I left the town!" the stranger went on angrily. "I found a bell-boy and a maid in the hotel who had seen your victim get out of bed dead drunk, and fall and smash his head against the brass bedpost. They cleaned up the mess—then got cold feet, I presume—and they kept their mouths shut when they saw his valuables gone!"

"Hey?"

Clifford started out of his chair. Barton dropped into another.

"You've got the whole story—if you hadn't been chump enough to break jail, you'd have had it by three or four on Tuesday. District attorney's all ready to turn you loose—and—and—" Mr. Barton choked a little and pulled himself together. "And I've been chasing you ever since. I've stolen somebody's machine when I found it in the woods while I was chasing you in a heavy-weight touring-car. I've shoved the little white thing on to one train and off another. I've dragged that poor devil of a bell-boy,

and the girl, too, around the landscape till they can go to sleep standing up anywhere. I've turned automobile thief, and —by thunder! I even abandoned some screaming idiot in the woods when I stole the car. I followed you to the blasted little joint Bowers keeps away back there, because it was the only place in the neighborhood I knew, and—"

There was a big leather couch across the room—the couch upon which Banderson was wont to repose on his rare visits to the Chicago office. Clifford gravitated toward it, and sat down rather noisily.

His eyes were popping in the direction of the tired Mr. Barton; a minute or so, and his lips began to work again:

"Do you mean to say that you've cleared that presumed crime away from me, Barton?" he cried.

"Eh? Certainly." Barton indulged in a long yawn. "There was a lot of luck about my work, Clifford, but—say! It didn't take over three hours to get what I wanted in the way of evidence."

Clifford continued staring.

He was beginning to understand several matters.

For one thing, he seemed to have been absolved of murder! That in itself was about as glorious relief as man could desire.

He began to understand, too, the remarkable reappearance of the little white racer at Bowers's yesterday morning. He began to understand the presence of the unfortunate woman — and he began to understand several other things as well.

But more than all he began to understand that he was *there!* That he had delivered his papers intact. His mission, with all its queer freaks, was over successfully.

And suddenly, as Banderson, and Lester, and Barton began to chatter excitedly, a tremendous relax came over him, and he stretched out flat upon the couch; and his eyes closed as if leaden weights had been laid upon them.

Things were floating deliciously above him—rosy pictures of innocence, and ten-thousand-dollar salaries, and white and gray automobiles, and apologetic judges, and groveling jailers and policemen, and future trust operations, and—

"Why, *most emphatically,* we've established a clear case for him!" a pinkish-white angel who resembled Barton was fervidly saying, somewhere off in space.

Mr. Clifford smiled serenely, but his eyes failed to open.

"I—made—it—on—Thursday!" he muttered, as the door opened to announce the first of the board of directors.

THE END.

HIS DISREPUTABLE FRIEND.

By BURKE JENKINS.

The college-mate who became a medium and proceeded to use this pursuit as a cloak for a nefarious deed.

IT was at the wedge of the Flatiron Building that one young man slapped another vigorously on the back.

"Well, good for sore eyes, Jim, boy! Where've you been keeping yourself these many moons?"

Whereupon the other turned a sad countenance, which lighted but little at this recognition.

"Oh, I've been around the same as usual. Seems to me it's you that ought to give account of yourself, Fred. What are you up to now?"

Though he put the question, Jim appeared little enough interested as to whether or not he got an answer.

"Why, the latest graft is immense, Jim; immense."

"Some new 'gilt-edge' syndicate or other?"

"Na, na; better'n that. This thing's safer and surer, now I've got it fairly started."

"Aren't building air-ships, or anything like that?"

"Far be it. Air-ships are too practi-

cal for yours truly. Got to have something more ethereal to keep up the interest for me."

"As for instance? Well, what is it, Fred? Out with it quick; I'm not exactly in the mood for guessing riddles."

"So I observe," replied Fred, the exuberant, "and, moreover, my newly acquired powers are not necessary to enable me to guess that your heavy grouch cometh from an affair of the heart. Oh, I tell you, Jim, I'm getting up on such things."

"Fred, you're an ass."

"Possibly; nay more, probably. But that won't prevent your spending a half-hour or so at lunch with me, will it? In fact, in view of this confounded sharp wind, coupled to a certain gnawing in the region of the midriff, it strikes me that such a move would be very sensible. Besides, where I'll take you will go to explain this new channel into which I've turned my versatile talent."

Without awaiting an acceptance of his invitation, he led the way down Fifth Avenue for a matter of two blocks, then turned west.

About midway of the block he rounded into a house, the lower floors of which had been given over to business, while the upper ones still bore some semblance of the dwelling it had originally been. Up two flights Fred led the way, finally stopping before a door from the cracks of which emanated the faint odor of a sickening incense. On the glass upper panel appeared, in modest, inconspicuous type, the one word, "Kara."

Selecting a latch-key from the number on his ring, Fred opened the door and led the way into the room.

Whereupon, even the morose Jim was surprised from his mood.

Hung from a sort of chandelier affair, was a weirdly grotesque lantern that gave out a subdued light to which the eye had first to accustom itself before it caught the other somber fittings of this generally lugubrious apartment.

Another small electric light, incased in a shade that concentrated its rays to one point, threw into considerable prominence a highly polished glass globe. This rested cozily upon a black velvet cushion which, in turn, was placed on a small tabouret of inlaid mother-of-pearl.

"Well, by the mother of Mike!" exclaimed Jim.

"Great, ain't it?" rejoined Fred. "The effect's here, eh?"

"Depends upon what effect you want," replied his visitor; "if you want a general setting of spookdom—"

"Exactly! But, come now, let's feed. What'd you like?"

He had caught up a telephone cunningly hidden behind a couch cover.

"There's the nicest kind of a little restaurant on this block. You see, I just phone over my desires and, usually in the matter of ten minutes, a dusky waiter fetches my meal right up here to me. Rather Oriental, eh, for Gotham?"

"Well, rather," assented Jim. Then he added: "Make it a chop and ale for me."

"Right O," said Fred, and he gave the order over the wire along with his own, which was of a heartier character.

"I take it, Fred," remarked Jim, settling himself more comfortably in a luxurious chair, "I take it that, as usual, you are a fraud."

"Of course; and, if you'll believe me, it's the only interesting existence. But have you caught on to the exact lay of this particular branch I'm managing?"

"Well, I don't think it needs a guide-book to tell me that I'm in the mystic chamber of 'Kara, the Clairvoyant,' whose advertisement so regularly appears in the Sunday newspapers. But, the Lord knows, I never suspected that such a personality could be brought down to the dimensions of my old scoundrel of a college mate. Making it pay, Fred?"

"Pay? Did you say 'pay'? Jim, I've sure got 'em going. The things in the way of future I can see in that there globule of glass would startle me myself if I didn't absolutely know what a fake I am. I've even attained the height of a 'carriage' practise. You just ought to see 'em driving up (stopping two doors away it's true) and slipping up those two flights you've just climbed. Oh, yes, it pays.

"But the inner fact is that this particular affair is only a means to an end. You remember my old ambition, Jim?"

"I believe it was something in the way of an heiress. You used to maintain that any kind of work, even such as I take

this latest nefarious proceeding necessitates, is irksome to a man of your indolent inclinations. In other words, you have stated definitely, on several occasions, when you were communicatively convivial, that to marry for money was the utmost desire of your innermost heart."

"And, at last, I'm on the right trail," explained Fred.

"I have even narrowed the thing down to the actual girl. I've found out that her sacred male parent is rated safely in seven figures. I have, moreover, only this forenoon, mapped out a plan, but if you don't mind we'll tackle the grub I hear approaching before I elucidate."

He went to the door and gave entrance to a darky who bore an appetizing tray. A small table being produced and a tip-joyed waiter dismissed, the two sat down to the meal.

"Now, this plan," continued the fortune-teller, mumbling around a mouthful, "is what even my extreme modesty compels me to term distinctly unique. But before I make it entirely plain to you, let me show you just exactly how 'Kara' appears to his devoted dupes."

He gulped his bite, laid down his fork, and caught up from the gloomy shadow of a curtain a false beard and wig.

The effect, when he had fitted these to his rubicund countenance, was that of an absolute disguise, with the added advantage of giving to the entire aspect that note of mysteriousness he most desired.

"Now, besides this facial make-up, Jim, I wear a long, flowing robe; and when I'm fitted into all this regalia, you wouldn't know me yourself. I sometimes doubt my own personality when I catch a glance in the mirror."

He swept the beard and wig from his head and once more attacked the food.

"But your plan about this catching of the girl of coin?" inquired Jim. "You certainly don't expect her to fall madly in love with such a patriarch as that outfit makes of you!"

"Well, hardly. But just you trust me when I tell you that the aforementioned patriarch is going to play his part, and a mighty important part at that."

"But the plan?"

"Coming at once! Simply stated, thus: About a week ago the young lady in question made her first visit upon 'Kara.' I didn't know her—who she was—at the time, but my usual lingo in the way of a stereotyped foretelling, being optimistic in the extreme, made its impression upon her girlish, credulous mind. Fortunately for my plan of to-day I told her that there was a young man who was to figure prominently in her life in the near future. Whereupon she sighed ecstatically. And the upshot of it was that she came again the next day and listened to my 'five-dollar reading'

"The resplendent glitter of the motor she had arrived in made me go to the trouble of finding out who she was, which, of course, as the affair concerns a lady, I shall not tell you.

"At this knowledge I began to map out my scheme, and here it is:

"I learn through the society column of a smart newspaper that a noteworthy reception is to be given at no other than the august residence of my desired father-in-law. I happen to know a fellow who will get me an invitation thereto. This will take place Thursday.

"When Thursday arrives it will be your old friend Fred, decked in the best-fitting frock coat he can get, and not the bearded 'Kara,' who will present himself for introduction to that same girl who has formed the habit of consulting the crystal gazer in all matters pertaining to her tender and susceptible heart."

"Aha, the plot thickens."

"Right. Having thus produced in very life the young man 'Kara' has foretold, I don't believe it will be overdifficult to bring to her most careful consideration, clairvoyantly of course, the extreme attractiveness and general desirability of consenting when this young gentleman makes her his offer of wedlock, which offer, by the way, is carefully foretold. The effect, of course, will strengthen her adherence.

"Grant you, now, that she accepts (for there certainly can be no other outcome), immediately after the wedding-bells, the devoted callers upon 'Kara,' the seer, will push an unresponsive electric button below-stairs; for he will, by this, have skiddooed, gone to a veritable limbo; ceased to exist.

"Now, Jim, boy, see you any flaw in the reasoning?"

"Nary a flaw, Fred," admitted Jim. "but allow me to state that, were I in a better frame toward life myself to-day, I should lose no time in telling you that for downright heartless rascality, for mean taking advantage of an innocent girl, you're engaged in the highest notch. But as I am not feeling over-sprightly myself, I make no further remark than to express my ardent desire that Allah blacken your face! And now, I must be going, for I've an appointment for three-thirty."

"All right, Jim," said Fred, by no means affronted, "now you've found the way here, drop in any old time; that is, any time after one, for I give my 'readings' up to that hour."

"Well, I may, Fred; for I'm growing a lonesome kind of chap these days. Besides, I want to find out how you're getting on with that fiendish plot of yours."

Whereupon Jim clattered down the stairs to the street.

II.

About a week thereafter it was in an entirely different frame of mind that Jim again found himself in the neighborhood of the Flatiron Building. There was more of the joy of living manifest in his snappy step — more animation in every movement.

It being well after one o'clock, he decided that the moment was propitious for another call upon his clairvoyant friend Fred. For one thing, in spite of his daredevil whimsicalities, Fred was good company; and there was still another reason for this visit.

Jim found the house easy enough, pressed the button under the token "Kara," and mounted the stairs. Arrived at the second landing, he was compelled to rap twice before he elicited any response whatever from within.

Finally a half-suppressed yawn told of a presence, and a shuffling toward the door resulted in its reality.

Fred slapped the door to after admitting his friend, and once more made for the divan whose yielding surface showed the dent of his nap.

He had managed, however, in his transit to the couch to slide a smoking-stand toward Jim, who, taking advantage of this hospitality, lighted a cigarette, settled himself for a chat, and sang out:

"What's the matter, Fred? Seems like you've got something of a grouch."

"Have," admitted Fred.

"Well, don't you want to ease your mind of it? Let a friend share it? Oho, I bet I know what it is."

"What?" growled Fred.

"Something's gang agley with that little scheme you had of kidnaping a trusting female's affections. I'll bet you've gone and actually fallen in love with her, which, of course, is disgusting, even though it wouldn't spoil the plan, eh?"

"Wrong trail, Jim. No love in me to-day, thanks; far from it. I'm a misanthrope *par excellence* since yesterday's sunup."

"Why since sunup? Come, ease your mind, Fred. It'll do you good."

The tone of Jim was friendly; no guile showed in it; so Fred replied:

"Well, look you, Jim. I *will* open out the entire story to you on one condition."

"Good; I agree to it whatever it is."

"The condition simply is that you don't interrupt me in my recountal by any little side remarks or any of those cutting sarcasms for which you were so renowned at college."

"Agreed," said Jim, propping his shoes up on an ottoman. "Fire away!"

"Well," said Fred in the drawl which he held to during his entire narration. "The way I got that girl a going was a caution. Why, she got so she'd run in on 'Kara' for a consultation twice a day.

"But, to start right, I got my introduction to her at the reception without the slightest trouble; met her old man, too—beetle-browed old codger, but decent enough to sign checks. I went under my own name, of course, in view of the relations I intended to assume later.

"The girl was graciousness itself, and I fancied at times that I was beginning to make my impression; so that next day, when she came for her reading, 'Kara' said to her, 'You have seen him?' 'Yes,' she replied, and her bosom heaved love-sickishly.

"Now, of course, I wasn't going to flush this fluttering little partridge too soon; so 'Kara' advised her at first to conceal her affections, letting nothing of her budding love show itself. Accordingly, my next call at her house was characterized mainly by its commonplaceness of conversation.

"But by her next consultation with 'Kara' she had fretted herself into an imaginary belief that we would have to meet terrific obstacles in the way of active objections to the match from her august parent. 'Kara' saw fit to humor her in this whim, though assuring her that all would end well. Meanwhile, I made another call, at which I could see her former reserve was breaking; there could be no doubt that she was ill at ease.

"The next day she didn't appear here at all, though I sat around in that suffocating wig and chin fringe till three o'clock. But on the next day following she showed up, and that very much so. And she wanted 'Kara's' advice on a plan. And here it was. This imaginary opposition by her male ancestor had grown more violent, and what she wanted to know was this: would everything go all right—that is, were the omens favorable, if the affair were pulled off by a regular, old-fashioned elopement, moonlight and all? And, further, did 'Kara,' as a man, think that it would seem immodest, in view of the circumstances, for her to be the one to propose the trick?

"Now, considering I was in a position to judge of the young man's own feelings in the matter—clairvoyantly, of course—I assured her, after I had pondered a second, that the thing was feasibility itself, advising her to make her plan known to her lover at the next meeting.

"After she had left, I had a final review of the situation, which resulted in the conclusion that the thing was mapping itself just about as I would like to have it. Barring, of course, the imaginary weaknesses due to her sex and yellow-novelishness. But it was a wedding I wanted; that was the point.

"Of course, all this time I had to keep a good grip upon my risibilities, for I positively suffer from an overdeveloped sense of humor. But you can imagine my wonderful control when I assure you that, had my face been of dried putty, it wouldn't have showed a crack when she made known to me in the privacy of the conservatory her well-thought-out plan of elopement. I started in surprise, just about enough, I think; then I allowed my chubby features to light themselves up into a smile calculated to kill at twenty paces. I called her all the dignified pet names in my ken, and thereupon we went over the exact details of the elopement.

"I left the Fifth Avenue brownstone in high glee. We were to pull off the trick that very night; and, of course, she had decided upon the Little Church Forninst the Corner for the place of splice.

"Imagine me, then, at ten o'clock that moonlit night. I had prepared for things by a visit at the church, to be assured of speed in the thing. Then I had chosen a closed taxicab as the vehicle best adapted to this latter-day runaway.

"To the second of the hour, lights of the cab doused, I waited in readiness at the curb of the side street, directly alongside a small door that gave access to the house, an entrance well hidden from the greater glare of the avenue's arc lights.

"I wasn't kept waiting two minutes before her veiled and hooded figure popped from the doorway and into the cab beside me. Oh, I tell you, she had read her novels closely!

"Away we went down the avenue. She leaned against me trustingly; but fear seemed to hold her, for she repeatedly turned for a look through the little back window.

"Incited by her example of alarm, I, too, caught myself turning for a glance backward up the road. By the godlets, there *was* a motor, dead in our wake, and increasing speed by the second!

"Of course, this might not argue anything at all—lots of motorists hit up a terrible clip—but, coupled to her own alarm, I found myself attaching some particular significance to this particular gas-wagon. So I chinned to our driver, offered that which makes the mare go, even gas mares, and our little taxicab jumped three notches in speed.

"Around the corner we skidded finally, forsaking the avenue, drawing up smartly before the church-door. Across the sidewalk and up to the waiting parson we hurried.

"And that divine certainly knew his trade. The way he rattled through the 'dearly beloved' business would have put a court clerk to shame. Then he turned to me for my 'I do'; and I gave it in my most impressive 'Kara' barytone. Then he whirled the question to her: 'Do you take—' and that's as far as he got.

"For on that second there came a monstrous commotion from the direction of the door. The growl of a voice that had somewhat the timbre of the bellow of a bull was quickly echoed by a squeal from the girl beside me. Then up the aisle thundered the pursuing parent, purple with fury.

"'*Stop!*' came the word in a volume I never believed possible to the human throat.

"'Thank God, I'm in time, Leona!' he cried; 'in time to save you from yourself.'

"Then he whirled on me. He started back a second; then he demanded: 'And who the devil are you, sir?' I saw not fit to give answer.

"So with a wrench he tore the veil from the woman beside me.

"Suffering shades of Sarah, Jim; it was the servant who had opened the door for me that very day!

"What think you of the episode? Hast an explanation handy? Thinkest thou that heiress could have been playing a prank on me all the time? I confess I've cudgeled my brains in vain thus far. What think you?"

"I think, Fred," said Jim, "that I owe you about the deepest debt of my career."

"*You!*"

"None other. For one day, you see, I happened to see you going into the house I have been haunting for six months, though forbidden to enter. Thereupon there tumbled over me the realization that Leona was the girl you had told me about.

"So that it followed, when you agreed to the elopement scheme, I coached Leona to do exactly as you would plan, and agree to the entire proposition. Nor was she to let a flaw appear in the runaway.

"And so it followed that those cursed detectives — those detectives who had hounded her every step against meeting me—why, they just took to your false scent like foxhounds to anise.

"It follows therefore, Fred, that I am deeply in your debt for the successful elopement that followed your own by an interval of some five minutes. And again I am the bearer of the most cordial well-wishes to you from my darling wife."

"The devil you are!" yelled Fred.

THE HOODOO HAND-GLASS.

By H. E. TWINELS.

A floating-island story of cruel companions, a strange animal, and a good thing washed ashore.

"JOHN, do you want me to pack this hand-mirror for you?"

My mother held up the article in question.

"No. What for? What earthly use will I have for that? I might break it and have bad luck for seven years. Besides, it looks rather effeminate for a man going out to explore the Southern Seas to be carrying a mirror."

"But you might want to shave some time."

"I guess not. I'm going to raise a beard, and sailors have more to do than shave, anyway."

That was all there was said about it, but when I unpacked my stuff in the seaman's berth I had secured on a boat bound for equatorial regions, I found that hand-mirror.

I smiled, realizing the thoughtlessness of mother. It was an ordinary imitation ebony-backed looking-glass, about the size of my head, and I thought it might be useful. So I left it out where I could get at it.

In one way and another I became unpopular with the crew. They were an uncouth lot of men, and the fact that I spoke good English rather bothered them. I tried to talk the way they did, but found it impossible.

Bad came to worse, and one day, when we were nearing the equator, one particularly pernicious pest, who ruled a gang of five or six that had been especially tormenting, found that hand-glass.

It was most embarrassing for me. They had called me "dude" all along, and now they gloated over this fresh evidence.

The find they had made was sprung upon me at mess one night. The talk turned to things we were going to see in this far-away region, and, suddenly, the pernicious pest turned to me with the question:

"Did you ever set eyes on an ourang-outang, dudey?"

"No, but I've seen monkeys," I replied significantly, looking along the row of faces.

"So you never saw an ourang-outang? Well, here, hev a good look at one, dudey," cried the pest, as he shot his right hand before my face and held a shining glass object close to my eyes.

I looked. It was my own reflection. The joke had been turned on me. I realized, too, that it was my own hand-mirror that had been used against me.

Madly I struck at the fellow, but he dodged and guarded with the hand that held the mirror. My fist came in contact with that and it flew across the cabin, smashing against the further partition with a sound of cracking glass.

There was an awed and awkward silence.

"Bad luck for seven years," cried one of the seamen. Sailors being the most superstitious men in the world, I felt my fate was sealed. Malignant glances were cast at me from all sides. I couldn't stand it. Grabbing up my hand-mirror, I found that it had only been cracked across the middle and the two pieces still remained in the frame. Slipping it under my coat, I darted away to my bunk.

An hour later we were becalmed. The next day one of our men fell overboard accidentally. On the afternoon of that day two men came down with the fever.

I was the Jonah. Black looks were all that I received, and everywhere, as I worked, I heard about the bad luck I had brought upon the crew and the ship for seven years.

It was a pretty sad affair, and I was chief mourner. I only hoped that nobody would sneak around and stab me in my sleep.

Finally, it was discovered that we were running short of coal. I was blamed for that.

Then came the outburst. The crew would put up with my presence no longer. I had been unpopular all along, and now I must be got rid of. The ship's officers had to give in to the superstitions of the sailors.

At last things were nicely arranged, and I was put aboard an uninhabited, floating island, with my luggage, and food for ten days. Then, with shouts and yells of relief and happiness, the vessel steamed out and left me alone.

My experience with floating islands was very limited. I had eaten a floating-island pudding once. That was all I knew about that sort of thing until I found myself aboard a real sure-enough bunch of land meandering around somewhere near the equator.

I knew that we were near that line when I had been put ashore, for all preparations had been made for the carnival of King Neptune, which always takes place when a ship crosses the line.

Being in this situation, I necessarily felt rather cramped. What I missed was latitude. But, finally, I realized that at the equator there is no latitude at all; I would have to be content, therefore, with longitude until something should come my way.

I found a rough cave near the point where I had been landed, and there I brought my luggage without delay. The cave had been inhabited before from the looks of things. That rather raised my spirits.

I unpacked and made things as homelike as possible. Suddenly I came upon

that accursed hand-mirror. Taking it up, I sank down on a stone and looked at it thoughtfully, as *Hamlet* surveyed the skull.

There was the thing that had got me into all this trouble. I cursed myself for not having thrown it away the moment I came upon it. If I had only lost it! But no, it had stayed by me to bring me shame and misfortune.

I could not blame my mother for it, poor soul; she meant well enough in putting it in. Confound the thing, anyway!

I seized it by the handle, and was about to dash it on the stone when suddenly, in swinging, it caught the sun's rays, reflected them into my eyes and almost blinded me.

An idea sprang to my mind at once. I had already looked for something that would make a suitable signal for passing ships. This was the very thing. When the sun was shining it would always be on duty and could be seen much farther than a red shirt, which I had already considered as the best signal.

So, carrying out the idea, I took the mirror down to the water's edge and hung it, face toward the sea, on a palm-tree. I hung it rather low, at about the height of my waist, and then put the red shirt among the branches of the tree, so that I would have two signals.

The crew had assured me that it would not be long before some vessel would come along and take me off.

I now set out for a survey of the island. It was not very large, and yet I figured that it would take me some time to explore it, for it was about three miles in circumference.

I got a general idea of the geography, and then beat among the underbrush near my cave for a spring.

Suddenly I came upon a well-beaten path. Following it with wonder, I came out into an open and there found water. I could not understand the path and the prints I found in the dirt. Hitherto, I had not suspected the presence of any living thing on the island.

It was a great shock to me. I could not imagine what the creature could be. From the prints that had been left by it I could not make out whether it was a lion, a big chimpanzee, or what. It caused me a great deal of worry.

There was much vegetation on the island, and I realized that almost any animal could find enough to live upon.

Then I hurried back to my cave to figure out how I could barricade it from this strange beast I knew to be the only other living thing on the bit of land.

I cleared the mouth of the cave, and began putting the provisions away safely, when I suddenly discovered that my strip of bacon was gone. In a moment it flashed to my mind that the animal on the island had stolen it in my absence.

I looked high and low for the stuff, but it was gone, and suddenly I came upon that strange footprint near the cave. Then I was certain that I had been robbed by a beast of prey.

Making a rough barricade, I crawled in and went to sleep. I had no weapon of any kind, and knew that I could only trust to luck to get out of my hazardous situation alive.

But I was not bothered during the night.

Next day I arose early and looked about the mouth of the cave carefully. I found many prints of the beast and realized that he must have been walking up and down before my sleeping place all night. That gave me a cold shiver.

I went out, however, and scanned the sea for a boat. The sun's rays caught on my looking-glass on the palm-tree, and I hoped that it would prove an effectual signal if a ship came near.

Then I went to the spring for a drink. Just as I parted the bushes I saw a huge hairy form skip on four legs through one of the other paths. I drew back, praying that the animal had not seen me.

Then, as I heard it crashing through the bushes farther on, I summoned my nerve and got enough water to last me for two days. After that I returned to the cave.

It was rather a sad outlook. Here I was, without a weapon, with only two-thirds of my original supply of food, and a ferocious animal on the same island with me. A nice ending for a young man who had started out so hopefuly in search of a fortune in the equatorial regions.

Suddenly my eye caught sight of a speck in the distance, out on the water. I felt certain that it was a ship. It came nearer and nearer.

Jumping to my feet, I seized a white shirt and ran down to the water's edge, waving it frantically. But the ship went on. I followed for probably a mile around the island, continuing to signal, but finally I realized that it was too far out to see.

Then I returned sadly to my cave. As I crawled in I felt a vague premonition, and started to back out. Then, getting my nerve together, I forced myself through and began looking around.

I was wrong, the strange animal was not in my abode. Then my provisions suddenly came into mind. Hastily going over them I found that all of my sea-biscuit had been stolen.

There was little left now. I found crumbs where the beast had greedily devoured the crackers.

It was not an enviable situation, but I bore up under it admirably for about an hour. Then I gave way.

It was mighty disheartening. I could easily see my finish. The food I had now would not last me for two days. To be quite certain of having that, I dug a hole in the back of the cave and buried it. Then I went out to look up and down the shore.

It was a calm, bright day and there wasn't a ship in sight. I fell to thinking about the spring on the island. That certainly was a curiosity. Then I realized that the island must have a very deep foundation in order to have water running through it.

That made me think that possibly it was not a floating island after all, but it certainly looked the part, and I believed the crew when they told me it was.

Suddenly my eyes took in an object drifting toward shore. I wondered blankly what it was. I had never seen anything on the sea before that looked like it.

Procuring a stick, I stepped down to the edge of the island and managed to pull the thing in. It was heavy and soft. I looked at the shapeless mass and wondered.

Suddenly a thought sprang to my mind.

"Ambergris!" I cried.

And, sure enough, that was what it was. I recognized it now by the descriptions I had read of it. The sailors had told me how the sick whales in that region belched forth this valuable stuff. I dragged the thing to my cave and hid it in a corner.

Things began to brighten. If I could only live to get off that island now I would have a good bit of money.

Having thought about it for some time, I took a stroll along the edge of the island in the hope that more of the stuff would float in. But, though I walked for an hour, keeping a careful watch out all the time for the unknown animal, I did not find any more ambergris.

Then I returned to the cave.

"Good Heavens!" I cried. "*The ambergris is gone!*"

That I could not understand. I could readily see why the beast wanted food, but why he should deprive me of my precious ambergris was something I could not fathom.

Things suddenly blackened again. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon and the sun beat down hotly. In spite of that I rushed down to the water's edge and threw myself in despair at the foot of the palm-tree where I had hung my mirror. I turned and looked at it.

Flash!

It seemed to me as though I had been struck by lightning. The powerful sun's rays had been suddenly reflected into my eyes. I almost fainted from the shock. My eyes were painful for some time afterward.

Then I seated myself at some little distance in front of the palm-tree and gazed off dully at the sea. It was a big rock that I sat upon, and it gave me an excellent view. But there was not a ship in sight.

Having personally experienced the strength of the sun's rays as reflected by the mirror, I felt sure that it would make a good signal.

The sun was very hot and I drowsed off, thinking blankly of all the hard luck I had had and dully cursing the mirror that had been responsible for it all.

Suddenly I stirred and opened my eyes abruptly.

Great Heavens! There! Not ten feet from me, was that horrid animal I had seen at the spring. It was crouching for a spring, and a wicked look was in its eyes. I realized in a flash that it had

come around the edge of the island and thus got in front of me.

I thought a thousand things in a second. Then, with a strange, quick motion, the huge animal approached on all fours.

I drew myself together, sprang back, and dodged behind the palm-tree on which my signals were hung. It was the only protection near by.

I knew that I hadn't one chance in a thousand, but I was determined to sell my life dearly.

The beast made a bound and stepped abruptly three feet in front of the palm-tree, its face on a level with the mirror.

I caught a sudden fire in its eyes. It was about to make another spring for me when:

Flash!

I knew in an instant what had happened.

The body sprang into the air as though a mechanical device inside it had suddenly worked.

It straightened up on its hind legs from the shock and fell over backwards, its head striking on a slant down the side of the big rock on which I had been sitting.

Then a quiver shot through it and it slumped down in a senseless mass. The sudden light from the mirror had blinded the beast and from the shock it had fallen over backward.

In the instant that the large, hairy form had stood upon its hind legs I realized that I had been mistaken. It was not an animal, but a *man*.

Rushing to his side I felt of his heart, under the shaggy hair that had grown all over his body. The heart was beating.

Dashing to the sea I secured some water and poured it on his face. It was not long before the man came to, slowly.

"Eng — English?" he asked weakly, looking up into my eyes.

I nodded my head violently and replied that I was.

"S-s-s-so'm I," he cried suddenly, a strange relief coming into his eyes.

I carried him to my cave and nursed him carefully for several hours. Then he became himself again, but a new self.

He told me his story, jerkingly at first, for it had been ten years since he had spoken, except in a jabber to himself.

It seems that he had been shipwrecked near the island over ten years before. He had finally been washed ashore. He had been partially crazed by the wrecking, and then when he could not hail any boat to take him off he gradually took to eating roots and leaves, and lived on like an animal until finally he had become insane, and did not care to leave the island.

He did not know exactly how his reason had returned so suddenly. All he could remember was that blinding flash of light, and then something snapped in his head.

I figured it out easily. The blinding light from the mirror had come upon him so suddenly that he keeled over backward, and when his head hit upon the stone his reason returned, as a blow often cures an insane person.

It was almost miraculous. I soon found him to be a good fellow, and we put in two days together waiting for a boat to come along.

He took me to his burrow, carefully concealed in the center of the island, and showed me a great store of ambergris that he had collected while he roved about.

Then we sighted a ship and were taken aboard. With us we lugged a great store of ambergris, enough to keep us both in comfort for the rest of our lives, for he insisted upon my taking half of the whole stock.

I couldn't get many people at home to believe the story. But every word of it is true. If you don't believe it, drop around some day and I'll show you the crack in that mirror.

APRIL.

THERE is no glory in star or blossom
Till looked upon by a loving eye;
There is no fragrance in April breezes
Till breathed with joy as they wander by.

William Cullen Bryant.

ONLY AS FAR AS PHILADELPHIA.

By FRED V. GREENE, Jr.

Why a flour salesman was called upon to prove that he had really gone to Atlantic City on a business trip.

"DEAN, there is a little matter here I want to question you upon."

The senior partner fumbled among the papers that littered his desk and, apparently finding the one he desired, went on:

"As I remember it, I sent you to Atlantic City to try to sell Bruning a few carloads of that flour we had on the way east."

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"But Bruning turned you down cold, as you phoned me, and you returned without an order?"

"Yes, sir; Bruning claimed—"

"Never mind what Bruning claimed," the other broke in hotly. "I am doing the claiming now, and that is that you never went to Atlantic City."

The younger man started at the tone of his employer, and for a moment was at a loss for a reply.

"Now, Dean, it isn't that I am sore about your not getting an order—I've been too long in the flour business to let that bother me; but I want salesmen upon whom I can depend."

"But, Mr. Starret, I *was* at Atlantic City." Dean found voice to protest. "Why, I phoned you from there asking if I could quote Bruning a lower figure."

"Which you knew you couldn't. I don't know what the great attraction is in Philadelphia, but you have no further attraction for me. You may go immediately."

"You mean you discharge me?"

The salesman spoke in a tone that plainly proved he considered his ears were deceiving him.

"Precisely!" The one word was final in its expressiveness.

"But I must know the reason," the other protested. "Surely I am entitled to know *why* I am discharged. And if it's about Bruning, I certainly could not be expected to be able to *force* him to buy flour that he claimed we were quoting at a higher figure than he could buy it in the open market."

Starret swung around in his chair.

"Bruning's out of it entirely. The case is that when I send a man to Atlantic City, or any other city, and he goes elsewhere—"

"But I did not go elsewhere," Dean interrupted. "I can prove it."

"I am talking. But you say you can prove it—so can I prove that you did not go there." He picked up a paper from his desk. "Here is last month's telephone bill—it is my proof."

Dean leaned over and examined the paper critically.

"There it is!" his employer exclaimed angrily. "One Philadelphia message; I couldn't understand it, and called up the company. That's why you're discharged."

"I don't understand what you mean," Dean faltered.

"Oh, yes, you do." Starret sneered. "The telephone company gave me the details of the message. You called me up from Philadelphia, and had it charged to this end."

"But—but—why, there is a mistake," the young man stammered.

"Then you made it. That is all there is to it. Go to the cashier and get what salary is due you. Good day, sir."

Starret swung around to his desk; and Dean, realizing that it was useless to attempt to argue with him, for the present, at least, turned and walked slowly out of the office. Without stopping for the money due him, he strode on to the street.

He could not believe he was discharged—he had been particularly successful in his work, and considered he had a bright future before him. Now to have it all ended so abruptly left him stunned, and without a thought as to what move to make.

He knew he was in the right—knew he had been to Atlantic City; but how could he prove it to Mr. Starret's satisfaction?

"I will prove it," he muttered grimly, "even if I have to go to Atlantic City and bring Bruning back to New York with me."

Suddenly he stopped; and a new thought showed itself in his countenance.

"I'll do that first," he exclaimed with conviction. "It can do no harm, anyway."

Quickening his footsteps he hurried on down-town, not pausing until he entered the large building in which he knew the offices of the telephone company were located.

"I wish to find out about a call that was made last month," he said to the hall-man. "Where shall I go?"

The reply was brief; and following directions Dean entered an office, and advancing to a counter again stated his errand.

The clerk who waited upon him made a memorandum of the message in question, and then left the room to look up the record of it.

Dean waited impatiently for some moments, when the clerk, advancing with the ticket in his hand, inquired: "What did you wish to know regarding this call?"

"In the first place, where was the call from?"

"Philadelphia," the clerk replied; then, reading from the ticket, added: "Mr. Dean called from Philadelphia for Mr. Starret in New York, and had the charges reversed to Mr. Starret's telephone. Line held four minutes; charges—"

"Never mind the charges," Dean interrupted. "It's all wrong. The call was from Atlantic City."

"Not according to our records."

"But they are wrong, I say!" the salesman insisted. "And they must be corrected. It is a very serious matter."

"Just a moment, then, and I'll make certain; although our records are seldom in error." Seizing a telephone on the counter, the clerk called for a number, and while waiting for the connection, remarked: "I am calling the long-distance company to verify this record."

Dean waited impatiently during the telephone conversation between the clerk and the party on the other end of the wire; but before it was completed he knew his first attempt to clear himself was fruitless.

"I have just compared our check with the long-distance company, and it is as I thought," the clerk informed him. "The call was from Philadelphia."

Dean could not reply for a moment—he had felt certain, since the idea had occurred to him, that surely the telephone company would immediately discover their error; and he had even allowed his imagination to go so far as to picture Mr. Starret's apology. The disappointment was too much for him and, mumbling his thanks, he walked drearily out of the office.

"Well, it's Atlantic City for me," he mused, when he reached the sidewalk. "I return either with Bruning, or his affidavit that I was in Atlantic City on the day in question. I'll hurry home, pack my bag, and start at once."

It was but a half-hour's trip to his home, and in about the same length of time he was seated in the train that would carry him to the seaside resort. In his anxiety to secure the proof he knew he would get, the ride seemed particularly long; but at last the heavy train drew into the station, and, without a thought of the fact that he had not lunched, Dean hurried to the Bruning bakery, only to find that the owner of it had left that morning for New York to attend to some pressing business.

Dean's hopes sank almost beyond rescue at this announcement.

"But where will he stop while in New York?" he inquired, a ray of hope piercing the gloom.

"Mr. Bruning left no address," was the reply.

"How long do you expect him to be away?" Dean queried; but there was no hope in his words.

"He said about a week," the young lady cashier answered.

"Thank you," replied Dean, in a tone so doleful that the girl looked up at him quickly.

But Dean had already faced about and was heading for the door.

Slowly he made his way home. On

reaching New York again, he dreaded to tell his mother of his discharge—a fact with which he had not acquainted her earlier in the day.

He entered the house; and the condition of things there was not such as would tend to cheer up one who had reached the very depths of despair. He and his mother had moved into their new apartment the day before, and, as with one glance he took in the disorder, he said grimly, in reply to his mother's greeting: "Well, it's all over between Mr. Starret and me."

"Why, Harry, what do you mean?"

"I'm fired!" he burst out. "Discharged, in plain words."

Mrs. Dean looked at him wonderingly; then putting her arm around him led him to a chair.

"Harry, do not feel so glum about it. Of course, I know it's a shock, but I'm sure it wasn't your fault—"

"Indeed, it wasn't." Dean interrupted, "although I couldn't make Starret believe me."

"Come, my boy, prepare yourself for dinner; you will feel better after eating."

Dean strode in the direction of his bedroom, and when he sat down at the table a little later he felt somewhat easier in mind than when he first entered the house.

During the meal he recited the story of his discharge, and the vain efforts he had made to vindicate himself.

His story brought forth all the sympathy a fond mother can give, and that lightened his heart to such an extent that, as he placed his arm around his mother's waist and led her toward the unsettled living-room, he exclaimed: "Well, perhaps after all it may turn out for the best. But just at present I must get busy in an effort to put this room into some semblance of order."

For some time he worked arranging furniture. Then he threw himself wearily into an easy chair.

"This is more tiresome than selling flour," he laughed. "It's getting late, and you must be tired. I know I am, and I'm going to bed. To-morrow I'll try to get another position."

"And you will succeed, Harry."

He smiled at his mother's confidence, then kissed her good night and went to his room.

He was up early the next morning, and after breakfast started down-town.

Before falling asleep the previous night he had decided upon a plan of action. He would visit all the flour-dealers he knew in an effort to form a connection, and as Currie & Son were considered the most formidable rivals of Starret & Co., he resolved to see them first. Then, if not successful there—and something told him he would not be—he had listed in his mind the next concern to which he would offer his services, and so on right down the line.

As he entered the Currie offices, he was met by Johnson, one of their salesmen, whom he knew quite well.

"Hallo, Dean! What brings you to the enemy's camp?" the other inquired jocularly.

"My dire need of employment," was the reply.

"Your what?" Johnson exclaimed in surprise.

"In every-day parlance, I am after a job."

"You? Why, what's the matter with Starret?"

"We severed our business relations yesterday."

Dean could not bring himself to say he had been discharged.

"In that case, see Mr. Currie immediately. One of our salesmen leaves this week, and as you ought to have some trade, he'd be only too glad to take you on. Wish you luck, Dean."

With a wave of his hand, Johnson passed on to the street, and the other started toward the offices of the head of the concern.

When Mr. Currie received him, Dean briefly stated the object of his call—that he wanted a position, as he was no longer in the employ of Mr. Starret.

"Well, we might be able to use another salesman," was the thoughtful reply. "In fact, we can always use good men. I'll look into the matter and let you hear from me. Is there any trade you think you could bring to us in the event of our hiring you?"

"Yes, I feel certain of some," Dean replied quickly, "and there are others of which I am not so sure, but feel quite confident of eventually getting."

"That is certainly something with

which to start. Of course, you realize that our brands are totally different from those handled by Starret, but a few days here in the office will be sufficient to familiarize yourself with them."

"I think so."

"Very well; come down to-morrow morning. Be here a little after nine. Meantime, I'll look around and see just how we can use you to best advantage. When did you say you left Starret?"

"Yesterday, sir."

For a moment Dean hesitated, and was on the point of explaining that he did not quit his former employer of his own free will, but had been discharged. But before he could speak further Mr. Currie extended his hand.

"Then come to-morrow. There is a great deal of work here before me, so I must beg to be excused now."

Dean bowed himself out, and although something seemed to whisper that he should have corrected the impression Mr. Currie had—that he had not been discharged by his former employer—he was once more himself.

It had all been so much easier than he had expected. In the first place, he had felt certain that he would have to interview a great many of the dealers before receiving any encouragement at all; and that would only be a promise of the first vacancy. And here he was practically engaged for the next day.

When he again entered his home he was in a far different frame of mind than when he left it.

"Everything is all right again, Harry! I see it in your face," his mother exclaimed.

"Yes, it is, mother."

"And Mr. Starret is convinced—"

"No, I have not been near him," he interrupted. "I have another position—or at least I shall have in the morning."

"Really?"

"Yes, I am going with Currie & Son. They are a first-class house, and I am very glad to connect myself with them. But I have other things that need my attention just at present. I'm going to dig in and try to get this flat all to rights to-day. It's mighty lucky I have a day off—the work is really too heavy for you." He glanced around the room. "What shall we do first?"

"If we hang the pictures there will be that much out of the way, Harry."

"Just the thing. You sit in that easy chair and direct the work. In other words, I am the employed, and you are the employer."

Dean laughed good-naturedly, and his mother realized that he was again himself—that the hopes for the morrow were based on something more tangible than a mere promise.

The rest of the day was spent in settling their home, and long before nightfall it had been brought out of the chaos that existed in the morning.

After the evening meal Dean settled himself in a chair and read for some time. Then he arose and, after bidding his mother good night, went to his room, where he soon fell into a sound sleep—the work of the afternoon had left its effect upon his system.

The next morning he entered the building Currie & Son occupied, and, going directly to the private offices, learned that Mr. Currie had not arrived as yet. So he seated himself and, taking out his paper, tried to become interested in its contents; but for some reason or other there seemed to be nothing in it to attract his attention. Instead, a peculiar feeling came over him—a premonition that all was not well, and that disappointment awaited him.

The few moments he was forced to wait for the man he expected to employ him seemed many more than they really were; when Mr. Currie entered hurriedly.

"Oh, good morning," was his greeting. "I'll see you in a few minutes," and he passed on to his own room.

Dean fidgeted in his chair, and asked himself why he should be so nervous. But before he could form an answer in his mind the office-boy appeared.

"Mr. Currie will see you now," he said.

Dean followed the boy, and entered the private office.

"Sit down a moment," Currie directed. "I've been so busy I haven't had the time to look into your case at all."

Dean only nodded his head.

"By the way," the other continued, "why did you leave Starret?"

"I—we—had a disagreement," Dean stammered.

Currie glanced up at him searchingly.

"I see. Well, I'll phone Starret, and if there is nothing against your business ability I will take you on this morning. Are you ready to start right in?"

For an instant Dean could not find words to reply. Then he faltered: "Yes, sir—I am ready."

Currie seized the telephone.

"If Starret isn't in"— He broke off suddenly to give the telephone operator the number he desired, while Dean murmured a prayer that his former employer would be many miles away from his office.

Dean could feel the cold perspiration standing out on his brow, and sat nervously tense while he heard Currie query: "Is Mr. Starret there?"

There was a brief pause, and the next question brought a sigh of relief from the salesman. Currie had asked: "When do you expect him to return?"

There was another pause, and the man at his side said: "No, never mind. It is a personal matter," and hung up the telephone.

Dean's heart beat high with hope. Mr. Currie had not left word for his former employer to call him, nor had he said he would call again. Perhaps, after all, he would put him to work immediately.

The man swung around in his chair, but for an instant did not speak. Then he began: "I couldn't get Starret, as you probably gathered from the conversation. Now I'm not casting any reflections upon you, Dean, but I have to act with caution. You say you and Starret had a difference. Well, I don't want to know anything about it—it's none of my business. But I would prefer a letter of recommendation from your former employer."

Dean was nonplused at this request, and could not reply.

"If I were to put you to work," Currie continued, "and Starret still wanted you—the difference being only a trifling one—he might claim I was luring away his salesmen. No, the only thing for you to do is to go to him, get a letter, and when you return with it I'll employ you—that is, of course, providing everything is all right, and I am sure it is."

"It is—you have my word," Dean asserted; then added in a positive tone: "but I will not go to Mr. Starret for any letter."

Currie stared inquiringly at him.

"And why not? If everything is all right—"

"But it isn't, from his point of view!" the other broke in.

A queer look came over Currie's face as he said slowly: "Then you could hardly expect me to employ you."

"No, I do not," Dean declared. "I will not go to Mr. Starret because I know he would not recommend me. And I'll tell you why I left him."

"I do not care to hear about it," the other broke in firmly. "The matter is closed. I am very busy. Good day."

He swung around to his desk again.

Dean stared at him an instant, then rose to his feet and strode out of the office, his flushed face showing plainly his humiliation.

All his hopes had quickly turned to despair; and when he reached the sidewalk he stood a moment trying to decide what step to take next.

But his mind was in such a state of turmoil that he could reach no conclusion, and instinctively he retraced his steps toward the street-cars, and was soon on his way home again.

When he arrived, and stood face to face again with his mother, she read failure in his looks before he had spoken a word, and endeavored to cheer him up. But without result.

For some time they talked; Dean always in the same hopeless strain, and she endeavoring to bring him out of the gloom into which he had sunk.

"Harry, if I were you I would go to Mr. Starret," Mrs. Dean said at length.

"What for?" her son grumbled.

"Because it seems as if a letter from him is necessary. And perhaps he would give you one. He always appeared to think a great deal of you; and if a letter is all that stands between you and another position, and you explained it to him, perhaps he might help you."

Dean did not reply instantly. He seemed lost in thought.

"Perhaps you are right, mother," he said absently. "It simmers down to the fact that I must get a position—we can't live on air—so I shall just put my pride in my pocket, and beg a letter of him."

He stopped, then added bitterly: "I'll explain that it's an act of charity. But

I'll do it! Yes, I'll go right down and see him now."

"I really think it best, Harry," his mother said quietly.

And Dean hurried from the house.

A feeling of reckless abandon came over him on the way down-town, and with it a determination not to let Mr. Starret realize his precarious position unless it became absolutely necessary.

"I'll try to appear independent," he mused, as he neared the corner which Starret & Co. occupied. "If he turns me down—well, then, I suppose I'll have to admit the dire necessity of a letter of recommendation."

Entering the building, he walked toward the door that led to the offices, his tightly pressed lips proving his expectancy of facing a trying ordeal. He acknowledged with a stiff nod the greetings of the clerks whom he passed.

He entered Mr. Starret's room to find that gentleman busily engaged; but as Dean approached his desk, he glanced up quickly.

"Oh, hallo, Dean," was his greeting, and the young man persuaded himself that there was no trace of anger in his voice.

"I came here, Mr. Starret, to ask if you will give me a letter of recommendation," Dean spoke in a firm, even voice.

"You what?" the other exclaimed.

"You heard me, sir," was the cool assertion. "Need I repeat it?"

"But how about mine?"

The younger man stared at the other; but, before he could speak, Mr. Starret continued: "I thought you came in response to the letter I wrote you."

"Your letter!" Dean repeated in amazement.

"Of course. Why, I wrote you day before yesterday," the other went on. "Didn't you get it? I sent it to your house."

"No; we moved from there two days ago, and I forgot to give the hall-boy our new address."

Dean spoke as one in a trance. Then he suddenly glanced up, and inquired: "But why did you write to me?"

Starret laughed.

"Can't you guess?"

Dean would not allow his hopes to rise, and shook his head in reply.

"Why, Dean, I wrote you to come back yesterday," the other informed him. "I learned I was wrong in discharging you."

Dean leaned forward eagerly.

"How did you find it out?" he queried.

"A few hours after you left here the day before yesterday, some one in the telephone company called me up with the information that since my representative had called—I guess he meant you—with regard to that Philadelphia message, the long-distance company had learned it should be Atlantic City after all, and that as that point was fifteen cents more than the other, they would send me a corrected bill."

"Yes," Dean said quietly.

"Yes; as they explained it," Starret continued, "Atlantic City is obtained through Philadelphia, and—oh, they went into a long explanation, but I can't recall it all. Anyway, Dean, it's on me, and you'd better stay right on now. You're reengaged."

"I knew I—"

"Well, I didn't, but I do now," the other interrupted. "And, by the way, you're hired at an increase of five dollars a week."

Dean's face fairly shone with joy.

"I knew I was in the right," he said; "and when I left here, after my discharge, I went direct to Atlantic City to get a letter from Bruning—"

"The deuce you say!" Starret interrupted.

"But, unfortunately, he had left that morning for New York."

"Yes, he was in here yesterday." Mr. Starret paused, then continued quickly: "When you put in your expense account this week, add to it the cost of that trip. It's on me. But you'd better not stay this afternoon. Take the rest of the day off, and be on hand without fail in the morning."

"I will," Dean asserted positively, and turned to leave his employer, preparatory to wending his way homeward.

"By the way, Dean," Starret called, and there was a trace of a smile around his mouth as he added: "Hereafter pay for all telephone-calls out of your expense money—then there can't be another mix-up like this."

TAKING NO CHANCES.

By MARIE B. SCHRADER.

A Friday invitation that left something to be desired, but was the means of bringing certain surprising events to pass.

"WHAT do you think of that?" exclaimed Frank Evans as he glanced up from the letter he held in his hand.

He had read it three times before commenting upon the contents, and it was with no small degree of interest that his friend and roommate, Ernest Keene, waited for some word which would give a clue to the absorbing news.

"Anything startling?" inquired Keene sympathetically.

"Not startling," replied Evans, "but very perplexing."

Evans stood in the middle of the room with the open letter held mechanically before him, although he had ceased to read it. He ran his fingers through his hair.

"I declare I don't know what to do about it," he muttered.

"Maybe I can help you out, old chap," ventured Keene. "If he wants to borrow money, tell him you've loaned all you have to me."

"Oh, it isn't anything like that," replied Evans. "It isn't money. It's a dress-suit case."

"A dress-suit case!" exclaimed Keene.

"Yes. This note is an invitation from Lucy Kenyon's brother, and it's several days late in reaching me. Wrong address — just like Tom. I'm to take dinner with them to-day, Friday, at their country place up the Hudson. It's Tom's birthday, and they are going to have quite a family gathering. The question is, shall I or shall I not carry my dress-suit case?"

"I should say, take it, for certainly you will want to wear your evening clothes at dinner."

"Now, that's just where you are wrong, Ernest. Old man Kenyon has made it one of the unwritten rules of his country house that young men from the city who come to dinner need not harness themselves up in regulation attire. 'Business clothes are all right for the country,' he says. Of course, if a dance or some entertainment were going on, it would be different; but the old man isn't keen on dressing up himself, and he won't let his guests do it."

"Well, what's the difficulty, then?" asked Ernest. "If you don't require your evening clothes, why bother about the suit-case? You won't need it."

"Now, that's what I am puzzled about," said Evans. "This letter invites me to dinner. The dinner is on Friday. On other occasions when I have been asked to the Kenyons it has usually been on a Friday, and the letter invariably mentioned the fact that I was expected to remain over for the week-end. This letter says nothing about that. It merely speaks of the dinner. The question is, am I or am I not invited for Saturday and Sunday as well as Friday?"

"Let me read the document," suggested Keene. "Perhaps I can find a solution of the problem."

But, after reading the invitation over several times, he shook his head.

"Sorry I can't help you, Frank. It's all Greek to me."

"If," continued Evans, "if I am invited to dinner only, of course I wouldn't carry my suit-case, for I would have no need of it. Besides, it would be very embarrassing for me to present myself at the door with it. On the other hand, if they expect me to remain for the week-end, and Tom has merely forgotten to mention the fact—which I suspect is the case—then I would be in a fine fix with no other clothes with me."

"Call Tom up on the phone and ask him," suggested Keene.

"He has gone to Pittsburgh. This note was written just before he left. He'll be back in time for the dinner."

"You could decline to stay if you discovered on your arrival that Saturday and Sunday were included. 'Pressing business' and all that—you know what to say."

"But don't you understand that it's to Lucy Kenyon's house?" asked Evans, a shade of annoyance crossing his face.

"Oh!" exclaimed Keene with sudden comprehension. "You like her, don't you?"

"Like her!" repeated Evans with emphasis. "There isn't another girl who—"

"I see," broke in Keene. "Then I really don't blame you for wanting to make the most of your opportunities."

"Besides, that fellow Woods will probably be on the trail," Evans went on. "He's very popular with the family, and is usually invited when I am. He's in love with her, and is always on the lookout for chances to rush her off into corners where he can have little private chats."

"Well, what will you do?"

"I'm trying to think of something," answered Evans doubtfully. "My brain seems in a muddle."

"Why not check your suit-case?" proposed Keene. "Then when you get up to the house and learn whether you are to stay or return, it would be right where you could easily get it."

"By Jove! that's a capital idea. Ernest, you've saved my life. I'll just leave the suit-case at the station. Why couldn't I have thought of that? It's the only way out of the difficulty. Now, I guess Woods won't have such an easy time of it as he might have had. Thanks, old fellow, thanks."

Evans proceeded to empty his bureau drawers in search of the articles he wanted to take with him, and soon had them spread out on the bed. Among the collection was his dress suit.

"What are you taking that for?" inquired Keene.

"It's best to be on the safe side," replied Evans. "You never can tell what's going on; and if there should be some entertainment, naturally, I want to be prepared. As I told you, they don't dress for dinner; but sometimes there are dances and plays and such things."

He finished packing and fastened the top securely.

"Now, I will take this down to my office. I have several business matters to look into before I leave, and don't want to be bothered sending up to the apartment after it. Besides, it is just possible I might at the last moment forget all about it."

"Oh, no danger of that," laughed Keene.

Evans picked up his suit-case and hailed a passing taxicab. In a few moments he arrived at his office, and was soon busy in the details of a prospective real-estate deal. Time flew, and the hour for his departure drew near. He glanced at his suit-case as he lifted it up, and started on his way to the elevator.

"Great idea!" he murmured.

He reached the station just in time and seated himself in the car. The journey was a short one of an hour or so, but it seemed interminable to him.

He looked about to see if there was any one of his acquaintance on hand.

Yes, there at the end was the detestable Woods. Evans pretended not to see him, and the latter followed the same plan, although each felt that his rival was aware of his presence.

Evans looked around for Woods's suit-case. He caught sight of one end of it protruding from the floor. It bore the initials "J. W. W."

"It couldn't be that she would ever consent to put Mrs. before those letters!" thought Evans.

In the meantime Woods had realized that Evans was there with his suit-case.

"Why must they always have that fellow Evans?" he muttered to himself in annoyance. "Too bad he can't stay away once in a while."

As the train drew up at the little station, both men, suit-case in hand, alighted.

"Ah, how are you, Evans?"

"Fine! How are you, Woods?"

"Great! I see you're invited for the week-end, too," blandly remarked Woods.

"I won't give him the satisfaction of knowing my difficulty," decided Evans quickly.

"I'm not sure that I can stay," he remarked aloud, by way of avoiding an untruth. "Pressing business in town, you know. It all depends on how certain

matters come out. Am looking for a wire."

"You must be busy," said Woods politely, but with an undercurrent of sarcasm which did not escape his companion. "Are you usually so much occupied on Saturday? I seldom do anything on that day. It's merely a couple of hours' duty, you know—from ten to twelve. Don't you close your office at noon on Saturdays?"

Evans felt his anger rising, but he controlled himself.

At this moment the Kenyon carriage drew up in front of them. Woods got in, but Evans told the coachman not to wait for him since he was obliged to call up New York on the telephone and then wait for some information. He did not wish to detain Mr. Woods.

This was perfectly satisfactory to Woods, and he drove off with ill-concealed content.

The moment the carriage had disappeared Evans picked up his suit-case and walked over to the baggage-room, where he secured a check for it. This done, he was forced to idle away some minutes in order to cover the supposed telephone-call. Then he hailed a passing countryman and dashed up to the Kenyon house.

As soon as he had deposited his hat and cane he entered the parlor. Lucy came forward to greet him, both hands outstretched.

"So good of you to come," she said. "We really didn't know whether to expect you or not. Tom attended to the invitation and mother and I feared there was something wrong. You know how forgetful Tom is. He has the best heart in the world, but at times he isn't as careful about social duties as he should be."

"Oh, the invitation came all right," said Evans, "but it only reached me this morning. I sent you a special delivery. Haven't you received it?"

"Not yet," said Lucy with a smile. "Special deliveries up the Hudson mean any old time at all.

"We expect Tom at any moment," she went on. "It would be just like him, though, to have a birthday dinner with the cause of the festivities absent."

They both laughed heartily at her remark, and Evans thought that she had the prettiest teeth and the sweetest smile in the world.

"We are going to have quite a jolly time to-morrow night at the dance," she rattled on. "I have asked all the men and girls I know for miles around. But, of course, Tom told you all about it in the letter. I think you will enjoy yourself. By the way, your room is the one you always have. I told Thompson to take your things up there. So glad you came."

Her reception was so cordial that Evans determined that he would not inform her of Tom's negligence. He liked Tom. In fact, he liked him well enough to call him brother some day, with everybody willing.

If he told of the oversight, Lucy would be sure to scold Tom, and that wouldn't do. Tom had already had trouble enough.

No, everything was turning out well and he would say nothing. After dinner he would slip down to the station and bring up his suit-case by the back entrance.

The son and heir of the household arrived about fifteen minutes before dinner was announced—just when every one had concluded that he preferred to dine in Pittsburgh.

He greeted Evans in a hearty fashion.

"Glad to see you, Frank. Thank Heaven my letter reached you all right. Lucy is always lecturing me about mailing things. I had a sort of feeling that something was wrong with your invite. Perhaps because it was written in such a hurry. Glad you are here, old chap."

Evans was pleased when Lucy's brother laid his hand in a familiar manner on his shoulder. He glanced over at Woods to see how he was taking it, but that gentleman was looking the other way.

The dinner passed off in delightful fashion, without formality and restraint. There were several other young women friends of Lucy present, but neither Woods nor Evans paid more than the expected attention to them.

Their allotted stay at the Kenyon was too short to waste time on the others. Each man focused his words and looks upon the daughter of the house whenever he saw an opportunity. Each had decided some months before that Lucy was the most charming young woman in the world, but he had not yet arrived at the

point where he could summon up enough courage to ask her to devote her charms exclusively to him.

Several times during the course of the dinner Evans's mind returned to the suit-case. He would not for the world have had Lucy surmise his predicament, and as for Woods, it would have afforded him unquestioned satisfaction. Evans congratulated himself that he had managed everything successfully.

After dinner it would be merely a matter of a half hour when he might find some excuse to absent himself, and so slip, unobserved, down to the station for his baggage.

The men finished their cigars and joined the ladies in the drawing-room. It was not long before Woods took occasion to remark to Evans in a voice that was plainly audible to those near, among whom was Lucy:

"Well, Evans, have you decided to remain over for the week-end?"

Before Evans could answer Lucy took up the inquiry.

"Why, there never was any doubt about his staying."

"Oh, excuse me," put in Woods. "I merely asked because he told me on the train that his remaining depended upon an important telegram. Pressing business, I believe."

Then he added significantly:

"Pressing business! These urgent real-estate deals on Saturday. Ha, ha, old chap, we've all been there! Don't blame you at all."

His shafts got in their deadly work, and Lucy turned toward Evans with a slightly frigid look, and remarked:

"Mr. Evans, if you had explained to me about your telegram, I would have telephoned down to the station in regard to it. Oh," she exclaimed, "I forgot, there is some trouble with the wires. I couldn't get Central all the afternoon. Sorry. Telegrams are often like special deliveries; they don't arrive until after the sender."

Evans was very much embarrassed. He saw at once that Woods was trying to get him in an awkward position; that he had led Lucy to believe that he, Evans preferred to be in town with some unknown young woman than at her house-party.

Woods's stock was rising, but Evans determined to get even. He didn't know how to do it, but he restrained himself as best he could. Lucy smiled sweetly at Woods, who devoted himself more assiduously to her than ever.

"As a matter of fact," said Evans, after a few moment's thought, "no one could persuade me to go back to New York now. I did have an important business deal on hand, and it was to be finished to-morrow, but, business or no business, telegram or no telegram, nothing could induce me to leave now."

Whereupon Lucy smiled approvingly. Woods glowered at him, but Evans was supremely happy, for he felt that he had fairly staggered his rival.

"Oh, Mr. Evans," protested Lucy, "don't let me interfere with such an important transaction. I wouldn't for the world like to feel that your stay here caused you to lose such a deal."

"Oh, maybe she'll write to-morrow," suggested Woods, in a bantering fashion which Evans understood perfectly.

However, he apparently did not hear the remark, and a few minutes later left the room. The suit-case was worrying him to death.

He decided that he would go to the station and get it at once. He ran lightly up the stairs to the room he had occupied on previous occasions, and sat down to think just what he should do to escape observation.

He started down the stairs for his hat when he heard steps approaching. He quickly ran back up the stairs and peered over the balustrade. It was Woods. He seemed to be everywhere. In a moment all was quiet and once more Evans started down, but stopped when he heard Woods's voice. Again he went back. He wouldn't have done so, however, had he heard what his rival was saying to Lucy.

"He won't stay over Sunday," said Woods. "Watch what I tell you. He'll fix it to get back to New York. He has to take her to dinner on Sunday evenings."

"Why, I didn't know there was some one in whom he is interested," replied Lucy in disappointed tones. "Aren't you mistaken, Mr. Woods?"

"Oh, no, indeed. He's crazy about her. He told me on the train that he had to

be back. It all depends on the receipt of a telegram."

"Are you sure you understand him correctly? I have always found him honest."

Evans would have embraced Lucy on the spot for her belief in him, if he had heard this.

"My dear Miss Kenyon," rejoined Woods, "I know all the details. If he stays over it's merely because she doesn't wire for him."

Lucy returned to her guests, but Woods still remained in the hall, examining some pictures on the walls.

"I guess I've fixed Evans," he thought with satisfaction. "He won't have a chance with her from now on. Just let a woman know that a man is in the leading-strings of another girl, and her hurt pride will do the freezing-out process."

Woods was afraid of Evans, for his judgment told him that his rival had come there with the purpose, if the opportunity should present itself, of putting a certain question to Lucy. Woods was not exactly sure of his own ground, and decided that with Evans out of the way he would have a better chance.

After spending some time in the hall he strolled into the library, where he picked up a portfolio of drawings, and soon became interested in examining them.

In the meantime Lucy was trying to entertain her guests. Her heart was heavy, for at last she realized how much she cared for Frank Evans. She had always accepted his attentions as something which belonged to her, and now he was waiting for a wire to call him back to the unknown one.

Oh, it was too awful, and she had been foolish enough to imagine, at times, that he loved her!

Well, she would tell him that she didn't want to keep him against his will when his heart was in town. A million bitter thoughts surged through her brain. The air in the house seemed stifling, and she opened the French window and went out on the balcony and then down into the garden. She felt she must be alone where she could fight it all out. The strain was too much.

In the meantime Evans was in his room, waiting for an opportunity to go down-stairs unnoticed. He felt he had already been away from the others a long time and some one was sure to inquire about him. He decided that he must get to the station at once.

How could he do it? That was the question.

He leaned over the balustrade and listened. Some one was there. Then his eye fell on the window, around which twined a huge wistaria vine.

Ah, he had solved the problem! His room was on the second floor, only a short distance from the ground. Besides, there was the wistaria to help him.

As quick as a flash he had grasped the improvised ladder and was on his way down it. He held firmly for a few inches, then his hand slipped and down he fell most unexpectedly. He landed in a bed of roses, and scratched his hands as he got on his feet.

It was dusk in the spring evening and he raised his eyes to see if any one had observed him.

The next moment he could have fainted, for there, only a few feet away, stood Lucy, gazing at him in open-eyed astonishment. As she came closer and saw him picking the thorns from his hands, she began laughing.

Evans was too embarrassed to be able to speak for a moment. He didn't know what to say. Certainly it was a peculiar situation for a young woman to discover her guest escaping from his room in so undignified a fashion.

Lucy didn't laugh very long, however, for the remembrance of Woods's conversation returned to her.

"Why, where are you going?" she asked.

A sudden suspicion crossed her mind as he glanced sheepishly at her.

"Your telegram hasn't come yet, has it?" she asked quickly.

"No," he answered. "That was all a—"

"I understand," she interrupted. "You are going to the station, aren't you?"

"Yes," he confessed. "I am."

"And I know what you are going for," she continued.

"You do?" he exclaimed in a pleased manner. "How did you guess my predicament?"

"Never mind," she said, "I know all

about it. I do think, though, that you might have thought enough of me to give me your confidence. Instead of telling some one else—"

"I swear I haven't told a soul," replied Evans. "And, as far as not thinking enough of you to tell you goes, I'm in this sorry fix now, because I think so much of your good opinion that I didn't want to lower myself in your eyes. Of course I could have brought it right up to the house with me, but then, suppose I hadn't been invited to stay for the week-end. I would have looked very cheap, presenting myself with a suit-case when you only expected me to dinner."

"A suit-case?" repeated Lucy. "Why, what are you talking about? I am talking about your telegram."

"What telegram?" asked Evans.

"Mr. Woods said you were expecting one from 'her.'"

"'Her!!' So Woods has been talking. See here, Lucy, I didn't mean to tell you this right now, but you ought to know by this time that there's only one 'her' in the world for me, and that's you. Woods is jealous, that's what's the matter with him. He thought he would queer me with you.

"The truth of the matter is, Tom neglected to mention in his letter whether you expected me to remain over Saturday and Sunday. Naturally, I hesitated to present myself with a big suit-case if I were only going to stay for dinner. I was so anxious to stay that I brought my grip along, anyhow, just on the chance. I hit on the plan of leaving it at the station until I learned whether I was to remain or not. When Woods asked me if I were invited for the week-end, I said something about pressing business and a telegram. You see, I had to have an excuse in case you didn't want me."

"Of course I wanted you," rejoined Lucy. "You should have known it was Tom's fault."

"I thought so," said Evans, "but I wasn't sure. I meant to go to the station and get back with the suit-case before any one missed me."

"Then there is no 'her'?"

"The only 'her' stands before me," said Evans, taking both her hands.

Inside the house Woods went to the library window to raise it. As he did so voices fell on his ears. He looked out just in time to see Evans kiss Lucy. They were talking very earnestly.

"It will be a great lark," said Lucy.

"You don't suppose they will miss you, do you?" asked Evans anxiously.

"Oh, not for some time," she answered. "I am sure they won't suspect a thing."

"I think we can get away all right," said Evans. "We can explain later."

"Wait a moment while I get my hat and wrap," replied Lucy. "I know a short cut through the woods. A train is due soon, but there is not apt to be anybody on it that we know."

"It won't take but a moment to get the suit-case from the station," said Evans. "Then off we trot and nobody the wiser."

Lucy put her head on his shoulder and then disappeared in the house. She was back in a flash, and the two disappeared through the garden, out the back way and into the distance.

Woods stood almost petrified. He had ground his teeth with rage as he listened to the conversation.

"An elopement!" he muttered. "That sly Evans! I might have known he was up to something. So that's what he meant by the 'pressing business.'"

He walked excitedly into the parlor and inquired with a suppressed voice for Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon.

One of the guests replied:

"They have taken two of the young ladies out to show them the speed of the new motor-car. They should be back by now."

Woods was furious. If he could catch the fleeing pair before the train arrived! But what could he do? If only some member of the family could be found!

He looked for Tom, but he, too, had disappeared. Some minutes had elapsed when the Kenyon automobile drew up in front of the door.

By this time Woods's rage knew no bounds.

"I'm so glad you've come," he blurted out. "They've eloped." Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon looked at him in amazement.

"Eloped!" both exclaimed in surprise. "Who has eloped? When did it happen?"

"I regret to be the bearer of bad

news," went on Woods, "but the fact is, your daughter and Evans are now on their way to catch the next train to New York."

"What?" shrieked Mrs. Kenyon, and promptly fell in a faint.

"It can't be true, Woods," said Mr. Kenyon. "Surely there is some mistake. I had no idea there was an engagement between Lucy and Evans."

"There's no mistake, Mr. Kenyon. I overheard all their plans. If we take the motor, we might arrive in time to prevent them from catching the train."

By this time the guests had come running from their various *tête-à-têtes* and were gathered around Mrs. Kenyon, who was quickly revived by the aid of smelling-salts and ammonia.

"Tell me it isn't true," she murmured.

Woods repeated all he had told her before, so that the entire household was in full possession of the details.

Every one expressed the greatest astonishment. No one had suspected a secret understanding between Lucy and Evans.

"Indeed," remarked one of the men, "I rather thought that you were the favored suitor, Woods."

Woods winced at this.

The whole place was in an uproar of excitement.

"What shall we do?" moaned Mrs. Kenyon. "Why did they elope? Mr. Evans is a very nice young man. There was no objection to him at all. Why couldn't they have done things properly? To run off in this way looks as if we didn't approve of Lucy's choice. Dear me! If the child wanted Evans, she could have had him with a church wedding and all the rest of it."

Woods looked at his watch.

"It isn't as late as I thought," he said. "I believe, if we start right away, we can get to the station in time."

Mr. Kenyon stepped back into the car, and, together with Mrs. Kenyon, Tom, Woods, and several of the guests, the start was made. Those who could not crowd into the automobile followed on foot.

The chauffeur was told to put on all possible speed, and it was only a matter of a few minutes when the machine drew near the wooden platform on which stood Evans and Lucy, with a suit-case between them. The train was just coming down the track, and they were evidently watching its approach.

"Wait, Lucy, wait!" called her father, but Lucy didn't hear him. She was holding Evans's arm in an affectionate manner.

"I'll stop them," cried Woods, who had caught sight of the town marshal.

"Stop, thief!" he shouted in loud tones.

The marshal looked around when he heard the word "thief."

"That man, over there," yelled Woods. "Stop him!"

There was no other man in the direction in which he pointed, so the marshal rushed over to Evans and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"You are my prisoner," he said.

"What does this mean?" indignantly demanded the young man as the members of the automobile party approached.

"What has he stolen, sir?" asked the marshal, who had a firm grip on Evans's arm.

"He has stolen that young lady," answered Woods.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said the marshal with a broad grin as he removed his detaining hand. "I can't arrest him for that."

Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon went up to their daughter, who was standing speechless with astonishment. They put their arms about her as if to hold her. The train had come and gone, but Lucy and Evans made no attempt to get on it.

"You can't go now, Lucy," said the mother, as she sobbed and kissed the girl. "It's too late. What ever put it into your head to elope?"

"Elope?" exclaimed both Evans and Lucy with one accord. "How could you imagine such a thing?"

"Mr. Woods told us all."

"Mr. Woods!" repeated Lucy.

"Yes; Mr. Woods overheard your plans, and, thanks to him, we were able to overtake you in the nick of time."

"Thanks to Mr. Woods, and his zeal in my behalf," said Evans, as he took Lucy's hand in his, "Lucy has consented to be my wife, for which I wish to thank Mr. Woods. It was more than kind of him to tell her about a fictitious girl in

New York. If it hadn't been for that and a few other things, I might not be as happy as I am at present. Neither Lucy nor I, however, had any thought of an elopement."

"That's perfectly true, mother," added Lucy. "We never dreamed of such a thing. We simply came down to the station for Frank's suit-case."

"Why did you have to do that?" asked Tom.

"Because, my dear, thoughtless brother, you left out of your letter to your future brother-in-law that he was expected to stay with us over Saturday and Sunday. He, thinking there must be some mistake, had the good sense to bring his suit-case along with him as far as the station."

"Oh, was that the cause of all this commotion?" exclaimed Tom. "Well, mistakes will happen in the best regulated families."

He turned and looked steadily at Woods.

"I would like to say a few words to you, Woods," he went on.

The two walked to one side of the platform, while the rest of the party turned to go home. It was a merry crowd; for, now that the affair had turned out happily, all were laughing over the situation.

"Woods," said Tom in a tone of voice concerning which there could be no misunderstanding, "the next train leaves in one hour. I'll see that your luggage is sent down to you."

"Very well," replied Woods; "I have no desire to return."

In a well-satisfied manner, Tom sauntered off the platform and lit a cigarette.

"I'm mighty glad that Evans is it," he said to himself as he took the short cut home.

RETURN TO SENDER.

By LEE BERTRAND.

Some trouble about a letter, with a good deal more that was set on foot in the endeavor to avoid any.

"DO you mean to say that you did not get my letter?" inquired Gertrude, half incredulously.

Steve Barton nodded.

"I certainly did not get it, little one. I was horribly disappointed, too, I can assure you. I had your solemn promise to write to me every day while I was away, and when yesterday passed without even a line from you I felt horribly blue. I must have bothered that poor hotel-clerk every half-hour, inquiring if any mail had arrived for me."

"Well, it's awful queer, Steve. I'm positive I mailed it. It was a good long letter, too. It's too bad you didn't get it. I wonder why it went astray?"

"Are you sure you addressed it correctly?"

"Positive. Kenworth Hotel, Albany, New York. That was the address you gave me, wasn't it?"

"Yes, that was the correct address. If you sent it to the Kenworth it ought to have reached me. It must have been lost in the shuffle, I guess. Those postal people are getting horribly careless."

"They ought to be punished," declared the girl severely. "I do hope my letter hasn't fallen into the hands of some stranger. I was feeling in a particularly sentimental mood when I wrote it, Steve, and really, dear, there were things in that letter I wouldn't for worlds have strange eyes peruse."

"Don't worry, girlie. If you addressed it properly, nobody else will read its contents. It is bound to reach the Kenworth sooner or later, and even though I have left Albany it will be forwarded on to me as soon as it arrives at the hotel. I was careful to leave my New York address with the clerk."

But instead of being reassured, Gertrude gave vent to a little cry of dismay.

"Oh, dear! How very careless of me! I understand, now, why you didn't get the letter, Steve. It's all my fault. I

am pretty sure that instead of addressing it 'Kenworth Hotel, Albany, New York,' I absent-mindedly addressed it 'Kenworth Hotel, *City*.'

"It was a slip of the pen, of course. I was writing several letters to city folks at the time, and that's how I came to make the mistake, I guess.

"Of course, that explains why it wasn't delivered. Isn't it too bad? I'm afraid that being in love is making me horribly absent-minded," she added.

"Well, after all, there's no serious harm done," said the young man. "You can repeat to me now all that you wrote in the letter. Much as I value your dainty correspondence, dearie, it will be so much nicer to hear the words from your own lips."

"Yes. But what will become of that letter, Steve? I'm worried about that. Won't the postal people open it when they find that they are unable to deliver it? I hate to think of what I wrote being read by a horrid, grinning postal-clerk. And besides, whoever reads it is bound to discover that we are secretly engaged. I mentioned that several times in the letter. Oh, dear! I am so worried!"

"Pooh! You need not worry, little girl. You say that you addressed it 'Kenworth Hotel, City,' instead of 'Kenworth Hotel, Albany.' I believe there is a Kenworth Hotel in this town. Hand me that telephone-book, please, and I'll ascertain. Yes. See! Here it is—Kenworth Hotel, Bowery. A cheap lodging-house, I guess. Your letter doubtless will be delivered there."

"Gracious! How very provoking!" gasped the girl with a blush. "Goodness knows how many horrid people have read the words I intended for your eyes alone."

"Don't be alarmed about that," declared Steve reassuringly. "When the hotel people find they have no guest answering to my name, they will doubtless return the letter to the mail-carrier unopened. We will call up the Kenworth right now, and ask them whether they still have your precious missive, or have already handed it back to the carrier."

Suiting the action to the word, he lifted the receiver from the telephone-stand on the table and got into communication with the hotel.

"Yes," replied the clerk in response to his question, "there was a letter left here addressed to Mr. Steve Barton. We have nobody here by that name, and it has been lying around the desk here for a couple of days."

"Where is it now?" inquired Steve eagerly.

"I handed it back to the mail-carrier about ten minutes ago," was the answer.

"It has gone back to the post-office," said Steve to the girl, as he replaced the receiver on the hook. "Don't be uneasy. It is perfectly safe. When the postal authorities find that it is impossible to deliver it, they will send it to the dead-letter office. We will get it back from there before prying eyes have a chance to peruse its contents."

"You are sure that it will go to the dead-letter office, Steve?"

"Of course I am. That's the ultimate destination of all letters which the postal people are unable to deliver. You didn't put your own address on the back of the envelope or in a corner, did you?"

"No. Why?"

"Well, if you had done so, they would return the letter directly to you instead of sending it to the dead-letter office. If they know the name and address of the sender, they always return the letter in such cases."

"In future I shall put my name and address on the envelope of every letter I send out," declared Gertrude. "Isn't it a pity that I didn't do so in this case?"

And then she uttered a startled exclamation and turned white.

"What's the matter, dear?" inquired Steve anxiously.

"Oh, goodness, gracious! I've gone and done it now. We're in a terrible fix, Steve! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! That letter won't go to the dead-letter office, at all. It will go to *father's* office. Father will open it, and learn that we are secretly engaged. Isn't it awful?"

"What do you mean?" gasped the young man, turning pale in his turn. "Why should that letter go to your father's office? Aren't you talking somewhat wildly, Gertie? Calm yourself, my dear. Your alarm is quite unwarranted. Why should that letter go to your stern parent's office?"

"Because I used one of his business envelopes," sobbed the girl. "I didn't recollect until just now. I remember that I ran short of my own envelopes, and after I had written your letter I went to the library to get one from father's desk.

"The only envelopes I could find there were some business ones with father's name and office address printed in the left-hand corner. I enclosed that letter in one of those envelopes. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What are we going to do?"

"But surely you took the precaution of crossing out the printed matter on the envelope?" inquired Steve anxiously.

"No, I didn't," answered the girl with a mournful shake of her head.

"Didn't you write your own name or initials above the printed name?"

"No. Of course, I ought to have done so, but it never occurred to me. I just enclosed that letter in the envelope, addressed it to Mr. Steve Barton, Kenworth Hotel, City, and dropped it in the letter-box. Of course, the postal people will send that letter back to where they think it came from."

"Gee-whiz!" exclaimed the young man.

He really could not think of anything else to say under the distressing circumstances.

"Isn't it perfectly horrible? Father will get that letter at his office. He will open it and read it, and learn of our secret engagement. You know what an unreasoning prejudice he has against you, Steve, dear.

"He will rave and storm. He has a terrible temper—but worst of all he will force me to break our engagement, send me off to Europe, and prevent me from communicating with you. Oh, what is to be done?"

"Perhaps your father won't open the letter," exclaimed the young man with a ray of hope. "When he sees that it is addressed to me he may forward it on to me without opening it. It would be the chivalrous thing to do, you know."

"Oh, yes; but I assure you father isn't a bit chivalrous, Steve. He boasts with pride that he is a hard-headed business man."

"Well, even so, he's a gentleman, I hope," declared the young man somewhat fiercely.

"Of course, he is. Don't you dare to insinuate that he isn't, Steve Barton," cried Gertrude indignantly. "I think you are just horrid for making such a remark. He's a gentleman; but that won't prevent him opening that letter."

"Gentlemen don't open and read other people's correspondence," declared Steve bitterly.

"Well, they've got a right to under certain circumstances, I guess," retorted the girl. "When that letter is returned with word from the post-office that it is improperly addressed, father will naturally suppose that it is a business letter sent out from his office. He is bound to open it to find out what it is. It is vain to hope that he won't read it, Steve, dear."

"Well, let him read it," cried the young man desperately, after a long pause. "What do we care if he does, Gertie? He's got to find out that we are engaged sooner or later. He might as well learn it this way as any other. You know, girlie, I was opposed to this secrecy from the very first. It didn't seem square or manly to get engaged on the sly. It was only your entreaties which prevented me from going to him and telling him that we are determined to marry each other. Let him read that letter and learn the truth."

"Oh, no! He must not find out about our engagement," cried the girl in terror. "You don't know father, Steve. He is a perfect dear in some respects; but he is the most stubborn and determined man in the world.

"He has told me that he doesn't like you. He would never give his consent, and he would insist upon my breaking our engagement."

"You could refuse to do so, Gertie. You *would* refuse, wouldn't you, little girl? You wouldn't let him, or anybody else, separate us, would you, dear?"

"Well, of course, it would break my heart to have to give you up; but I am terribly afraid of father. When he starts out to get his own way he generally comes pretty near having it. He is very resourceful, too. I am afraid he would find means of preventing us from seeing each other again.

"No, no, Steve. He must not learn of our engagement for another year. I shall be of legal age then, and better able to do as I please."

"Well, I don't see how we are going to prevent him from learning of it now," retorted the young man with a bitter laugh. "That fatal letter doubtless is already on its way to your father's office. It is now just noon. It ought to reach him by three this afternoon at the latest. He's bound to get it."

"You must prevent him from getting it, Steve," declared the girl suddenly. "You must prevent it reaching him."

"*I* prevent it!" gasped the young man. "What a queer proposition, little girl! How on earth am I going to accomplish such an impossibility?"

"I don't know how. But you must find a way. You are generally very resourceful and ingenious, Steve. Yes, you are, dear. You know you are. You must think of a way to prevent father from getting that letter."

"Well, I thank you for the compliment, little one, and I appreciate the faith you have in me: but really you are crediting me now with more cleverness than I possess. I can't conceive of any way of stopping your father from connecting with that fatal missive," and Steve gave a rueful laugh.

"You *must* find a way, Steve, dear. I don't care how you do it, but it must be accomplished. If you love me you will manage it—somehow."

"I might set fire to the post-office, and thus destroy that letter before they have a chance to deliver it," remarked the young man in the dark tone of a villain in a melodrama.

"Would you really go to that length, Steve? Wouldn't it be awfully dangerous?" inquired the girl anxiously.

"Oh, yes. I must admit that there would be plenty of danger connected with the job. The penalty for arson is very severe. I'd be caught, probably, and have to spend nearly all the rest of my life in jail.

"Besides, even if I set fire to the post-office the plan would not be certain of success. The fire department in all probability would arrive on the scene, and put out the flames before they consumed the letters."

"Well, of course, I wouldn't dream of letting you undertake anything so desperate," declared Gertrude hastily. "Can you not think of some other way, dear?"

"I might wait outside your parent's office, waylay the letter-carrier, knock him down, and take that letter from him before he has a chance to deliver it."

"Wouldn't you be caught and punished?" asked the girl timorously.

"Yes. I suppose I would. I don't think I'm exactly cut out for a highwayman. I'd probably bungle the job, and be nabbed red-handed; and I guess the punishment for robbing Uncle Sam's mail is even more dire than the penalty for arson."

"Well, I certainly wouldn't permit you to attempt it," declared Gertrude hastily. "Can't you think of some way not quite so violent and lawless, Steve?"

"No, I can't. I'm absolutely at my wit's end. Maybe you can suggest something, little girl."

Gertrude shook her head.

"I wish I could; but I'm only a girl, and quite inexperienced in such matters."

"Well, I can't boast that *I've* had a whole lot of experience at bucking up against the United States postal system," retorted the young man. "You're setting me the hardest problem I've ever had to tackle, Gertie."

"But there must be *some* way," insisted the girl with a sigh. "You're so awfully clever, dear, that you really ought to be able to think of one."

Steve sighed.

"Your good opinion of me is very flattering, my love, but I'm afraid I must prove unworthy of it in this case. Let us resign ourselves to the unpleasant fact that your father must get that letter, and prepare to face him bravely when he discovers our engagement."

"No! No! It must not be," cried the girl fearfully. "We *must* do something to prevent it. Ah, I know, Steve," clapping her little hands excitedly. "I've got an inspiration. We will go to the post-office right away, before they have a chance to send out that letter, and beg them to give it to us instead.

"Isn't that a great idea? And so delightfully simple, too. Really you ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir, for not having thought of it before."

But instead of sharing her sudden enthusiasm, the young man shook his head.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, little girl, but I'm sure that plan would not work. The post-office people would refuse. They would not dream of letting you or me have that letter."

"But, why not? The letter is addressed to *you*, and *I* wrote it. Surely we have a right to it. We ought to be able to make them see the matter in that light."

Steve shook his head again.

"It is true that the letter is addressed to a Steve Barton, but there are probably a dozen Steve Bartons in New York City. I should be quite unable to convince them that I am the person for whom the letter is intended."

"But surely they'd believe me if I told them that I wrote the letter," protested the girl.

"No, they wouldn't. Technically, that letter was sent by your father; because his name and address appear in the left-hand corner of the envelope. They'll return it to him, and to no other person."

"But we could explain just how that occurred," persisted the girl. "We could tell them that I used one of my father's envelopes, and forgot to cross out the printed name and address."

"Your explanation wouldn't affect them," affirmed Steve. "You see, Gertie, our postal system is like a great big machine. It moves with the regularity and precision of clockwork. Everything the department does is strictly formal, and in accordance with routine.

"They wouldn't break a single one of their rules to oblige you, or anybody else. You might as well appeal to that clock on your mantelpiece to skip a couple of hours. You'd stand just about as much chance of having your request granted."

"Oh, dear," sighed Gertrude tearfully. "Aren't they perfectly horrid? I buy quite a lot of stamps from them in the course of the year, too. They ought to be willing to scratch a point to accommodate such a good customer."

Steve laughed at this ingenuous remark.

"No," he declared gravely, "it's absolutely no use to attempt to get that letter while it is in the hands of Uncle Sam. That would be quite impossible.

"If anything is to be done, it must be done after the fatal missive has left the protection of the postal authorities. Ha! I think I have an idea. I've just thought of a plan that might work."

"Oh, what is it, Steve?" cried Gertrude eagerly. "I just knew that you would find a way. Tell me what it is."

"No. I can't tell you now," replied the young man firmly. "It is better that you should not know my plan until after I have tried it."

"Why, Steve, don't you trust me?" cried the girl reproachfully.

"Of course I do, you little goose, but there are reasons why I prefer to keep my idea a secret. To-night I hope to call here with that letter, and then I will explain to you how it was done."

"Is it anything dangerous, Steve?" inquired Gertrude anxiously.

"No, I don't think so. I expect to get away with it without incurring much risk. I want you to give me some help, girlie. I want you to answer one or two questions."

"Certainly, dear."

"Well, first of all, where is your father's office located? I have never called on him down-town, you know."

"He is in the Sky-Scraper Building, Broadway, near Wall Street. His offices are on the twelfth floor."

"How many rooms does he occupy?"

"Two. One is his private office. The other is used by his help, you know."

"And do you know what his help consists of? How many employees has he in the office, I mean."

"Only two, a young woman stenographer, and an office-boy."

"Good. Very good," exclaimed Steve enthusiastically. "And do you know the name of the girl stenographer?"

"Yes. Her name is Mortimer—Miss Blanche Mortimer. She has been in my father's employ for several years."

"Has she a mother, do you know, girlie?"

"Yes, of course she has. What a queer question. What on earth makes you ask it?"

"Never mind why. I will explain everything later. Does Miss Mortimer live with her mother?"

"Yes. I believe the old lady is deaf. Miss Mortimer told me so once, I think."

"Very good. And the office-boy—do you happen to know his name, Gertie?"

"Yes. His name is Tommy Jones. He is the son of a poor widow in whom I am interested. I made father give him the position."

"Is he a bright boy?" inquired the young man anxiously.

"Yes. Father was telling me the other day that he is the smartest and most faithful office-boy he has ever had."

"Ah! I shall have to look out for Tommy Jones," muttered Steve. "I don't think I shall have much difficulty with the old man, or with Miss Mortimer, but I shall have to proceed very carefully with Tommy, I guess. He's liable to spoil everything. I've had past experience with office-boys."

"What on earth do you intend to do, Stevie?" inquired Gertrude, her curiosity greatly piqued by his mutterings.

"You'll learn later. I must leave you now, Gertie. I haven't a minute to lose. That letter will probably be delivered within three hours, so I cannot afford to waste any time. I must start at once."

He took a penknife from his pocket and, without asking permission, walked over to the telephone and ruthlessly cut the wires which connected the receiver with the body of the instrument.

"Why, Steve!" gasped the girl, astonished at this act of vandalism. "What on earth are you doing that for? You have put our telephone out of business."

"I know," he answered grimly. "That's what I wanted to do. It's part of my plan. You must excuse the liberty I've taken, girlie. Don't on any account allow the telephone company to repair that wire until you hear from me again. If that wire is restored to working order it is likely to spoil everything. Good-by, dearie. I'm off."

He had kissed her and departed before the much-mystified and greatly worried girl could utter another word.

II.

THREE hours later Tommy Jones, office-boy of old Joshua Downie, Gertrude's father, entered his employer's private office.

"You're wanted on the phone, sir," he announced.

"Who wants me?" inquired old Downie, who was sitting at his rolltop desk going over some important correspondence.

"Party wouldn't say, sir. He says he wants to talk to you personally, and that it's a case of hurry."

Grumbling at the interruption, old Downie walked to the telephone in the outer office, and put the receiver to his ear.

"Hallo! Who is this?" he shouted into the transmitter. "Yes, this is Mr. Downie. What do you want? What's that you say? Good Heavens, no! It can't be true."

Miss Mortimer, his stenographer, looked up from her typewriter, and glanced at her employer anxiously, startled by the note of alarm in his voice.

Mr. Downie put the receiver back on the hook and turned to her excitedly.

"Miss Mortimer, get me my house on the wire, quick. Tommy, bring me my hat and coat. Some person has just called up to inform me that my house is on fire. He says that it is burning furiously. It may be some fool's practical joke. See if you can raise my daughter on the wire. Hurry."

The young woman hastily went to the telephone and called up Mr. Downie's residence. She knew the number offhand, and did not have to take time to look it up in the telephone directory.

For five minutes she held the wire, while her excited employer impatiently paced up and down the office.

Then she turned to him anxiously.

"I can't raise them, sir. Central says she doesn't get any answer to her call," she said.

"Good Heavens! Then it must be true. My house really must be burning. Otherwise they'd be somebody there to answer the phone. I'm going up-town at once, Miss Mortimer."

He rushed out of the office and frantically signaled one of the descending elevators.

"Gee-whiz!" exclaimed Tommy Jones, after his employer had gone. "The boss was excited, wasn't he, Miss Mortimer? I never saw him so rattled before."

"I guess you'd be rattled too, Tommy, if your house was on fire," com-

mented Miss Mortimer quietly. "I do hope the flames won't do much damage."

"Oh, I guess the firemen will put out the blaze before it amounts to much," replied the office-boy confidently. "If it really is a good fire, I wish I was up there to see it. I ain't never seen a big blaze—never in my whole life."

"Oh, Tommy, how can you talk in that unfeeling way!" exclaimed the stenographer reproachfully. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Go on. Whatcher tryin' to give me," retorted the boy. "I ain't said anything unfeelin'. All I said was that if it *is* a big blaze, I'd like to be there to see it. Nothin' wrong about that remark, is there?"

"Well, I hope it isn't a big blaze—for Mr. Downie's sake," declared the young woman.

"So do I, of course," returned the boy. "I guess the boss can afford to have his house burn down though. Reckon it won't make much difference to him, he's so awful rich. But I hope his daughter is safely out of the burning building. That's what I hope. I wouldn't like anything to happen to her. No, indeed. She's a peach and a thoroughbred. Ever see the boss's daughter, Miss Mortimer?"

"Of course I have. I, too, hope that she is quite safe. It would be terrible if she was in the house when the fire broke out. I hadn't thought of such a terrible possibility before you mentioned it, Tommy."

"It takes us men to think of such things," replied the youngster with an air of superiority. "Well, sir, what can I do for you?"

This last sentence was addressed to a good-looking, well-dressed young man who had burst into the office somewhat excitedly.

"Which is Tommy Jones?" inquired the young man breathlessly.

"That's me, of course. Didn't suppose it was the lady, did you?" retorted the office-boy witheringly.

"Well, Tommy," said the visitor, "Mr. Downie, your employer, wants you to hurry up-town immediately. His house is on fire, and he thinks he may need your assistance. He says you're to get up there just as quickly as you can."

"Huh! How do you know?" exclaimed Tommy suspiciously. "The boss only left here himself a few minutes ago. How do you know that he wants me up there?"

"I met him on the street just as he was getting into a taxicab," replied the visitor readily. "He called to me and asked me if I would do him a favor and come up here to give you that message. He said that it had just occurred to him that he might be able to use you. You'd better hurry."

"What do you think about it, Miss Mortimer?" inquired Tommy, still inclined to be a trifle suspicious.

"Oh, I think you had better go, of course," declared the young woman. "This gentleman couldn't have any object in telling you this if it wasn't true. Hurry up, Tommy! Mr. Downie will probably be able to make good use of your services. Here's your car fare."

"Think I can safely leave the office in your care?" inquired Tommy anxiously.

"Of course you can," laughed the young woman. "Hurry, now. By the way, when you get up there, you might call me up on the phone, if you get a chance, and let me know about the fire—I'm terribly anxious."

The office-boy seized his cap and hurried out. The good-looking young man also took his departure. Miss Mortimer resumed her work at the typewriter.

"Dear me," she sighed. "I do hope the fire isn't a bad one."

Ten minutes later the telephone-bell rang, and she hurried to the instrument with a beating heart, thinking that it might be tidings about the conflagration.

"Hallo," came a man's voice over the wire. "I want to talk to Miss Blanche Mortimer. Is this she?"

"Yes. I'm Miss Mortimer," replied the young woman eagerly. "What do you wish, please?"

"Your mother wishes you to come home immediately, Miss Mortimer," continued the man's voice. "Something very important."

"Oh, dear! What has happened? Is she hurt? Is she dead? Tell me quick," gasped the startled girl.

"No, no! Your mother is alive and well. Don't be alarmed," declared the

man's voice reassuringly. "There is no reason for you to worry. Everything is all right; but your mother wants you to come home right away for a reason that cannot very well be explained over a telephone."

"But if she is all right, can't she wait until I come home to-night at the usual hour?" protested the young woman. "It is really quite impossible for me to leave the office just now."

"She wants you home immediately," insisted the masculine voice. "It is a matter of the greatest importance. I really think that you will regret it exceedingly if you don't come at once."

"Well, can't you give me some idea of what mother wants me for?" exclaimed Miss Mortimer. "This summons is really very extraordinary. Won't you tell me— Hallo! Hallo! What's the matter, Central? Why did you cut me off in the middle of a sentence? I shall complain to the manager. Not your fault? The party at the other end disconnected, you say? Dear me, this is really very extraordinary. I wonder what it means."

For five minutes she paced agitatedly up and down the floor.

"Mother realizes how difficult it is for me to get away from the office during working hours," she muttered. "She wouldn't have sent for me unless it was something of the greatest importance.

"That man said she was all right; that nothing had happened to her— What, then, can have occurred to require my presence at home? I simply can't imagine.

"Well, anyway, of course I can't go. I can't leave this office all alone. I must wait until either Mr. Downie or Tommy returns from the fire. It is simply impossible for me to go now."

She continued to pace the floor in a state of great excitement.

"That man said that everything was all right—that there was no reason for me to worry. If that is the truth, it can't be bad news which has prompted mother to send for me. What, then, can it be? Gracious! I am consumed with curiosity."

And in the end curiosity won out. The mystery of that telephone message constituted a lure which was irresistible.

"I can't understand it," murmured Miss Mortimer; "I simply must run home for a little while and find out what it all means. Perhaps I shall be able to get back before Mr. Downie returns. At any rate, I must take the chance. I can't stand this uncertainty any longer. And, besides, the man said that I should regret it exceedingly if I did not go at once."

It did not occur to the simple, confiding young woman to doubt the authenticity of the telephone message she had received. The fact that she had been summoned by a strange masculine voice had not aroused her suspicions in any way.

Her mother being stone deaf, and therefore, of course, unable to use the telephone herself, it seemed to her quite natural that the old lady should have requested somebody to telephone for her.

As Miss Mortimer reached the ground floor of the big office-building, she noticed the nice-looking, well-dressed young man who had brought the message to Tommy from Mr. Downie.

He was standing in the lobby near the elevator-shaft, and as she passed him a smile of satisfaction and triumph played over his features.

Miss Mortimer did not see this smile, however, and she went on her way quite unsuspecting.

As she passed out of the front door, the young man stepped into one of the elevators and alighted at the twelfth floor.

He walked down the long corridor, and as he stood in front of a closed door which bore the legend "Joshua Downie" on its glass panel, he heaved a sigh of profound disappointment.

"Great guns!" he gasped. "I overlooked this! What an idiot I am. I might have guessed that the last one out would close and lock this door. I ought to have asked Gertie if she had a duplicate key to her father's office. After succeeding admirably up to this point, can it be possible that I am going to fail after all, just because of this one little hitch?"

One of the elevators stopped at the twentieth floor, and the grilled iron gate opened and closed with a click.

A gray-uniformed letter-carrier, with

a bundle of mail in his hand, had stepped from the car and entered an office at the other end of the corridor.

At sight of him a look of despair passed over the young man's face, and he gritted his teeth and glared at the closed door in front of which he stood.

"I must find a way to overcome this obstacle," he muttered. "And I've only got about four minutes. That letter-carrier will be here by that time."

A piece of paper had been pasted on the glass panel of the door. On it was written, in a large, bold, feminine hand: "Back in Thirty Minutes."

Miss Mortimer had taken the precaution of pasting this notice on the door before she left.

"If only I had a skeleton-key, or knew how to pick a lock?" sighed the young man. "All that I have accomplished is rendered useless because of this closed door."

In a fit of desperation, he suddenly seized the door-handle and turned it. Then he uttered an exclamation of mingled surprise and delight.

The handle yielded to his twist. The door opened. Miss Mortimer had not locked it. She had purposely failed to do so because she was not sure that her employer had his key with him. She had relied upon the notice on the door to keep intruders from entering the unguarded office.

"What a rare piece of luck!" gasped the young man joyfully, as he entered, leaving the door wide open behind him.

He removed his hat and coat, and hung them on a rack on the wall of the outer office. When the letter-carrier entered the office, two minutes later, the young man was sitting at the typewriter, pounding away at the keys as busily as if he had been regularly employed there.

"Good afternoon!" exclaimed the letter-carrier cheerily. "Hallo! You're new here, ain't you? Where's the young lady that always sits at that machine?"

"I'm taking her place," replied the young man, truthfully enough.

"Well, here's some mail for you," said the letter-carrier, handing him five letters. "There's one here that was improperly addressed, I guess. They couldn't find the party it's addressed to, so they've sent it back."

The young man seized the letters eagerly, and still more eagerly selected the envelope to which the mail-man had referred, placing the other letters upon a desk.

After the carrier had departed, the young man eagerly tore open this envelope, hastily perused its contents, placed envelope and letter in his pocket with a satisfied smile, donned his hat and overcoat, and walked quickly out of the office, quietly closing the door behind him.

"Eureka! I have succeeded!" he chuckled. "My plan has worked to perfection. Gertrude will be delighted."

III.

HALF an hour later, old Joshua Downie returned, a flush of anger upon his severe countenance.

"If I could catch the rascal who telephoned me that my house was on fire, I'd make it hot for him!" he growled savagely, as he turned the handle of his office-door and entered.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, as he walked from his outer office to his private sanctum. "Nobody here. Miss Mortimer and Tommy both away! What the dickens does this mean? I've told them both a hundred times never to leave the place unattended. They shall both hear from me when they come back, I promise them."

A little later Tommy Jones sauntered in, whistling blithely as he entered.

"Come here, you young villain!" growled his employer. "Where the dickens have you been? What do you mean by going away and leaving this office to look out for itself? Where's Miss Mortimer? Answer me, you young villain."

"I ain't a villain, boss," declared the boy resentfully. "I only did as I was told. I got your message, and I hurried up-town to your house, as you ordered me to. I couldn't see you, and I couldn't see no fire in your house, so I came right back just as quick as I could."

"What do you mean?" thundered old Downie. "Don't tell me any lies, young man. I didn't send you any message. What are you talking about?"

"Didn't send me no message?"

gasped the boy. "Well, then, boss, all I've got to say is that I've been deceived. Yes, sir! Just after you'd left, a slick-lookin' guy came in here and said for me to follow you up-town right away—that you needed my services at the fire. He said you'd sent him up here with the message. That's where I've been, sir."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the old man. "This is really very remarkable. I wonder if you're telling me the truth."

"Yes, boss. Honest I am. I hope I may drop dead if I'm lying to you," declared Tommy earnestly. "You can ask Miss Mortimer. She was here when that guy came in and said you wanted me to join you up-town. She heard him."

"Humph! Where *is* Miss Mortimer?"

"I don't know, sir. She was here when I left. I don't know where she's gone. Maybe that slick guy has kidnaped her. Maybe that's why he got me out of the way."

Just then Miss Mortimer came in. She looked very white-faced and worried.

"Where have you been, young woman?" demanded her employer sternly.

"Oh, sir, please don't scold me," said the girl, trembling. "I know that I did wrong to leave the office; but some man telephoned me that my mother wanted me home at once on a matter of great importance. I feared something was wrong, so I just had to go."

"Well, did you find anything wrong when you got home?" demanded the old man sharply.

"No, sir. When I reached home my mother was surprised to see me. She hadn't telephoned to me at all or asked anybody to do so for her. I can't understand it at all," answered the young woman, beginning to cry.

"Can't understand it, eh?" snapped old Downie. "Neither can I. Don't cry, Miss Mortimer. I guess I'll forgive you this time. We've all been tricked by the same rascal, I guess. When I reached my house I found that it wasn't on fire at all. I wonder what his game was? What did he want to get us all out of the office for? Ha! I wonder if—"

He rushed hastily into his private room. Then he let out a roar which sounded just like the bellow of an angry bull.

"My gold watch and fob!" he shouted furiously. "I accidentally left them lying on this desk, and they're gone. That watch was worth four hundred dollars, and the chain another hundred. That rascal has stolen them! Telephone to police headquarters, Miss Mortimer, and ask them to send detectives around here at once. I'm going to get that scoundrel if it costs me a thousand dollars to do it."

"I'd know him again in a minute if I saw him," declared Tommy Jones.

Miss Mortimer went to the phone, and in a trembling voice summoned the police.

She had just accomplished this when the door of the office opened and the uniformed hall-man entered.

"Mr. Downie, can I see you for a minute, sir?" he asked.

"What is it you want?"

"Well, sir, there's been something mighty queer going on, and I deem it my duty to inform you about it.

"A short while ago you got a telephone-call that your house was on fire, I believe?"

"Yes, I did. What do you know about it?" demanded old Downie, looking at the man very suspiciously.

"I'll tell you what I know, sir. I was standing in the lobby on the ground floor, near the public telephones—my regular station, you know—when I noticed a young man enter one of the booths and call up your office. Although he closed the door of the booth, I could hear every word he said, and I heard him tell you that your house was on fire.

"A little later he got into one of the elevators and went up to your floor; and a little later still he went into the telephone-booth on the ground floor again, and once more called up your office.

"I listened again, and this time I heard him tell Miss Mortimer that her mother wanted her to come home immediately. Then, a few minutes later, he again got into the elevator and went up to your floor. I know he went to your floor, because I afterward inquired of the elevator-man.

"I didn't think anything of it at the time; but later on I got to thinking how

queer it all was, and I thought maybe something was wrong, and that I'd better tell you about it."

"You've done quite right, and I'm much obliged to you," said old Downie. "Something *is* wrong. I've lost a gold watch and fob worth five hundred dollars. They've been stolen from my desk. That villain lured us all out of the office, and then came up here and robbed me. Can you give me a description of the fellow?"

"Yes, sir. I think I can," replied the hallman, and proceeded to do so.

"That's him!" cried Tommy Jones excitedly. "That's him to a T, ain't it, Miss Mortimer? It's the same guy what came up here and told me that you wanted me up-town, boss."

"We must catch him," declared old Downie grimly. "I wonder how long it will take the police to get here? They've got to get him. I'm determined to have him caught and dealt with according to law."

"Perhaps this will help you and the police to catch him, Mr. Downie," said the hallman, producing a little brown leather memorandum-book. "The young man left this lying on the table in the telephone-booth the last time he called up your office. It may prove to be a good clue."

Old Downie seized the book eagerly and perused its contents. On the fly-leaf was written:

STEVE BARTON:
15 West Forty-First Street, New York City.

Inside the book were several little entries of a personal nature. On the last-used page was scrawled in pencil:

Downie's Office, Sky-Scraper Building, 20th floor.
Name of office-boy, Tommy Jones; name of stenographer, Miss Blanche Mortimer.

"Ha!" exclaimed the old man excitedly. "These entries speak for themselves, of course. This memorandum helped the villain to work his rascally trick. You are right, my man; this is a most valuable clue."

"This book appears to belong to Steve Barton, and Steve Barton is responsible for the larceny of my watch and fob. I know the young scoundrel. He used to be sweet on my daughter, until I forbade her to have anything more to do with him. I always disliked him. He always struck me as being such an unmitigated ass. Now, it appears that he is a rogue as well as an ass.

"Well, he shall suffer for this. I'll hand this book over to the police, and they'll put Mr. Steve Barton behind iron bars, I reckon."

Ten minutes later two detectives from the precinct station-house arrived and, after hearing all the facts from Mr. Downie and examining the brown leather memorandum-book, agreed that there seemed to be sufficient justification for the arrest of Steve Barton.

They found him at home at the address written on the fly-leaf of the leather note-book.

He unsuspectingly admitted that the little book was his property, and then they informed him that he was under arrest.

"What for?" gasped the young man, turning pale.

"For the larceny of a watch and fob belonging to Mr. Joshua Downie," replied one of the detectives. "You went up to his office to-day, and stole the watch and fob from his desk. 'Tain't no use to attempt to deny it, young feller, for we've got you dead to rights. You must come along with us."

They took Steve to a station-house, and notified old Downie of his arrest.

The old man hurried to the police-station accompanied by Tommy Jones, Miss Mortimer, and the hall-man of the Sky-Scraper Building.

"That's him!" cried Tommy excitedly, as he gazed at the prisoner through the cell-bars. "That's the guy who gave me that fake message, boss. I'd know him among a hundred."

"That's the man who called you up on the phone and told you your house was on fire, Mr. Downie," said the hall-man. "I'm absolutely positive of it."

Miss Mortimer said nothing; but she looked at the young man half reproachfully, half sadly, and seemed to be undergoing a struggle to keep back her tears.

"So, you're a thief, are you, young man?" growled old Downie, glaring at the prisoner. "I guess I did well to forbid my daughter to have anything to do with you."

"Mr. Downie, I beg you to listen to me," pleaded the young man earnestly. "I swear to you that I am not a thief. I am innocent of this charge."

"Oh, no, you're not. It's useless for you to deny it. You've heard this boy and this man positively identify you. What's the use of lying any more?" snapped the old man contemptuously.

"Mr. Downie, I'll admit that I called you up on the telephone and told you that your house was on fire. I'll admit also that I lured your boy and this young lady from your office by false messages, and I'll admit that I entered your office afterward; but I swear that I did not steal your watch and chain."

"That's a most ridiculous statement," snapped old Downie. "Your admissions convict you of the crime. If you didn't steal my watch, perhaps you'll explain why you lured us all away from the office, and why you entered after we had all gone."

"Yes, sir. I will explain that," replied the prisoner eagerly. "I did it because I wanted to—"

He stopped short suddenly; his face turned deathly white; cold moisture appeared upon his brow. It had suddenly occurred to him that he could not tell the truth without implicating Gertrude in the matter.

"I guess I don't care to explain why I did it," he stammered. "But I swear to you that I am no thief. I went there to get something that belonged to me; that is all I can tell you."

IV.

WHEN Joshua Downie reached his home that evening he said to his daughter: "Gertie, you remember that young man, Steve Barton, whom you used to be so sweet on, and whom I forbade you to have anything to do with?"

"Yes, father," replied the girl, trembling apprehensively.

"Well, he's in jail. I've had him locked up. He's turned out to be a thief—a desperate character. Let this be a lesson to you, my child, always to follow the advice of your parent. I always knew there was something wrong about that fellow. That is why I warned you not to have anything to do with him."

Gertrude uttered a little scream of horror.

"Steve in prison! Oh, father, father, what have you done! Steve is no thief."

"Oh, yes, he is," insisted old Downie. "He lured us all out of the office this afternoon, and stole my gold watch and fob from my desk during our absence. He has confessed."

"Confessed that he stole your watch—impossible!" gasped the girl.

"Well, he has confessed that he visited my office during our absence, and that he worked a rascally trick to get us out of the way. He denied that he stole the watch; but that's plainly a lie. If he didn't come there to steal, what the dickens did he come there for?"

"What does *he* say?" asked the girl eagerly.

"He hasn't got anything to say on that point. He says he doesn't care to explain why he visited my office after luring us all away by fake telephone messages. Of course, he can't explain it. He stole that watch all right, and he shall go to prison for it."

"No, he did not steal the watch," cried the girl excitedly. "I know why he visited your office, father, and I know why he refuses to explain. It is because he is a hero and wants to shield me; but I am going to tell you everything—for Steve's sake." And she bravely proceeded to tell her father about the incident of the misdirected letter.

"He went there to get my letter, that's all," she sobbed. "He worked that trick on you for my sake. And to think that you have thrown him into prison and accused him of theft! Steve Barton is no thief! He is the truest, noblest, best fellow that ever lived, and—I am going to marry him some day. There! The secret is out now, and I don't care, either."

"Going to marry him, eh?" shouted her father furiously. "You are going to do nothing of the kind. I tell you that the young scoundrel *is* a thief. Even if what you tell me about that letter is true, the fact remains that he stole my

watch. He may have gone there originally with the intention of getting that letter, as you say; but he must have seen the watch and fob lying on my desk, and was tempted to take them. If he didn't take them, who did?"

Before Gertrude could reply, the door-bell rang, and the maid-servant announced that a lady named Miss Mortimer was outside and wanted to see Mr. Downie on a matter of great importance.

The young woman stenographer entered the library—trembling and tearful.

"Oh, Mr. Downie," she sobbed, "I just couldn't hold out any longer. I had to come here to tell you. I can't see that unfortunate young man go to prison for something for which I am to blame. He is innocent. He did not steal your watch and fob. I took it."

"You!" gasped the old man, plainly horrified at this unexpected confession. "You a thief, Miss Mortimer! I can't believe it."

"No, no! Please don't call me that," cried the young woman wildly. "I am no thief. At least, I didn't mean to steal. Let me explain, Mr. Downie.

"When that telephone message came and I was told that my mother wanted me at home, I decided to take a chance and leave the office unguarded for a little while. Then I noticed your watch and fob lying on your desk, and knew that you had accidentally left them behind.

"I tried to close the desk; but the lock was broken. The desk would not shut. I was afraid to go out and leave such valuable articles at the mercy of anybody who might enter the office during my absence.

"So I decided to take the watch and fob with me for safe-keeping. I put them in my hand-bag, and on the car somebody stole the bag from me. I was afraid to tell you about it before, for fear you wouldn't believe my story and would think that I deliberately stole the watch; but now I can't see that young man punished unjustly, no matter what happens to me."

Of course, Miss Mortimer's confession resulted in the release of Steve Barton the next day.

"I'm sorry I did you an injustice, my boy," said old Downie to that young man. "I'm glad to find that you're no thief, since my girl seems determined to marry you.

"To be candid with you, my main objection to you as a son-in-law has been that I have always considered you a brainless ass. But that trick you worked to get possession of the letter was so confoundedly clever that I guess it's up to me to confess that I've done you an injustice in that respect also."

A TROLLEY MIX-UP.

By FRED H. KROG.

What happened to a sightseeing party when something went wrong with the current and the megaphone-man took a hand in the game.

EXCEPT the conductor and the motorman on the sightseeing trolley-car, there was only one man present. All the seats were filled with girls—all kinds of young girls—with an exception again, an austere, angular chaperon. She taught art at Tufts when she was not watching her charges on an outing.

Marion Wilton, one of the frill-and-furbelow sort of girls, with saucy black eyes, instantly fixed her attention on that solitary man.

"He's handsome, isn't he?" she whispered to Elizabeth Stanhope, who was her chum by virtue of contrasts, being gracefully slender and possessing soft brown eyes.

Before Betty had an answer ready, the car started; the man, who had been sitting on the front seat, rose and faced the girls.

"Look, Betty," Marion whispered, "he's going to smile."

But he didn't. Instead, he lifted a huge megaphone to his lips.

"We are now passing the house where

the Boston Tea Party was organized," he bellowed.

"There's a reason for that man," remarked Betty sourly.

"On your right," the man continued as the conductor collected the fares, "you see the house where Richard Mansfield served as a clerk. We are now passing the historic dwelling where Benjamin Franklin was born, and which is now a tailor-shop. Across the street is the Old South Church where he was baptized. That big building is the post-office."

"He has a splendid voice," Marion whispered.

"Perhaps," Betty answered, "if it was separated from that megaphone."

"Now," the man went on, "you see the old State House, with its gilded unicorn and lion rampant, which were thrown into the sea the night of the Boston Tea Party. And here the Boston massacre occurred. Tom Lawson's offices now overlook the ground. That is Faneuil Hall, with its gilded grasshopper—the Cradle of Liberty, which is now the city meat-market."

"I wonder," Betty remarked, "what species that grasshopper belongs to?"

"That reminds me," said Marion, "that your beetle is gone. I'm glad of it. If I ever have another roommate who has a mania for bugs—"

"There is the church," the man continued, "where the old sexton hung the lantern for Paul Revere."

And so the car bowled along out of Boston into the country through Somerville, remarkable because nothing ever happened there; and on to Lexington, where the bronze Minute-Man stands guard over the triangular common.

The car had proceeded some miles beyond Lexington, and Miss Chapman, the chaperon, had remarked that it looked very much like rain, when Betty and Marion resumed their discussion.

"The man," Betty remarked, "doesn't have so much to say."

"He looks interesting," said Marion. "I am going to speak to him."

"Chappy will see you," Betty hastily interposed.

"There are only two vacant seats between us and him," Marion replied. "I shall cough, anyway."

"You don't know who he might be," cautioned Betty.

"He can't eat me," Marion replied.

She started to cough when, with an unexpectedness that jerked the unsuspecting passengers off their seats, the car stopped.

"Wow!" Marion exclaimed. "That was sudden!"

The motorman was observed to reach over his head and pull something that instantly popped. He tried it again with the same result. Then he gave one of the two handles, which he always held in operating the car, a vicious jerk.

"We are stuck," Betty announced.

Now the motorman and the conductor walked around to the side of the car, and talked earnestly in low tones.

While they were holding this little palaver, the young man of the megaphone joined them.

The upshot of the whole thing was that the young man climbed into the motorman's place on the front platform. Here the motorman gave him some tools with which he removed the tin coverings of the long narrow boxes on which the controller-handles are mounted.

After filing and hammering in the depths of the boxes, and after the motorman had looked into them, and the conductor had done likewise, and Marion and Betty had stood up to see, the covers were put back.

"He's a man of action," Marion declared.

With a jocular air the young man took his place on the front seat, smiled affably, and announced that all anxiety might cease. The car would presently resume its way.

He was still talking when the car started.

There was a rasping, squeaking, grinding noise under the floor, and then with alarming suddenness the car moved, but in an opposite direction from that in which it had been running.

The rate at which it proceeded to back up caused the passengers to grip their seats. All the more so because the car at the time of the accident was mounting the brow of an unusually long and steep hill.

The man with the megaphone dropped that instrument, and bellowed some in-

coherent remarks to the motorman about controller-handles, reverse connections, and circuit-breakers.

The motorman was too busy to hear, being frantically engaged in turning the controller-handles this way and that.

When the car had gone about a hundred yards it very unexpectedly stopped again.

Now the young man and the motorman had another very long conference, after which the motorman climbed on the roof of the car. While he was sliding over its curved surface the car started down hill again, and then began climbing the grade with a vengeance. The motorman forgot his company, and swore.

During these antics of the capricious vehicle, the girls were busy finding things to hold on to, and screaming. Miss Chapman called on the conductor very peremptorily to stop the car at once. Each time it did she would order the girls to get off, and when they let go of their seats to obey her the car would start on another erratic spurt.

Moreover, it began to rain; one of those heavy, steady downpours from a solid gray sky that boded wet weather for hours to come.

Meantime the car stopped for a length of time that seemed to promise a rest. The motorman crawled down from the roof. Thereupon, he and the young man started another heated argument on the front platform.

It was plain that the crew had lost confidence in any further interference.

"Who are you, anyhow?" the motorman was heard to yell.

"My name is Goodwin—John Goodwin," the man of the megaphone replied.

"What do you know about a motor?" the motorman next demanded.

By this time Miss Chapman, with consummate daring, had made her way to the scene of the argument.

"If you please," she said "can nothing be done?"

"If you'll pull the breaker," the young man declared, "and shut off the power—"

"Shut off the power!" the motorman fairly yelled. "Shut off the power! That's all that's holding the car on the hill-side. Do you know where we'd land if I shut off the power? We'd slide down this hill, jump the track at the bottom, and wind up in a wreck."

"Maybe," said a voice behind Miss Chapman, "we could push it along."

The chaperon wheeled around, and saw Marion and Betty, who had covertly followed her.

"Go back to your seats," Miss Chapman ordered.

"They are perfectly safe here," said John Goodwin smilingly, and launched at once into a long explanation of what was the matter.

But the motorman would not listen, and it finally ended in the young man, the girls, and Miss Chapman being ordered back to the seats.

In some manner the whole party understood, with many variations, that they were being held on the side of the hill by some kind of uncertain relation between the trolley-car and the trolley-wire. Rumors were also gaining ground that other cars at any moment might collide with this one at either end; that the car might burn up; that they might receive a fatal shock; that the handsome young man could help them if the motorman would let him, and that they were, on the whole, very near destruction.

All the while it rained steadily.

This particular trolley-car was one of those summer varieties with cross-seats and open sides. For protection from the rain the girls pulled down the curtains, and huddled as near to the center of the car as possible.

After some time, when the situation had begun to grow monotonous, the curtains were suddenly pushed aside.

"Professor Beecher!" Miss Chapman exclaimed.

The professor, a little weazened man with big steel spectacles, and a tin box slung on his shoulder, all dripping water, smiled affably, greeted the party, and took refuge in the car. Professor Beecher was an instructor in biology at Tufts.

Miss Chapman explained the situation to him.

"Very interesting," he remarked, "strange. I was caught in the meadows by this same rain."

"Look out!" John Goodwin yelled as something popped on the front platform. "The power is shut off."

The car started down the hill.

In the subsequent excitement some unfortunate girl grabbed Professor Beecher's tin box and, by banging it against a seat, knocked the lid off.

Out of the opening poured a stream of field vermin—bugs, beetles, worms, field-mice, caterpillars, and all their kin.

"Sit down," John Goodwin yelled in vain. "It was the rain — dampness — short circuit. Hold on."

The girls, oblivious of everything except the creeping, scurrying terror under their feet, climbed screaming to the seats. There they clung to each other, while the bugs crawled, and the car reeled.

All except Betty. She stood by the side of a seat from which Marion clung to her hair.

"They can't hurt you!" Betty screamed.

"That's right," said the young man.

As the car whirled down hill it gained in momentum. No one could see, nor tried to see, whither they were going.

Professor Beecher, on his hands and knees, slid to and fro under the seats with each lurch of the car, trying to recapture his specimens, and succeeding in crushing them.

At the foot of the hill the erratic car left the track with a care-free bound, and shot out into a reedy marsh, where it stopped in a shower of mud. When it settled the floor was covered with water, which in one way was an advantage, as it drowned the live things swarming there.

It took a long time to extricate Professor Beecher from his predicament under the seats, and then to restore any degree of calmness.

Meanwhile, Betty and Mr. Goodwin began talking about a big green bug which he held between his thumb and forefinger.

Marion, standing gingerly on the seat, alternately wept and laughed.

"Betty," she cried, "what are you talking about?"

Betty did not heed.

"This particular genus," she was saying, "is only found in damp places."

Whereat John Goodwin and Betty laughed deliciously.

"Betty," Marion screamed, "are you holding one of those things in your hand?"

"This poor fellow," John remarked, "has lost one leg."

"Pooh!" Marion turned her back on the pair. "I wonder if that fellow knows as much about bugs as he does about trolley-cars?"

So far as Betty and John Goodwin were concerned that party might still be marooned in the marsh. But the conductor and Miss Chapman hatched a scheme of rescue.

It was decided that the men of the party, except Professor Beecher, should wade back to the car-track, and find help in any shape or form possible.

After some minutes they returned with long boards, which were placed from the car to the track, and the work of rescue began.

When everybody had been dragged or carried off the car, the party started down the track.

By some chance or other Betty and John Goodwin were separated from the others, and walked some distance behind the party.

They were still talking about bugs, even though the rain poured down on them in torrents.

"There's a house," exclaimed John eagerly. "Before we go in," he went on, "may I call on you? You see, I am earning my way through the Boston Tech. by 'spieling' on these cars, and—"

He broke off his sentence with a yell and, reaching for his collar with both hands, turned and ran along the track in leaps and bounds.

Betty gasped as she saw him disappear in the rain. Had that interesting man suddenly gone mad?

Loath to lose an acquaintance so prosperously begun, she waited in the wet for a long time. But John Goodwin did not return. At last, the girl, disappointed, made her way to the house where the rest of the party were waiting.

Betty had barely rejoined her companions, when a car clanged through the rain, and the rescue was completed.

It was a day long remembered at Tufts.

About a week later Betty received a card bearing the simple legend: "John

Goodwin." So, he had come back after all.

At first she was inclined to refuse to see him; but curiosity got the better of her, and she descended the stairs and met him in the parlor.

After a long talk together, during which both of them felt quite ill at ease, Betty finally demanded: "What made you run away from us that day in the rain?"

"Must you really know?" John asked, coloring.

Betty nodded.

"You see," went on her companion desperately, "I had to. One of those blamed bugs was crawling down my back!"

SOMETHING DOING AT LAST.

By EDWARD P. CAMPBELL.

A sigh for excitement that was gratified in a fashion altogether unexpected.

"OH! Is that you, pard?"

The question came from a figure lurking in the shadow.

"It's me, Bill," flashing a dark lantern.

"Go easy with that glim. Do you want de cops to get wise there's something doing here to-night?"

"Ah, forget it! You speak of the cops as though they amounted to something. Why, man, they don't earn their car fare, and youse knows they don't have to pay a cent to ride. I'm getting tired of this game—"

"You don't mean to say you are losing your nerve?" eagerly questioned Bill.

"Fade, little one. Do you reckon Jim Hamlin, the crook, is getting weak-kneed in his old age? Nothing like that, son. You see, pard, it's this way. When I started in this business there was some excitement. A fellow was liable to get caught once in a while, or feel a bullet zipping past his ear, but the game is so tame now—it's like taking candy from a two-year-old. I'm thinking about cracking a safe in some police station. No doubt, though, it would turn out like all the rest."

"What you grumbling about? Ain't youse well fixed?"

"Well, I own the finest home around my part of the burg. But, come on; there's no use losing any more time. Sure you've got the right number?"

"Yep," replied Bill.

"Well, then, let's go through the formality of pinching the swag. I do hope somethin' exciting will turn up. If this sort of thing keeps on I'll have to go to Africa after big game."

An entrance was easily effected. Silently the two moved from room to room. Sounds of peaceful slumber could be heard up and down the hall.

"I guess we've cleaned them out. Let's beat it." With that Jim Hamlin climbed out of the window, his friend Bill close behind him.

The two made their way to another section of the city, where they hung out.

"Well, good night, Bill. We must think of some pastime with some ginger to it. This thing of having your own way, with no kicks comin', makes a fellow weary."

"So long, Jim," and Bill shuffled off down the street.

As he turned the corner he mumbled to himself: "He won't suspect me. That's one sure thing."

Meanwhile Jim Hamlin climbed wearily to his flat on the third floor. He was not satisfied with the evening's work. He threw open the door with a dejected air, and turned up the gas, then he staggered back—his face ashen.

Words for the moment utterly failed him—his eyes bulged from their sockets. Something exciting had turned up at last.

"Cleaned out, by gum—the low-lived sucker—may he choke! This is a scurvy trick to play me. After me toiling and risking my life for twenty years, then to have somebody else reap the harvest of my labors. It is too much."

James Hamlin was so taken aback at this unexpected turn of misfortune that he settled down and became a self-respecting, hard-working citizen.

Reading Worth While

ALL FOR 25 CENTS

The **WOMAN'S WORLD** is the greatest magazine in the world—greatest circulation, over two million subscribers, greatest list of contributors and greatest reading value. The Star Anniversary issue of the **WOMAN'S WORLD** contains the greatest list of contributors, and interesting features ever published in one issue of a magazine—see below. We will send this great issue free in accordance with the free offer below.

Jane Addams

"White Slave Trade of Today," by Edwin W. Sims, United States District Attorney in Chicago. An account of the White Slave traffic of today by the official who has already obtained the conviction of many hundreds of the miserable creatures engaged in this "business," and who, Mr. Sims says, "have reduced the art of ruining young girls to a national and international system." Do you know that "White Slave" Trappers search the city and country towns for their victims and with what wiles they lure fair girls away? Mr. Sims' words of warning and the facts he presents should be read by every mother and father in America. Mr. Sims was the government prosecuting attorney in the famous $29,000,000 Standard Oil Case.

"Wolves That Prey on Women," by Jane Addams of the Hull House, Chicago. Miss Addams is regarded by millions of thoughtful people as the foremost woman of America and is noted the world over for her untiring work for humanity. Every reader of this advertisement should read this warning article in the Star Anniversary issue of the **Woman's World** by Miss Addams.

"Why Girls Go Astray," by Edwin W. Sims—a second "White Slave" article strictly from the viewpoint of the lawyer, who finds himself called upon, as an officer of the law, to deal with this delicate and difficult subject. In this article Mr. Sims states he has received many letters from fathers and mothers since he commenced writing for the **Woman's World** whose fears and suspicions "were aroused by the warning that the girl who left her home in the country, went up to the city and does not come home to visit, needs to be looked up." These cases have been investigated and some of the results are published in his article "Why Girls Go Astray."

Maud Ballington Booth

"A Word About Wayward Girls," by Mrs. Ophelia L. Amigh, Superintendent Illinois State Training School for Girls. "The girl who has once gone wrong will never go right; there's no use trying to bring her back into the straight and narrow path again." Mrs. Amigh writes that this is what the world says. She proves that it is not the case.

"Binding Up the Broken Hearted," by Maud Ballington Booth of the Volunteers of America. An original article telling some interesting facts and experiences of her work among the men and women in penitentiaries.

"The Sins of Society," by Mr. Joseph Medill Patterson, author of "A Little Brother of the Rich," the greatest book sensation of the year. Mr. Patterson is an insider, and this article is a startling exposure of the follies and sins of the fashionable rich.

"The Sins of His Fathers," by Cyrus Townsend Brady, author of "A Little Traitor to the South," "Richard the Brazen," etc. A powerful story dealing with "The Sins of the Fathers visited unto the third and fourth generation."

"The Stage Struck Girl," by Elsie Janis, the youngest Star on the American stage.

"The Most Interesting Thing in the World," a fascinating symposium by George Ade, George Barr McCutcheon, Forrest Crissey and William Hodge.

"Cupid Well Disguised," by Anne Warner, author of "Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

"Time's Defeat" and **"The Empty Bowl,"** by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the "Poet of Passion."

"The Love Potion," by Edwin Balmer, the author of the brilliant "Wireless" stories which appeared in The Saturday Evening Post. Mr. Balmer appeared upon the literary horizon as a result of the first Collier's Prize Story Contest.

"The Warp and Woof of Romance," by Margaret E. Sangster, the most celebrated writer about affairs of the home on this continent.

"Homes and Near Homes in the Far North," by Rex Beach. This sketch-story in the **Woman's World** abounds with the rapid, moving-picture style of description, the surprising touches of nature, the soul-stirring pathos so characteristic of Mr. Beach's work. His serial stories for magazines bring him $10,000.00.

"The Old Homes and the New," by the Hon. Adlai E. Stevenson, former Vice-President of the United States. A comparison of the modern home life with that of fifty years ago.

"Should Girls Be Permitted to Marry Old Men?" by Rosetta.

"The Christian Science Faith," by Mrs. Clara Louise Burnham, author of "Open Shutter," "Jewel," "Leaven of Love," etc.

"The Belles of the Barbers' Ball," a new and heretofore unpublished song, words and music complete, by George M. Cohan, author of "Yankee Doodle Boy," "So Long, Mary," "Give My Regards to Broadway," etc.

"The Stories That Mother Told Me," by Harry Von Tilzer, new song with words and music complete by the composer of such big song hits as "Taffy," "All Aboard for Dreamland," etc.

"Love Making in Foreign Lands," by Frank L. Pixley, author of "King Dodo," "The Burgomaster," "Prince of Pilsen," etc.

Geo. Barr McCutcheon

Also, twenty-one additional contributions appear in the Star Anniversary issue by the following well known men and women:

(Continued on next page)

George Ade

Jacques Futrelle

Ople Read

Edwin W. Sims

CONCERNING FUTURE ISSUES

Every issue of the Woman's World during 1909 will be noteworthy. It is the marvel of the publishing world how a magazine of such unusual merit as the **Woman's World** can be supplied at the ridiculously low subscription price asked. Space permits mention of only a few of the features to be published in the next few issues:

How to Protect Our Girls

Harry A. Parkin, the assistant U. S. District Attorney of Chicago, who has had direct personal charge of the government's prosecutions against the White Slave Traffic, has written a powerful and practical article on this subject which will appear in the **March** number of the **Woman's World.** Mr. Parkin is the man who actually headed the raids which landed so many of the White Slavers in prison, the man who personally examined scores of the witnesses and prepared the evidence for the government's cases, the man who, as a faithful servant of the Department of Justice, has dug down into the filth and mire of this terrible traffic in order to stamp it out so far as federal laws provide for its extermination. The campaign of prosecution which he has conducted under the direction of the U. S. Attorney, Edwin W. Sims, has brought many things to light—among them this fact: Federal laws can protect only girls brought in from foreign countries or emigrants arriving here from other lands; **the protection of American girls is up to the States themselves.** The White Slavers are, broadly speaking, free to forage on home ground, while the emigrant girl is under the strong protecting hand of the government of the United States.

The State legislatures of this country are now in session. It is up to them to pass new laws which will drive the White Slavers from the home field. Very few legislators know what new measures are needed. Mr. Parkin does, for his work as a prosecutor has made him intimately familiar with every phase of this hideous traffic and with the legal loopholes through which these wolves make their escape.

The **Woman's World** proposes to do what it can to stop these holes, to plant thorns in the paths of those who live from the shame of our home-grown girls. Therefore, Mr. Parkin has been engaged to write an article suggesting the measures which ought to be passed by every State legislature of this country, this winter. More than this, his article will tell the mothers and fathers how to get action on the legislators of their various States, so that they **will get results** and pass the needed laws. Read Mr. Parkin's article and then **ACT**—and act quickly. He gets right down to brass tacks and tells what to do. If the fathers and mothers of this country will act on Mr. Parkin's suggestions—and it is easy to do so—the White Slave fiends can be driven into their holes or thrown into prison. Here is a chance for you to **do something** that will actually protect your daughters and your neighbor's daughters.

"Do you Admire the Ostrich?" by the editor of **Woman's World.**

"Terrors of the Way of Shame," a warning to mothers by Mrs. Ophelia L. Amigh, Supt. Illinois State Training School for Girls. A strong article based on facts.

"Better Education on the Sex Question," by Judge Julian W. Mack, soundest and most distinguished Jurist in the West and for years at head of Juvenile Court, Chicago, where he passed upon thousands of cases.

(*Continued on next page*)

"White Slavery in America," by Hon. Charles Nelson Crittenton, President National Florence Crittenton Mission, having branches throughout the United States and the only institution of the kind ever specially chartered by U. S. Congress. Mr. Crittenton has dealt with the victims of the White Slave Traffic for twenty-five years and is the greatest living authority on the subject.

"The International Monster," by Forrest Crissey, advisory editor **Woman's World** and a writer of wide reputation. If Mr. Crissey were permitted to tell in type what he knows about White Slavery he would cause your hair to stand on end. He will do as much, anyway, perhaps.

Besides the above strong reform treatises on the White Slave and other Evils, which will appear in the next few issues of **Woman's World,** the following great features and fiction, written expressly for **Woman's World,** will also appear during the early part of 1909:

An article for every home-dweller and true American by Hon. George von L. Meyer, Postmaster-General of U. S.

"The Rights and Wrongs of Women," by Hon. Robt. M. La Follette, U. S. Senator from Wis.

"Christian Marriage," by Cardinal Gibbons.

"Story of the Old Homestead," by Denman Thompson.

"Odd Family Life in Foreign Lands," by Burton Holmes.

"Saving Waste in School Years," by Hon. Edwin G. Cooley, noted educator.

"A Child of the West," by Charles N. Crewdson, noted author-salesman.

"The Bitter Cup," by Cy Warman, famous Canadian author and master of the short story.

"A Revolution in Practical Education," by Hon. Willett M. Hays, Asst. Secy. Dept. of Agriculture.

"God's Patient Poor," by Herbert Quick, well-known author.

Humorous Story, by Chas. Battell Loomis.

"The Gloaming Ghost," a new two part serial by George Barr McCutcheon. You will not be able to read any new short stories by Mr. McCutcheon unless you read the **Woman's World.**

"Six Mystery Love Stories," by Jacques Futrelle, author of "The Thinking Machine," "The King of Diamonds," etc.

"The Confessions of a Soldier of Fortune," three part serial by Roy Norton, author of "The Vanishing Fleets," etc. Also numerous short stories by the same author.

"Annie the Amiable," and two other short stories, by Rex Beach.

Three new stories by Cyrus Townsend Brady.

"The Modern Comic Opera," by George M. Cohan.

"The Romance of the Cave Man," six complete related short stories by Stanley Waterloo, author of "The Story of Ab."

"New Arkansas Traveler Stories," each complete in itself, by Opie Read, the originator of the Arkansas Traveler.

"A Maid of Millions," by one. How a girl who has unlimited money spends her life.

"What is Sweeter than Irish Music?" a new song by Chauncey Olcott, Irish Star and author of "Day Dreams," etc.

"Education by Machinery," by Robert B. Armstrong, former Asst. Sec. of the Treasury. "The Story of a Simple Life," by Maude Radford Warren. Two thrilling boy stories, "The Phantom Wolf," and "From the Neck of the River Thing," by the famous Chicago boy author, Dwight Mitchell Wiley. Articles and stories by Roswell Field, Elliott Flower, Henry M. Hyde and many others.

(Continued on next page)

Rex Beach

Roy Norton

George M. Cohan

Maude Radford Warren

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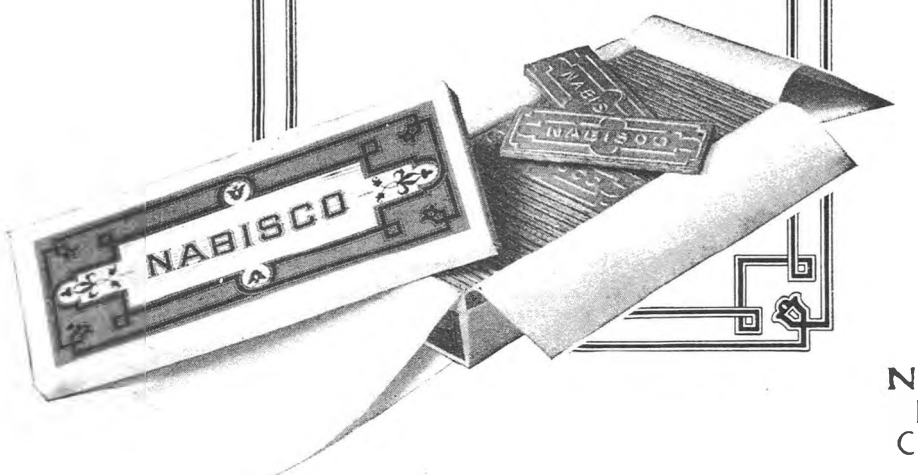

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For Sale by Paint, Hardware and Drug Dealers.

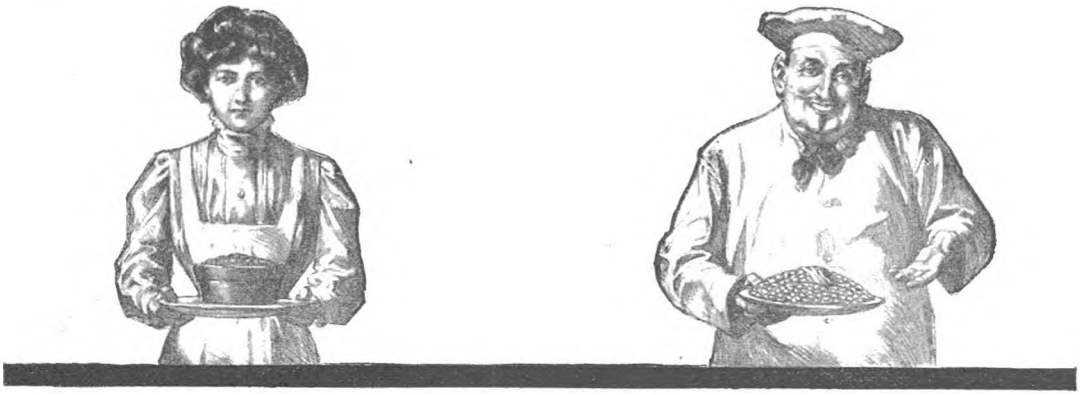
If your dealer does not keep JAP-A-LAC, send us his name, with 10c. to cover cost of mailing and we will send a free sample, quarter-pint can of any color (except gold, which is 25c.), to any point in the United States.

Write for illustrated booklet containing interesting information and beautiful color card. Free on request.

THE GLIDDEN VARNISH CO.

2408 Rockefeller Bldg., Cleveland, O., U.S.A.

Our Green Label Line of clear varnishes is the highest quality manufactured. Its use insures perfect results. Ask your paint dealer.



Your Way

You bake in a dry-heat oven. The top beans crisp, but the beans below never get half enough heat.

So your beans don't digest; they ferment and form gas. They are mushy and broken, while every bean should be whole.

The tomato sauce isn't baked in.

The dish is not very inviting. It is heavy and hard to digest. Your people don't want it often.

The result of your time and trouble has been to spoil Nature's choicest food. Yet it isn't your fault. You simply lack the facilities.

Our Way

We pay $2.25 per bushel to get the choicest beans grown—seven times what some beans cost.

We bake in steam ovens—in a heat of 245 degrees. We bake in small parcels, so the full heat goes through.

Thus all beans are baked alike—baked until they are mealy—baked so they all digest. Yet no beans are crisped, no skins are broken. The beans are nutty because they are whole.

We bake the tomato sauce in the beans, and get our delicious blend. Then we send the dish to you all ready to serve.

Van Camp's BAKED WITH TOMATO SAUCE PORK AND BEANS

If you knew what you miss—what your people are missing—you would serve this delicious dish.

Beans are 84% nutriment. They contain more food value than the choicest beef, yet cost not a third as much. They should form a daily dish.

It is a pity to spoil such a food as this simply through lack of facilities. Learn what the difference is.

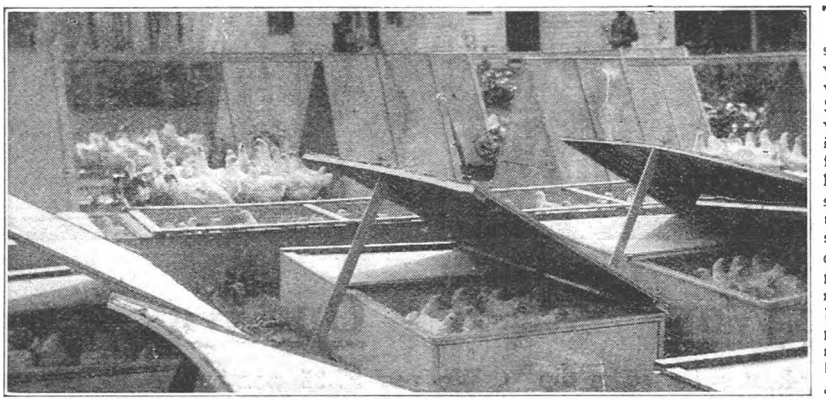
Three sizes: 10, 15 and 20 cents per can.

Van Camp Packing Company, Indianapolis, Ind.

a 11

A Living From Poultry on a City Lot

$1,500 IN TEN MONTHS FROM SIXTY HENS ON A CORNER OF A CITY LOT



TO the average poultryman that would seem impossible, and when we tell you that we have actually done a $1500 poultry business with 60 hens on a corner in the city garden 40 feet wide by 40 feet long, we are simply stating facts. It would not be possible to get such returns by any one of the systems of poultry keeping recommended and practiced by the American people, still it is an easy matter when the new PHILO SYSTEM is adopted.

The Philo System Is Unlike All Other Ways of Keeping Poultry

and in many respects is just the reverse, accomplishing things in poultry work that have always been considered impossible, and getting unheard of results that are hard to believe without seeing; however, the facts remain the same and we can prove to you every word of the above statement.

The New System Covers All Branches of the Work Necessary for Success

from selecting the breeders to marketing the product. It tells how to get eggs that will hatch, how to hatch nearly every egg and how to raise nearly all the chicks hatched. It gives complete plans in detail how to make everything necessary to run the business and at less than half the cost required to handle the poultry business in any other manner. There is nothing complicated about the work, and any man or woman that can handle a saw and hammer can do the work.

Two Pound Broilers in Eight Weeks

are raised in space of less than a square foot to the broiler without any loss, and the broilers are of the very best quality, bringing here three cents per pound above the highest market price.

Our Six Months Old Pullets are Laying at the Rate of 24 Eggs Each Per Month

in a space of two square feet for each bird. No green cut bone of any description is fed, and the food used is inexpensive as compared with food others are using.

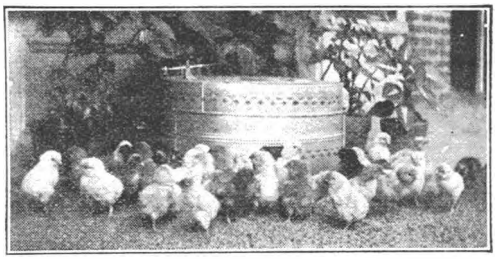
Our new book, the **Philo System of Progressive Poultry Keeping,** gives full particulars regarding these wonderful discoveries with simple, easy to understand directions that are right to the point, and 15 pages of illustrations showing all branches of the work from start to finish.

Don't Let the Chicks Die in the Shell

One of our secrets of success is to save all the chickens that are fully developed at hatching time, whether they can crack the shell or not. It is a simple trick and believed to be the secret of the Ancient Egyptians and Chinese, which enabled them to sell the chicks at 10 cents a dozen.

Chicken Feed at 15 Cents a Bushel

Our book tells how to make the best green food with but little trouble and have a good supply any day in the year, winter or summer. It is just as impossible to get a large egg yield without green food as it is to keep a cow without hay or fodder.



Our New Brooder Saves 2 Cents on Each Chicken

No lamp required. No danger of chilling, overheating or burning up the chickens as with brooders using lamps or any kind of fire. They also keep all the lice off the chickens automatically or kill any that may be on when placed in the brooder. Our book gives full plans and the right to make and use them. One can be easily made in an hour at a cost of 25 to 50 cents.

Send $1.00 and a copy of the latest revised edition of the Philo System will be sent by return mail. The latest edition has many pages of additional reading matter, and by ordering direct you are sure to get the latest and most approved book.

E. R. PHILO, Publisher,

305 Third Street. ELMIRA, N. Y.

A FEW TESTIMONIALS

Valley Falls, N. Y., Sept. 5, 1907.

It was my privilege to spend a week in Elmira during August, during which time I saw the practical working of the Philo System of Keeping Poultry, and was surprised at the results accomplished in a small corner of a city yard. "Seeing is believing," they say, and if I had not seen, it would have been hard to believe that such results could have followed so small an outlay of space, time and money. (Rev.) W. W. Cox.

Oct. 22, 1908.

P. S.—A year's observation, and some experience of my own, confirm me in what I wrote Sept. 5, 1907. The System has been tried so long and by so many, that there can be no doubt as to its worth and adaptability. It is especially valuable to parties having but a small place for chickens; seven feet square is plenty for a flock of seven. (Rev. W. W. Cox.

Ransomville, N. Y., Dec. 5, 1908.

Dear Sirs:—Last spring we purchased your book entitled "Philo System" and used your heatless brooders last spring and summer. The same has been a great help to us in raising chicks in the health and mortality. The chicks being stronger and healthier than those raised on the brooders with supplied heat. We believe that this brooder is the best thing out yet for raising chicks successfully. We put 25,000 chicks through your heatless brooders this last season and expect to use it more completely this coming season. We have had some of the most noted poultrymen from all over the United States here, also a large amount of visitors who come daily to our plant, and without any exception, they pronounce our stock the finest and healthiest they had seen anywhere this year.

Respectfully yours, W. R. CURTISS & CO.

Skaneateles, N. Y., May 5, 1908.

One article of the Philo System entitled "A Trick of the Trade," has been worth three times the amount the book cost. I saved on my last hatch fifty chicks which are doing nicely. W. B. REASE.

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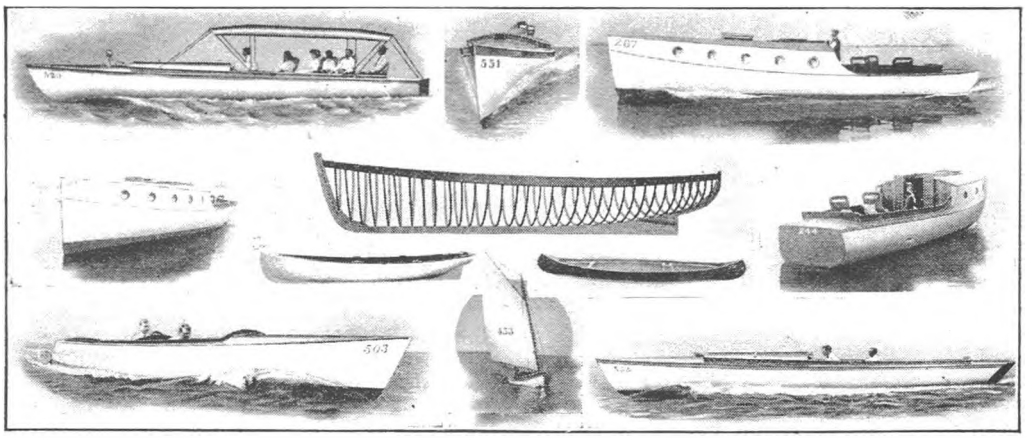
c13



Build Your Own Boat and Save Two-Thirds

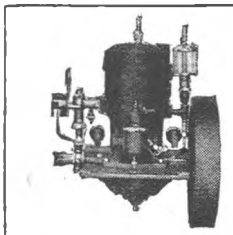
Anyone can put together my knock-down boats or build a boat from rough lumber, by using my exact size printed paper patterns and illustrated instruction sheets. I can sell you a boat for about one-third what a factory would charge. If you want to know how it can be done,

Send for my new 1909 catalog No. 22 today, showing 100 new models.

Each one embracing all the requirements of the thoroughly up-to-date pleasure boat—the result of twenty-three years' experience in building and sailing boats—from a paddling canoe to a large cruiser.

Eight years ago I originated the pattern and knock-down system of boat-building. It has revolutionized the boat-building business. Boats built by my system are now found in every civilized corner of the earth, and they have been built by amateurs at a saving of just two-thirds of what they would have cost if bought from a boat builder or factory. Right to-day there are more boats built by my system than in all the boat factories put together, and mostly by inexperienced men and boys.

Knock-down frames with patterns and instructions from $5.00 up.



My engines are best described in catalog No. 22, which also gives a combination discount when your order includes engine and K.-D. frame.

MY GUARANTEE
—You Take No Risk

I absolutely guarantee that you will be *perfectly satisfied* with everything you purchase of me, *or your money will be instantly refunded.*

C. C. BROOKS.

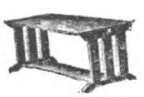
My new catalog quotes prices on knock-down frames, patterns, complete knock-down boats, motors, hardware and fittings, knock-down boathouses and completed boats ready to run.

In addition to our former lines, it shows speed, semi-speed, and family launches, of the "V-in," "V-out" and "V-plumb" stern types. Also a line of sea-going cruisers and light draught tunnel sterns, up to 45 feet in length, beams up to 9 feet.

I can supply you with the frame-work for your boat, shaped and machined, every piece fitted ready to put together, for less money than most lumber dealers would charge you for suitable rough lumber.

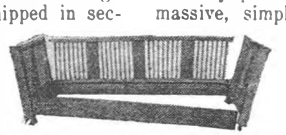
I can save you (1), the boat builder's profit; (2), labor expense; (3), big selling expense; (4), ¾ the freight.

Figure it out yourself.



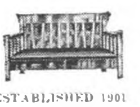
Put the "Knock-Down" Sections Together Yourself and Save 2/3

I can also save you two-thirds on high grade Mission furniture shipped in sections—not in pieces. Easy to put together. No tool work necessary. No skill required. Simply fit the assembled sections together in the grooves provided, apply stain furnished and the piece is finished.



As you receive it, with cushions made ready to drop in place. Just six joints to put together.

Every piece is of selected solid oak, massive, simple, and always in good taste, increasing in value with age, of a style that never changes. You save in dealer's profits, freight rates, finishing, crating, packing and factory costs.



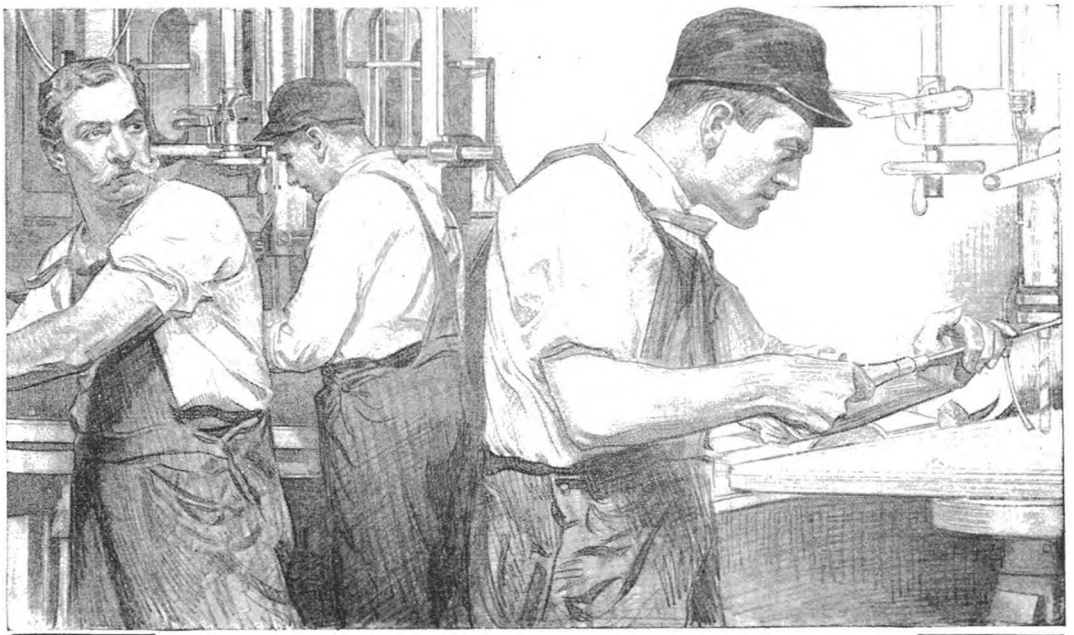
If interested in furniture only, send for catalog No. 8.

C. C. BROOKS, President

BROOKS MANUFACTURING COMPANY

604 Ship Street, SAGINAW, MICHIGAN, U. S. A.

Originators of Knock-Down System of Boat Building and Home Furnishing. ESTABLISHED 1901



Back to His Old Job

Promoted—Couldn't "Make Good"—Put Back at his Old Job—Humiliated—Confidence Gone—Opportunity Killed.

Suppose *you* were advanced—as indeed you hope to be—would you be prepared for your new duties—or would you make a "hit or miss" effort and end in dismal failure through *lack of training?*

The element of "failure" need never enter into your career if you have the special training such as the International Correspondence Schools of Scranton can impart to you in your spare time. Success will be doubly sure because I. C. S. training makes you an expert *at your chosen occupation.* Keeps you moving up. *Raises your salary.* Helps you to get both hands on a better position—where before you merely viewed it from a distance. *Makes you a Success!* By marking the attached coupon you will learn how you can be helped. Mark it now. Doing so costs you only the postage. Marking the coupon is in no way binding.

How You Can Compel Success:

You can quickly and easily put yourself in a position to earn more through I. C. S. help without leaving home or giving up your position. *There are no books to buy.* So long as you can read and write the I. C. S. has a way to make you successful.

About 300 students every month ***VOLUNTARILY*** report salaries raised through I. C. S. help. During January the number was 287

A postage stamp brings you the very information you need to break away from Failure and win Success. Is your future worth it? Does your ambition justify it? Then, by all means mark and mail the coupon ***NOW***—before you forget it.

SALARY-RAISING COUPON

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 806, Scranton, Pa.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for employment or advancement in the position before which I have marked X

Bookkeeper	Mechan. Draughtsman
Stenographer	Telephone Engineer
Advertisement Writer	Elec. Lighting Supt.
Show Card Writer	Mech. Engineer
Window Trimmer	Plumber & Steam Fitter
Commercial Law	Stationary Engineer
Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Civil Service	Building Contractor
Chemist	Architec'l Draughtsman
Textile Mill Supt.	Architect
Electrician	Structural Engineer
Elec. Engineer	Banking
	Mining Engineer

Name _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

C15

"NATIONAL" TAILORED SUITS

Made-to-Measure New York Styles Expressage Prepaid **$7.50 to $35**

Each "NATIONAL" Tailored Suit is cut to order from measurements sent by mail. Each suit is shipped express prepaid and with the "NATIONAL GUARANTEE TAG" attached—guaranteeing that if the suit does not fit perfectly you are to send it back, and we are to refund your money and pay express charges both ways.

Now we have over half a million pleased customers. Each one's suit is cut and made to order singly from measurements sent us by mail—and, wonderful as it may seem, only the smallest possible percentage ever require the least alteration.

We have been making suits to order in this way for Twenty-One Years. Our specialty is fitting ladies who are hard to fit. Is there then any doubt about our fitting you?

"NATIONAL" Style Book and Samples are FREE

Your "NATIONAL" Spring and Summer Style Book will show you fashion plates of all the really desirable New York Suits. We will send you a liberal assortment of samples from our 400 new materials for your selection. You make your own choice of style and material and we make you the suit AT OUR RISK.

This "NATIONAL" Spring and Summer Style Book also shows the following "NATIONAL" Ready-Made Garments:

Millinery	Tub Suits	Petticoats	Belts
Waists	Silk Dresses	Jackets	Corsets
Skirts	Lingerie Dresses	Rain Coats	Hosiery
Kimonos	Muslin Underwear	Plumes	Boys' Clothing

Misses', Girls' and Infants' Wear

One copy of this "NATIONAL" Style Book is YOURS—is intended for YOU alone. Won't you write for it to-day? If you also wish samples for a Made-to-Measure SUIT be SURE to ask for them. Samples sent only when asked for.

[*We pay the postage and express charges.*]

National Cloak and Suit Co.

247 West 24th St., New York City

Largest Ladies' Outfitting Establishment in the World

Mail Orders Only **No Agents or Branch Stores**

SECTIONAL "COME-PACKT" TRADE FURNITURE MARK

You CAN'T Be Fooled

"Come-packt" Sectional Furniture comes "in the white" and the finished sections are ready to put together. You see just what you get—and you get QUARTER-sawed WHITE Oak every time. No chance to disguise defects or substitute cheap woods. A few minutes only needed to fasten the sections and apply whatever stain you select—we include it free. It's a pleasure and a satisfaction to KNOW you have the best obtainable.

No. 1. $10.50 With Cushions.

$6.75 Direct to You. No. 306, Library Table Top 22 x 36 in.

And You Save OVER HALF

We manufacture and ship direct to you at lower prices than dealers pay. Why pay middlemen's profits, store rents, clerks' wages, etc., as well as high freights and costly packing—two more items that add to the PRICE, not the VALUE of store furniture. Try our way ONCE—that's the proof. "Your money back if you say so."

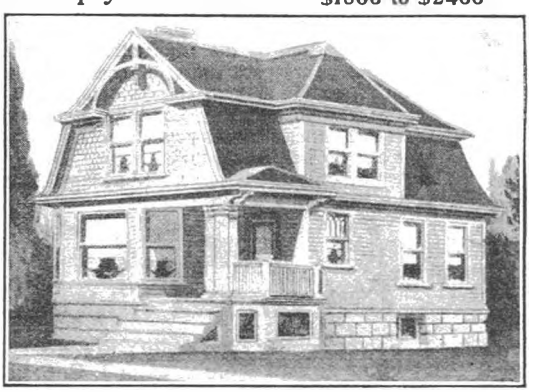
WRITE TODAY for free catalogue of 100 illustrations of handsome Library, Dining-room, Bedroom and Porch furniture.

"It comes in SECTIONS, not in pieces."

International Mfg. Co., 434 Edwin St., Ann Arbor, Mich.

Buy Daverman's Books and Build Cheaply and Well.

This House $1600 to $2400



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This is one of the **200** houses shown in our big book of plans, **"Modern Homes,"** with designs costing from $800 to $20,000, with every kind of dwelling in all forms of construction. Price of this great book is only **25c** and **14c** for postage.

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Positively the greatest bungalow book ever published at any price. Real California bungalows at reasonable prices. Value of this book $1, but we send it to you for only **25c** and **5c** for postage.

Cottages and Bungalows

A neat little book of 68 designs of cottages and small bungalows from $300 to $9,000. Price **25c** and **5c** postage.

"Art in Architecture," $1 per year. A magazine for the home with new plans every month and useful information.

J. H. DAVERMAN & SON, Architects

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One half actual size

An Innovation In the Firearms World!

The New .25 Caliber

COLT AUTOMATIC PISTOL

The Colt, caliber .25 Automatic Pistol, weight 13 ounces, is only 4½ inches long, and of flat, compact shape—just fits a man's vest, or can be carried in a lady's muff or hand bag.

It has the effectiveness of larger pistols, without their bulk.

Its metal-patched bullets, driven at high-velocity by smokeless powder, will penetrate four and one half ⅞ inch pine boards.

Shoots as fast as the trigger is pulled; ejects the empty shells and reloads automatically for each shot. Shoots straight and hits hard.

Equipped with three separate devices, either of which positively prevents accidental discharge.

A handy, reliable and practical pocket pistol; backed by the COLT guarantee for Quality, Strength and Durability. Unequalled for simplicity and rapidity of action. Perfect in balance and with a grip that fits the hand.

Just fits the Vest Pocket

See One at Your Dealer's

or, why not send for our New Catalog No. 15, just out?

It describes guaranteed Colt Revolvers and Automatic Pistols, in all desirable calibers and sizes, adapted for all purposes.

COLT Arms are fully guaranteed for use with *Smokeless* and other powders in standard, factory loaded ammunition.

Colt Patent Firearms Mfg. Co.

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My Boy!
Here's Your Chance

It's more than a chance—you can make it a certainty because it depends entirely upon yourself. It's your opportunity to rise to one of the countless positions open to the trained man and obtain a trained man's salary.

The man who sits in his private office and "hires and fires" and lays out your work was no more qualified to fill that position a few years ago than you are to-day. He saw *his chance* and made the most of it. He obtained his training and knowledge by study. You can do the same—the American School will help you.

Don't be afraid to mail the coupon, you won't be bothered by agents or collectors. Like all strictly educational institutions the American School depends, for growth, upon reputation and the success of its students.

Don't let a little thing like filling in and mailing a coupon stand between you and success, congenial work and more pay. *Accept your chance to-day.*

WE HELP MEN HELP THEMSELVES

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American School of Correspondence,
Chicago, U. S. A.:

Please send me your free Bulletin of Engineering information and advise me how I can qualify for position marked "X."

.....Electrical Engineer	.....Structural Draftsman
.....Draftsman	.....Heating and Ventilating Engr.
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.....Mechanical Engineer	.....Architect
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.....Municipal Engineer	.....Sheet Metal Pattern Draftsman
.....Railroad Engineer	.....College Preparatory Course

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

OCCUPATION.....

Argosy, 4-'09

I REMOVED MY
FRECKLES

I will show you how to remove yours

FREE

For years I tried every known remedy without success. Skin specialists and doctors said I would take them to the grave. I fooled them all.

I cured myself by a simple discovery. I will send you the prescription free if you will write for it. It took off my freckles and the freckles of thousands of others. It will remove yours. It will clear the worst complexion. Write today.

MRS. E. C. WHITE

P. O. Box 746 Dept. 137 Buffalo, N. Y.

Will You Accept This Business Book if We Send it Free?

Sign and mail the coupon below. Send no money! Take no risk!

One hundred and twelve of the world's master business men have written ten books—2,079 pages—1,407 vital business secrets, ideas, methods. In them is the best of all that they know about

—Purchasing	—Salesmanship	—Position-Getting
—Credits	—Advertising	—Position-Holding
—Collections	—Correspondence	—Man-Handling
—Accounting	—Selling Plans	—Man-Training
—Cost-keeping	—Handling Customers	—Business Generalship
—Organization	—Office Systems	—Competition Fighting
—Retailing	—Short-cuts and	and hundreds and hun-
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—Manufacturing	line and department	ness subjects.

A 9,95 -word booklet has been published describing, explaining, picturing the work. Pages 2 and 3 tell about managing businesses great and small; pages 4 and 5 deal with credits, collections and with rock-bottom purchasing; pages 6 and 7 with handling and training men; pages 7 to 12 with salesmanship; with advertising, with the marketing of goods through salesmen, dealers and by mail; pages 12 to 15 with the great problem of securing the highest market price for your services—no matter what your line; and the last page tells how you may get a complete set—bound in handsome half morocco, contents in colors—for less than your daily smoke or shave, almost as little as your daily newspaper.

We'll you read the book if we send it free? Send no money. Simply sign the coupon.

The System Co., 151-153 Wabash Ave., Chicago

If there are, in your books, any new ways to increase my business or my salary, I should like to know them. So send on your 10-page free descriptive booklet. I'll read it. 324

Name _____

Address _____

Business _____

Position _____

C70

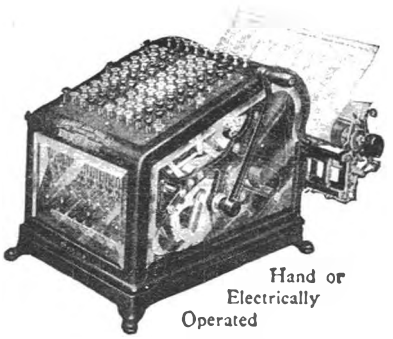
The Big Man in a Little Business

¶ There's a little town in Texas—a county seat, with 150 inhabitants. It has one fair-sized store, a bank and the county court house.

¶ The store, the bank and the county each bought a Burroughs Adding and Listing Machine.

¶ That illustration is given to show you that the big man in a little business, no matter what his surroundings, will avail himself of every opportunity to make that business grow to fit him and keep on growing with him. It's safe to bet that that kind of progressive spirit will build business in that county, in that bank and that store. And it goes to show that no matter how small a business is, big men and big methods are bound to make it bigger.

¶ No matter how small your business, or what its nature, whether you have only one bookkeeper or none, there is a



Hand or Electrically Operated

BURROUGHS

(Nine out of every ten adding and listing machines sold are Burroughs)

Adding and Listing Machine

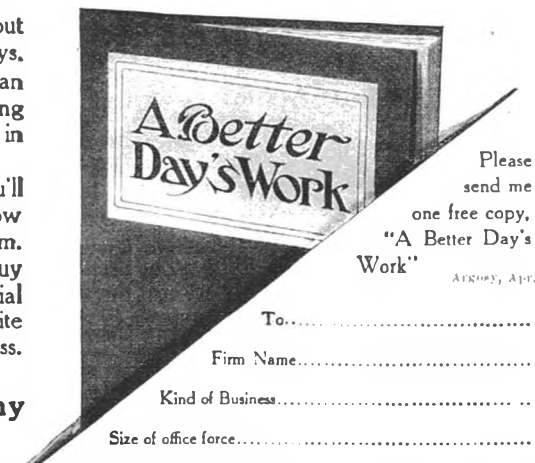
that will do your work, take the clerical details off your mind and give you a chance to **concentrate on the business-getting-and-keeping end of your business.**

Try a Burroughs on Your Own Business—FREE

¶ If then you find that you **can** get along without it, send it back and we'll pay the charges both ways.

¶ Our book, "A Better Day's Work," gives an interesting history of accounting from the beginning and contains many solutions you'll be glad to have in your library. And it's sent with our compliments.

¶ We'll send you a Burroughs on trial if you'll ask for it. We'll demonstrate it, show you how to handle it and how to apply it to your system. And remember you are under no obligation to buy or even rent. Give the Burroughs a fair, free trial—that's all we ask. Fill out the coupon or write to-day, stating the size and nature of your business.



Please send me one free copy, "A Better Day's Work"

Argosy, Apr.

To.....

Firm Name.....

Kind of Business.....

Size of office force.....

Address.....

Burroughs Adding Machine Company

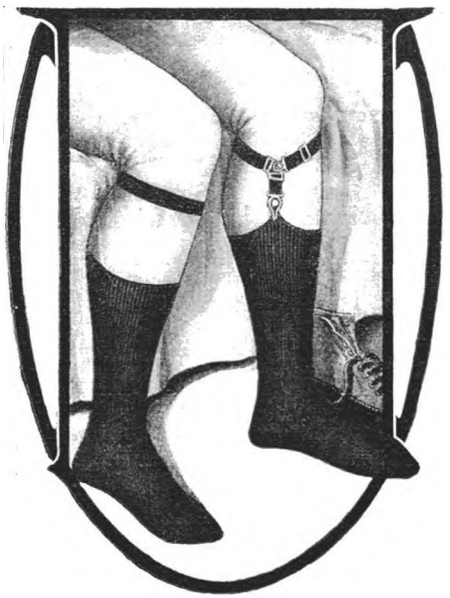
4 Burroughs Block, Detroit Michigan

412A

65 High Holborn, London, W. C., England

021

Brighton



FLAT CLASP

GARTERS

The flattest clasp, the surest grip, the strongest metal parts, the finest silk webs, the lightest weight, the best work ever put on a man's garter. Perfect in support, absolute in comfort, greatest durability. *Unconditionally guaranteed.* At your dealer's, **25c** or sent direct from the factory on receipt of price.

Made of the costliest webs, made by the most skilled workers, made for the longest and most satisfactory wear —all lengths and weights—*absolutely guaranteed.* At your dealer's **50c** *a pair*—or sent direct.

PIONEER SUSPENDER CO.
718 MARKET ST., PHILADELPHIA
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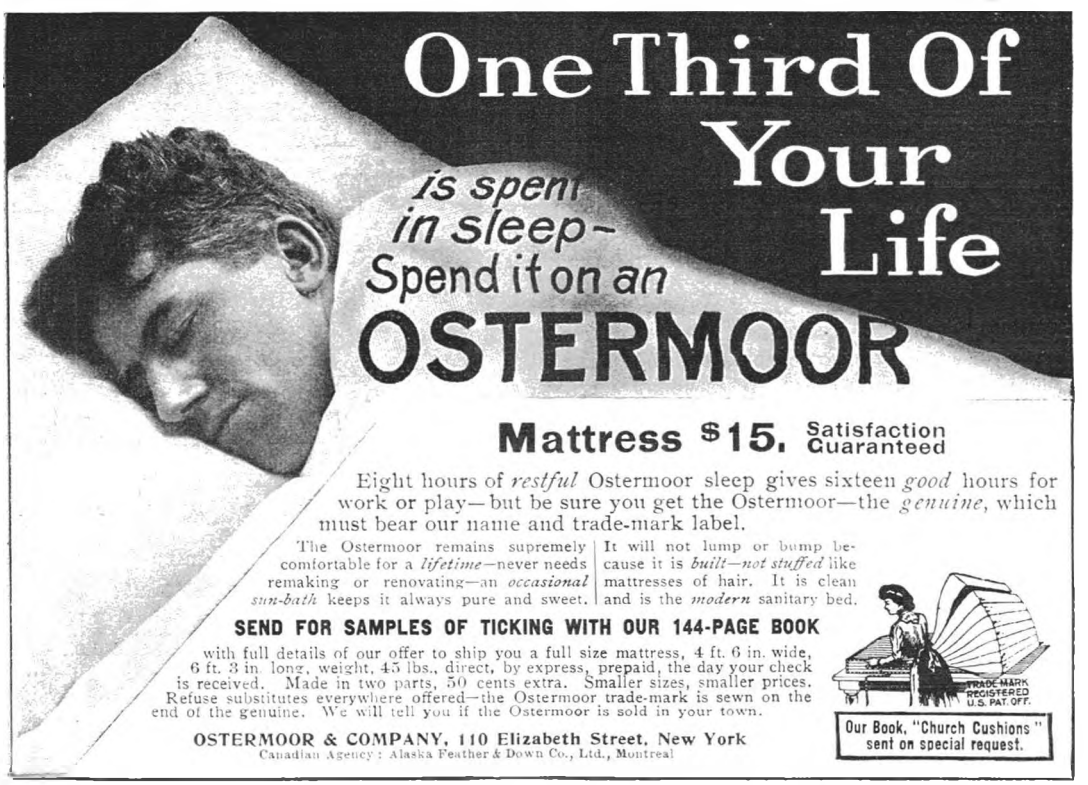

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We Will Tell You These Secrets

which have cost poultrymen years of labor and thousands of dollars. They will cost **YOU** only a trifle and a few minutes' time to write us. There is no man in the United States who has more friends among poultrymen than MICHAEL K. BOYER. A veteran chicken breeder himself, he knows the business from A to Z, and through his wide acquaintance and friendship he has learned many of their most jealously-treasured secrets. This scattered material he has collected in book form, and we are offering it to the poultry raisers of America. **Every secret printed in this book has been obtained in an honorable way, either by permission of the owner** or through Mr. Boyer's own experience.

Dr. Woods' Egg Food Secret Dr. P. T. Woods authorizes the publication of his system for producing large quantities of sterile eggs for market. Every poultryman who raises eggs for market must know Dr. Woods' method to be up with the times, and every householder who supplies only his or her own table will appreciate an increased quantity of the highest quality eggs for table use.

The Secret of Mating No one is better known in the poultry world than I. K. Felch. Success has crowned his efforts as a breeder of blooded stock. Some years ago Mr. Felch compiled a breeding chart and published it. Later, realizing its value, he withdrew it. *Now* he gives this information to *you* in Mr. Boyer's book.

How to Have Fertile Eggs Mr. Boyer has contributed all the secrets which have made him the successful poultry breeder, poultry writer and editor that he is. His secret of securing fertile eggs by alternating males we believe is worth $100 to any big producer of setting eggs. It is something new, and the diagrammatic illustration furnished by Mr. Boyer makes the matter so plain that the novice can easily understand it.

Feed at 15c a Bushel An enterprising poultryman has advertised this secret for $5.00 and pledged those buying it not to disclose it. It has, however, long been known to Mr. Boyer, and the method has been fully explained in "**Poultry Secrets.**"

Selecting the Laying Hens Since the production of eggs is the very basis of the poultry industry, the ability to tell the laying hens in the flock without the aid of trap nests will put dollars in your pocket. Do not keep on feeding the robber hens.

Of course we cannot go to the length of saying that all the information in the book is new to every one. It is said there is nothing new under the sun, and the Egyptians were hatching eggs by artificial heat centuries ago; but we do say that to the great majority of poultrymen these secrets are absolutely unknown.

We are Willing to Name Here Some of the Secrets

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2. Burnham's system of mating fowls.
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4. Mendel's Chart of Heredity.
5. Secret of strong fertility by alternating males.
6. Secret of knowing what to feed and how to feed it.
7. The secret of having green food in winter.
8. Secret of sprouting oats and barley for poultry feeding.
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11. Secret of telling the laying hens of the flock.
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14. The only safe way of preserving eggs.
15. A secret of dressing fowls so as to do the work quickly and thoroughly.
16. An exposure of the methods employed by some fanciers to kill the fertility of the eggs.
17. The winter egg crop and how to get it.
18. Fattening turkeys for market.
19. Hunter's Secret of Success.
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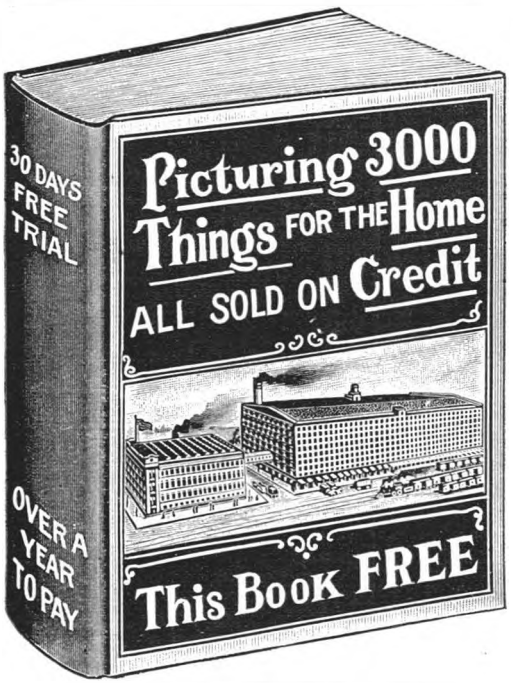

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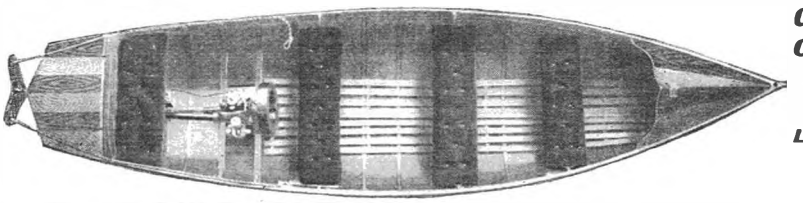

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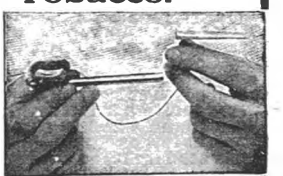

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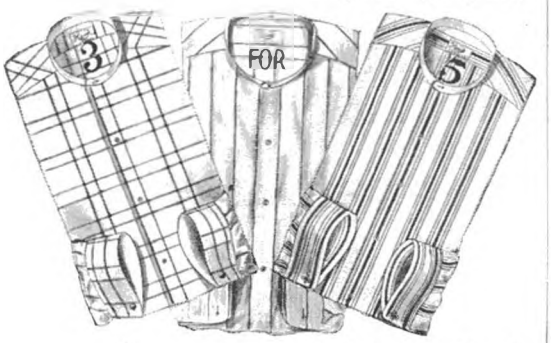

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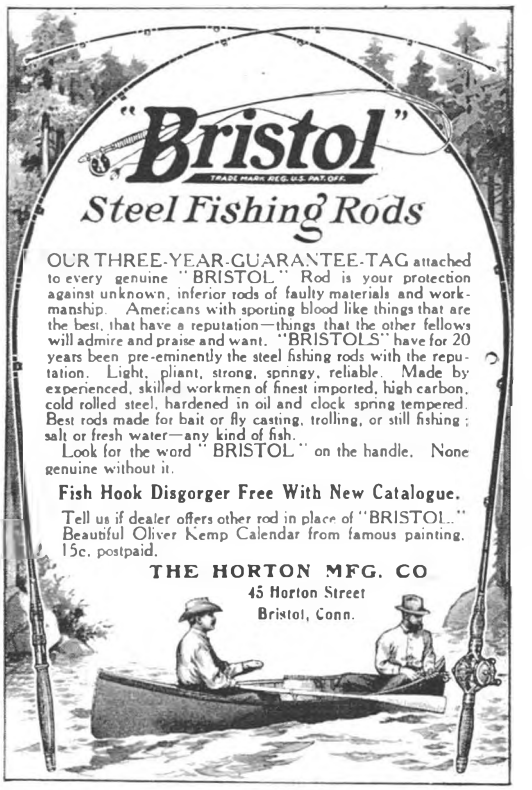

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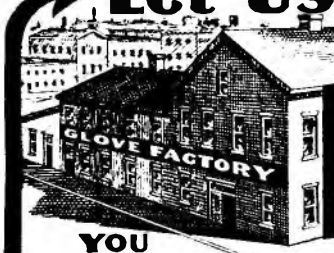
Let Us Help You To Be A Manufacturer And Factory Owner



YOU CAN OWN A FACTORY LIKE THIS

Under Our New Plan
We Give You
Tools And Equipment
Without Cost

We Will Start You in the Canvas Glove Business

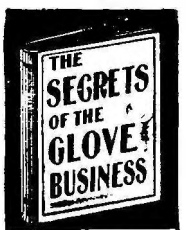
and give you without cost the necessary tools, simply with the understanding that you buy supplies and material from us so long as our prices are as low or lower than you can get elsewhere.

Immense Profits are made in this fascinating business. The McCreery Brothers started only a few years ago without a cent. They actually borrowed $100 to start with. Today they have thousands of dollars. They own their own large factory, have extensive interests in others, and do an enormous business. They have started a few other men in the glove business, and they will help you to start too, furnishing you with tools and equipments without cost, and teaching you the secrets of the business.

Unlimited Demand—There is no class of goods for which there is such a steady demand as for canvas gloves and mittens. They are the popular glove for the masses. Everybody uses them—the farmer, the mechanic, the doctor, the lawyer, the merchant, the laborer—in all sections of the country—from Maine to California, and from Minnesota to the Gulf. There is actually room today for **ten** canvas glove factories where we only have **one** now.

Seven Years Ago a canvas glove was hardly known, except a few made by hand by farmers' wives. Everybody then wore leather gloves. Today there are **six pairs** of canvas gloves worn, where formerly only **one pair** of leather gloves was used. You can easily see the tremendous field that has thus been opened up.

We Mean Business When we say we furnish tools without cost, we mean exactly what we say. All we ask is that you buy your cloth from us; but we do not even ask that unless we can furnish it at as low or lower prices than you can buy elsewhere.



Our interesting book which we send free. Write for it.

Our New Plan makes it easy for any man to start in business for himself. We give you without cost the necessary tools, such as expensive hand-made dies, cutting table, maple cutting block, turning machine, cloth rack, rawhide maul, knife, pattern, and equipment. No matter how small or how large your town—no matter what section you live in—there is always room for a factory. Any merchant can make the gloves he sells himself, and soon be making gloves for other stores.

No Experience is required. We teach you the secrets of the business and furnish you tools and equipments without cost. We have taken men who had never had a day's practical business experience, and started them on the road to wealth. These men started in a modest way, but soon built large factories, work lots of help, have a big stock of cloth and machinery on hand and a good balance in the bank. What these men have done, you can do.

Don't Miss This opportunity, even if you have to borrow the small amount of money necessary to buy a stock of cloth to start with. You should be able to pay it back in a very short time and have money in the bank besides. There will be many fortunes made in the canvas glove business in the next few years. You can start a factory in any spare room at home, or small store room, and enlarge it as your business demands.

No Capital to speak of is required. We teach you the secrets of the business; we furnish you tools and equipments without cost. All you require is a little money to buy a stock of cloth.

This Liberal Offer Your Stepping Stone to Success

We Start You in a business of your own, right in your own town. Every man, no matter how humble, is entitled to at least the profits of his own labor. If you have the ambition to better your condition—to be somebody—to provide for yourself and family—to enjoy success, happiness and prosperity—we can help you.

Come With Us and let us start you in this profitable, legitimate business, which, with a reasonable amount of light work and attention, should make you a prosperous factory owner in a very short time. The small amount of money which is required to be invested (from $50 upwards) is spent entirely for cloth, supplies and other necessities of the business. We furnish you the tools and equipment without cost. There is no waste material, no dead stock. Every yard of cloth can be turned back into cash.

OPPORTUNITY IS KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR

Here is a Chance where you can with our help start on an honorable career as a successful business man. You cannot possibly lose anything by investigation, and it may mean great financial success for you. **Do not delay.** Today the opportunity is open to you; tomorrow may be too late. Our ability to assist others in starting factories is limited to our ability to furnish them with raw material, and just as soon as enough have become associated with us to absorb our capital, we shall be obliged to withdraw this offer. **IT IS SO VERY EASY TO GET THE FULL DETAILS OF OUR PROPOSITION. SIMPLY SIGN AND SEND US THE COUPON.**

McCREERY MANUFACTURING CO.
284 Dorr Street, Toledo, Ohio

CUT THIS OUT AND MAIL TODAY

McCREERY MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 284 Dorr Street, TOLEDO, OHIO

Gentlemen: Please send me without cost a copy of your book and full information about starting in the glove business.

Name .....

Address .....

More Light!

Where more light is needed—that's what the Angle Lamp gives. Because its best brilliancy is not wasted on the ceiling but is thrown directly downward by the "Angle" at which the flame burns, to light your book or table brilliantly, giving the reader a new pleasure and resting and relieving tired eyes.

The Angle Lamp

resembles a hand-some gas chandelier both in its appearance and its freedom from the smoke and smell and bother of ordinary lamps. Like gas it is lighted by one turn of a button and the striking of a match. Like gas the light can be regulated and turned at full, height or *turned low* without a trace of smoke or odor. Yet the Angle Lamp is more economical than even ordinary lamps. Call it a more economical gas.

But let us show you what new methods have done for Country Home lighting. *Write for a descriptive catalog "B"* explaining why this oil lamp is used by such particular people as Mrs. Grover Cleveland, the Rockefellers, Goulds, Carnegies, etc., for lighting their homes and estates in preference to any other system and explaining our offer of

30 DAYS' TRIAL

The Angle Lamp is made in 32 varieties from $2.00 up, a lamp for *every purpose. Send for our catalog "B"* showing just the style to suit your taste.

THE ANGLE MFG. CO. 159-161 West 24th St., New York

PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS

insure absolute comfort and freedom of motion. The sliding cord in the back permits instant adjustment to every movement of your body and takes all strain off the shoulders and trouser buttons.

President Suspenders lie flat on the back and feel so easy you do not realize you have suspenders on. There is never any tugging and pulling when you move, as in the case of the old style, rigid-back suspenders.

Light weight for office and dress wear; medium and heavy weights for workers. Extra lengths for tall men. Maker's guarantee on every pair—*Satisfaction, New Pair or Money Back.* If your dealer can't supply you, we will, postpaid, upon receipt of the price, 50 cents. Convenience suggests a pair for each suit. Get them today.

THE C. A. EDGARTON MFG. CO.

708 Main Street **Shirley, Mass.**

STARTLING Watch Offer

The Great Burlington Special at a No-Trust Price!

The world's masterpiece of watch manufacture now sold direct!—

The most amazing offer ever made in the whole history of the watch industry—an offer which has absolutely PARALYZED competition—**the offer of the genuine Burlington Special direct to the public at the rock-bottom NO-TRUST PRICE,** without middlemen's profits.

The Fight is On!

We will not be bound by any system of price-boosting contracts with dealers. We will not submit to any "high-profit" selling scheme. We will not be dictated to by ANY Trust.

NO MATTER WHAT IT COSTS, we are determined to push our independent line **even if we should have to fight a combination of all the Watch Manufacturers of the country!**

And so we are making this offer, the most sweeping, astounding offer ever made on any high-grade watch. The famous BURLINGTON direct and **at the same price the Wholesale Jeweler must pay.**

And in order to make the proposition doubly easy for the public we will even allow this rock-bottom price, if desired, on terms of **$2.50 a month.** Don't miss this wonderfully liberal offer.

Here is Your Opportunity: Easiest possible kind of payments—at the same rock-bottom, no-trust price, whether you buy for cash or time.

POST YOURSELF!

Be sure to get posted on watches and watch values, trust-method prices and no-trust prices **before** you buy a watch. Learn to judge watch values!

Get the Burlington Watch Company's

FREE WATCH BOOK

Read our startling exposure of the amazing conditions which exist in the watch trade today. Read about the anti-trust fight. Read about our great $1,000.00 Challenge. Learn how you can judge watch values. Send your name and address for this valuable **FREE BOOK** now—TO-DAY. Sign and mail coupon.

BURLINGTON WATCH CO.
Dept. 1074
Millard Stn.
Chicago
Ills.

Burlington Watch Co., Dept. 1074, Millard Station, Chicago, Illinois

Please send me, *without obligation* and prepaid, your free book on watches and copy of your $1,000.00 challenge to the Waltham or Elgin, with full explanation of your cash or $2.50 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name .....

Address .....

No letter necessary; coupon will do

C 37

FREE CATALOG

. . . FOR . . .

Every Woman in America

You Should Have This New York Style Catalog. Send for Your Copy NOW. It's Free.

Over a million American women are shopping regularly in New York through our catalog. Send for our catalog and YOU'LL know the reason why.

This Latest Spring and Summer Catalog

is a necessity in every home away from New York, America's fashion and buying center. It places all the New York shopping advantages right in your home, as in its 265 pages is illustrated and described all that is new, stylish and correct in wearing apparel for women, men and children; all the latest novelties and household supplies. The prices quoted are lowest in America. We tell you in our catalog how to save express and freight charges. We guarantee the quality of every piece of merchandise we sell. The demand for our catalog is always very great. To avoid disappointment be sure and write for it today. It is FREE. Address Dept 3 H.

Siegel Cooper Co.'s Liberal Guarantee

is absolute and goes with each article purchased. If your purchase does not prove **satisfactory in every detail**, if it does not prove the best value you ever secured, return it to us at our expense and **your money and all charges will be promptly refunded**. The advantages are all yours—**the risk all ours.**

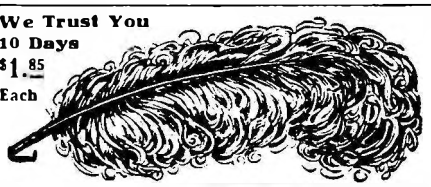
Get the Catalog. Get it *now*. It offers you the best values and the lowest prices in America

SIEGEL COOPER CO.

6th Ave., 18th and 19th Streets

NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.

We Trust You
10 Days
$1.85
Each



Send no money, write to-day for this handsome 14-inch, beautifully curled, carefully selected Ostrich Feather, any color. If you find it a big bargain remit $1.85 each, or sell 3 feathers and get your own free. Enclose 2c. postage. Write for catalogue.

ANNA AYERS, Dept. 7, 21 Quincy St., CHICAGO

EXTRA FINE CARBONATE—Substitute for Genuine Diamond

DECEIVES THE EYES OF EXPERTS.

¼ carat. ½ carat. 1 carat.

all sizes.

$2.00 **$2.50** **$3.00**

14 kt. gold filled Tiffany Style Mountings. Stones possessing brilliancy, beauty and lasting polish places our **Carbonate Stones next to Genuine Diamonds.** Warranted 5 years. Goods sent registered mail free. Send money order. **HIRSHFIELD'S JEWELRY STORE, 212 6th Ave., N. Y. City.** Near cor. 14th St.

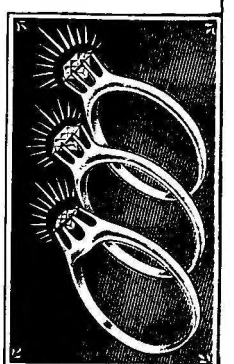
DISCOUNTS!

Highest Grade DIAMONDS at Special DISCOUNTS.

SEND today for the complete Marshall catalog and price list, together with the **Special Discount Sheet.** You may have heard of the high quality of the Geo. E. Marshall goods, but you will surely be **surprised** at our special discounts on even the finest, pure white diamonds. Discounts also on cut glass, silver and jewelry.

Marshall's

"F" Grade—



"F" first and finest grade—diamonds of the rarest beauty—are shipped prepaid, on approval; no money down.

Marshall's "F" grade diamonds are gems of perfect cut and color and of dazzling brilliancy. They are the diamonds that show their quality. Their appearance in itself is proof of their grade. A signed guarantee of quality accompanies every Marshall diamond.

Not one jeweler in ten carries in stock a diamond equal to the Marshall "F" first grade, and the jeweler's so-called first grade is generally about equal to Marshall's second or even third grade.

HERE are shown three stones of rare beauty, all "F" grade Tiffany—prices $76, $46 and $28. We allow terms of $7.60, $4.60 or $2.80 a month respectively. Or for all cash, 5 per cent off. Remember, please:—Any diamond shipped prepaid on approval—not one cent in advance, nothing to pay unless completely satisfied after full examination.

Catalog on Request

Price List & Special Discount Sheet

Send name & address on coupon—that is all!

Now be sure to get this catalog and discount sheet and our approval-shipment offer **BEFORE** you buy a diamond or jewelry. Write today.

Geo. E. Marshall,
(INC.)
W. S. Hyde, Jr., Pres.
A. S. True, Sec'y.
Suite 1124,
103 State St.
CHICAGO, ILL.

CUT OR TEAR OFF THIS COUPON — Chicago, Ill.

GEO. E. MARSHALL (Inc.), Suite 1124, 103 State St.,

Without any obligations, please send me at once, free, your Marshall Catalog and Special Discounts Sheet, with full explanation of your no-money-down approval offer.

Name .....

Address .....

No letter necessary; the coupon will do.

R 46

C41

PUZZLE:

Find the Chaperon

One of these women is a married woman of nearly 40. The others are misses of 15 to 20 years younger.

Can you tell which is the oldest, the chaperon?

The chaperon looks nearly as young as her charges, and can mingle with the younger folks without a difference in ages being apparent—because she has retained her complexion and youthful lines.

Cosmetics did not do it—an occasional massage with Pompeian Massage Cream is what did it, and it will do as much for you. It drives away and keeps away wrinkles and "crow's-feet"; gives a clear, fresh, velvety skin; rounds out angles and drives away double-chins.

Pompeian Massage Cream

is not a "cold" or "grease" cream. The latter have their uses, yet they can never do the work of a massage cream like Pompeian. Grease creams fill the pores. Pompeian Massage Cream cleanses them by taking out all foreign matter that causes blackheads, sallowness, shiny complexions, etc. Pompeian Massage Cream is the largest selling face cream in the world, 10,000 jars being made and sold daily. 50c. or $1.00 a jar, sent postpaid to any part of the world, on receipt of price if dealer hasn't it.

For men, Pompeian Massage Cream takes away soreness after shaving. By removing the soap from the pores it allays the irritation so distressing to those whom a thick, fast-growing beard makes constant shaving a necessity.

Answer to Puzzle: This puzzle has created so much discussion in families and among friends that an explanation is sent with every sample jar. (See offer below). Have each of your family vote and discover who is right.

Send for Sample Jar and Book

Cut off Coupon NOW Before Paper is Lost

You have been reading and hearing about Pompeian for years. You know it is the most popular face cream made, 10,000 jars being sold daily. You have meant to try it, but have not done so. This is your chance to discover what a vast difference there is between an ordinary "cold" cream and a scientifically made Massage Cream like Pompeian. Fill out the coupon to-day and prepare for a delightful surprise when you receive our quarter ounce sample jar. A 16-page booklet on the care of the face sent with each jar. When writing enclose 10 cents in silver or stamps (United States only) to cover cost of postage and packing.

THE POMPEIAN MFG. COMPANY
31 Prospect St., Cleveland, Ohio

CUT OUT ALONG DOTTED LINE, FILL IN AND MAIL TODAY

Pompeian Mfg. Co., 31 Prospect St., Cleveland, Ohio

Gentlemen: Enclosed find 10c. to cover cost of postage and packing. Please send me one copy of your famous illustrated massage book and a special sample jar of Pompeian Massage Cream.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

C43

SHOES

REGAL
Sign of ye REGAL

The Only Shoes Made in QUARTER-Sizes, Insuring an Exact Fit for Every Foot

Regal *quarter-sizes* have given thousands of people the only perfect fit they ever obtained in ready-to-wear shoes. Remember that Regal quarter-sizes offer you *double* the usual number of fittings.

The 252 Regal styles for Spring are, as always, exact reproductions of the most approved custom models. The perfect fit and comfort of Regal quarter-sizes, together with custom style and quality, make Regal Shoes the greatest shoe values in the world.

Regal Shoes are sold directly from the Regal factories to *you*, with all intermediate profits eliminated.

$3.50 $4.00 and $5.00

If you don't live near one of the 624 Regal Stores and Agencies, order from the Regal Mail Order Department. If the shoes are not exactly as ordered, we will cheerfully exchange or refund your money, if desired.

Olmstead, $3.50

(Delivered Prepaid, $3.75)

Style C 7259—As illustrated. Oxford, blucher-cut. Made of Black King Calf.

Style C 8688—Same, except made of Russet King Calf. **Price, $4.00.**

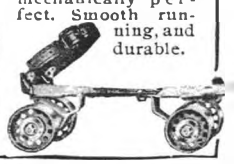
REGAL SHOE COMPANY

Mail Order Dept.: 509 SUMMER STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

Mail Order Sub-Stations: Factory, Whitman, Mass., Box 905. San Francisco, Cal., Phelan Building. London, Eng., 97 Cheapside, cor. Lawrence Lane, E. C.

WINSLOW'S Skates

Winslow's Roller Skates are unusually well adjusted and finely finished—they are mechanically perfect. Smooth running, and durable.



THE BEST ICE AND ROLLER SKATES

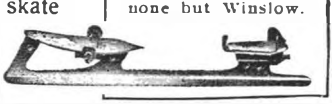
For 50 years the standard skate has been the Winslow. It is made by the most skilled workmen, from the finest materials, in the largest skate plant in the world. All styles and prices.

When writing please say if interested in ice or roller skates.

THE SAMUEL WINSLOW SKATE MFG. CO., Worcester, Mass., U. S. A.

81-88 CHAMBERS ST., NEW YORK 8 LONG LANE, E. C., LONDON

Winslow's Ice Skates are noted for their high-grade material and superior workmanship; reliable and "speedy." Best skaters will have none but Winslow.



SECRETARY of War Stanton sat in his office in Washington.

"If I ring that bell," he said, "any man, *in the most distant State*, is a prisoner of war!"

The telephone bell has succeeded the messenger bell.

Business has succeeded war.

If *any man* in the Union rings the bell of his Bell Telephone at his desk, any other man *at the most distant point* is at his instant command.

That is the Bell Companies' ideal—that you may take the receiver off the hook and get into communication with *any man*, even in the most distant State.

That is the really *universal telephone* that the Bell Companies set as their goal at the beginning. It is so far realized that already 20,000,000 voices are at the other end of the line, all reached by the one Bell system.

The *increased efficiency* of the individual, of the lawyer or bank president or corporation official; the increased efficiency of the *nation as a whole*, because of the development of the Bell system, can hardly be estimated.

It certainly *cannot* be overestimated.

The president of a corporation to-day could not be the president of such a corporation without it.

The modern corporation *itself* could not exist without telephone service of national scope.

Corporation officials could not have transacted business quickly enough by old methods to reach the totals which alone are accountable for our remarkable commercial development as a nation.

The wheels of commerce have been kept at the necessary speed to provide this swift development by the universal telephone.

The mere item of *time actually saved* by those who use the telephone means an *immense increase* in the production of the nation's wealth every working day in the year.

Without counting the convenience, without counting this wonderful increased efficiency, but just counting *the time alone*, over *$3,000,000* a day is saved by the users of the telephone!

Which means *adding $3,000,000 a day to the nation's wealth!*

The exchange connections of the associated Bell Companies are about 18,000,000 a day—the toll connections half a million more. Half of the connections are on business matters that must have prompt action—either a messenger or a personal visit.

Figured on the most conservative basis, the money value of the *time saved* is not less than ten cents on every exchange connection and three dollars on every toll, or long distance connection—figures that experience has shown to be extremely low.

The saving *in time only* is thus $1,800,000 daily on exchange messages and $1,500,000 on long distance messages—this much added to the nation's productiveness by the Implement of the Nation, the Bell Telephone.

American Telephone & Telegraph Company

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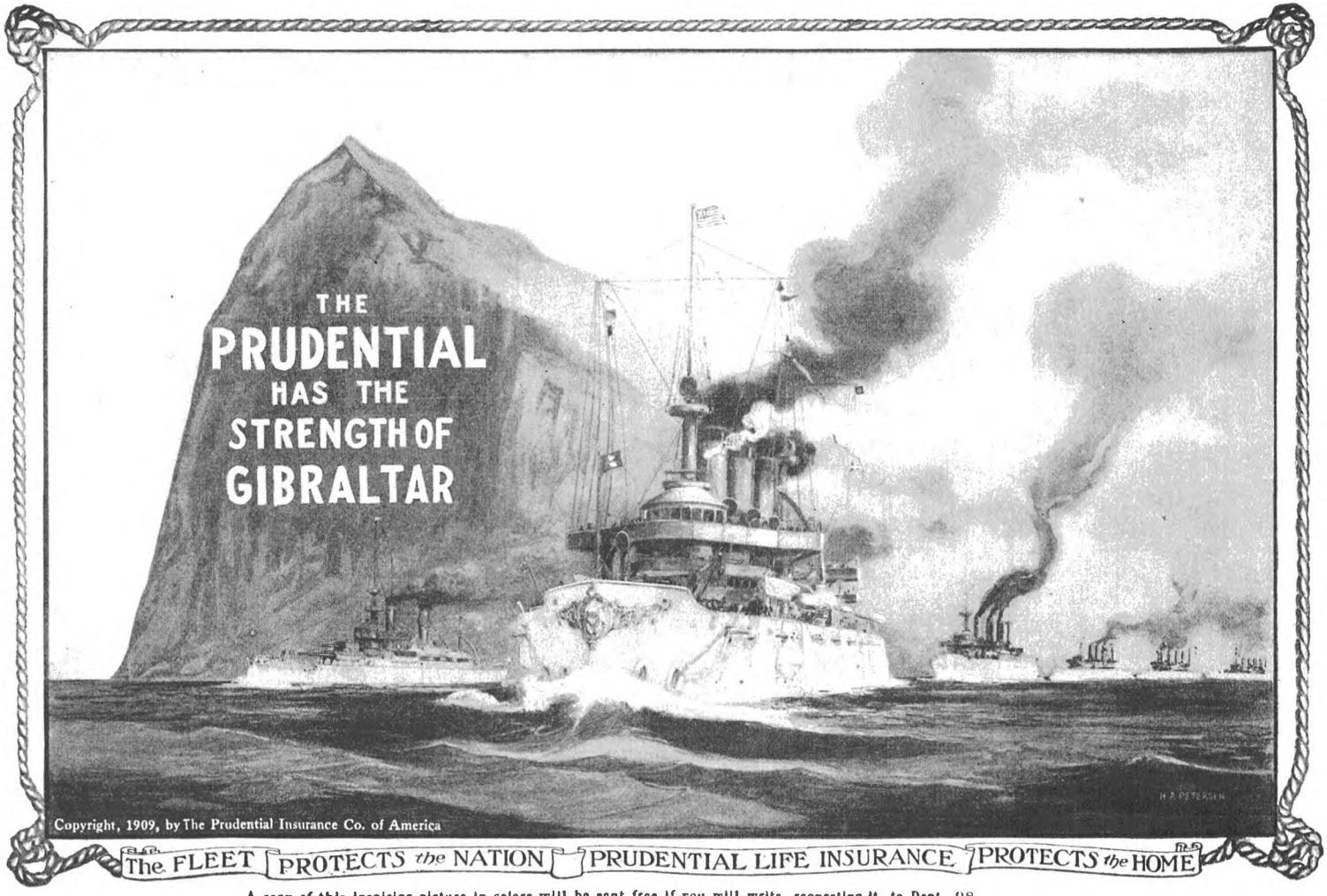


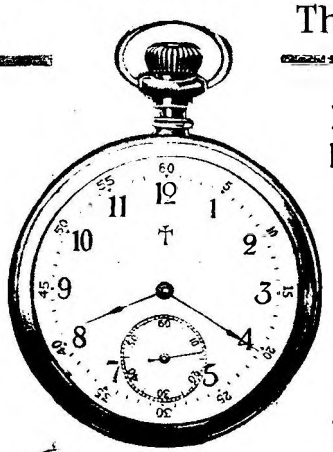
A copy of this inspiring picture in colors will be sent free if you will write, requesting it, to Dept. 98.

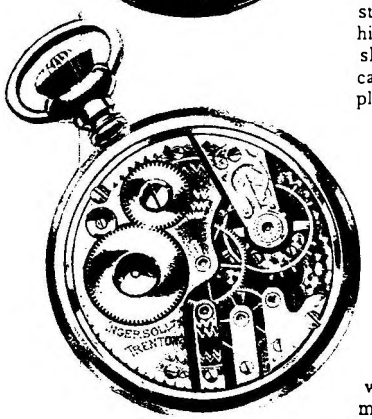
The Prudential Insurance Company of America. John F. Dryden, President. Home Office, Newark, N. J.

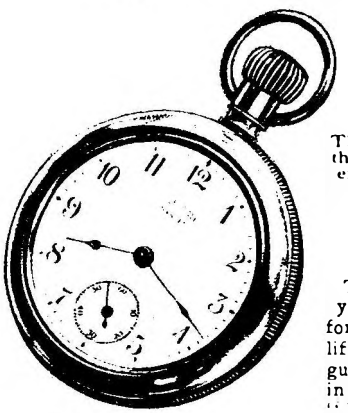
Incorporated as a Stock Company by the State of New Jersey.

New Ingersoll-Trenton $5

The Best Seven Jewel Watch $7&$9







Everybody knows what great value the Dollar Watch has always been. The new *Ingersoll-Trenton* offers the same kind of value in a high-grade 7 jewel watch. It is the first fine watch ever produced and sold on an economical basis. The reason is plain.

The same underlying principles of *specialization*, which made the Dollar watch possible are now applied in another field, and in another factory, to the making of this high grade 7 jewel watch. The entire "I-T" factory concentrates upon one watch only, producing it in enormous quantities and at enormously reduced costs by systems known only to the Ingersoll organization. Other factories make many grades, styles and sizes, each in relatively small quantities and at correspondingly high costs. For the most part they make movements only which they ship out without performing on them the final and crucial operations of casing, testing and regulating. Hence they cannot guarantee the completed watches.

The "I-T" is *cased* at the factory, and is timed, adjusted and regulated with all the facilities that only a factory possesses. Here is the first high-grade watch sold with a *definite printed guarantee* covering the entire watch, movement, case and assembling.

Except in number of jewels the "I-T" is equal to the highest priced of other makes. Having but one watch to make, the "I-T" factory combines in this one all the workmanship and improved features which others reserve for their extravagantly jeweled, most profitable models. It is the only 7 jewel watch ever made in all other respects like a full jeweled model; it has the best materials obtainable, the same bridge model, micrometer adjustment, compensating balance, safety pinion, Breguet hair-spring of the very best watches and a special patented stem-wind superior to any other ever made. It has that full, strong regular motion of the balance, distinguishing the well made, accurate-running watch.

The "I-T" is sold only in the special "I-T" cases, which are made in 3 grades: Solid nickel, $5.00; 10-year gold filled, $7.00, and 20-year gold filled, $9.00. The "I-T" gold filled cases are honest value and unlike many of the fraudulently stamped cases they contain sufficient gold to give actual wear for the full guarantee period.

These watches are sold only through *responsible jewelers* who receive them direct from the factory, saving you wholesaler's profits. Sent by express prepaid by us on receipt of price if not locally obtainable.

Booklet—Send for our Booklet No. 46, giving detailed descriptions and watch information never before made public.

INGERSOLL WATCHES

The Dollar Watch is the every-day, every-purpose watch. Through 17 years of service it has proven to the American people that it is sufficient for all ordinary needs. It has established itself as a feature of American life and now commands a sale of over 12,000 watches a day. It is fully guaranteed for accuracy and durability. Ingersoll watches are also made in ladies' size, the "Midget," at $2.00, and the new thin-model, "Junior," $2.00.

The name INGERSOLL is always stamped on the dial of genuine Ingersoll watches—Look for it.

Sold by 60,000 dealers or postpaid by us. Booklet free.

Robt. H. Ingersoll & Bro., 46 Frankel Building New York City

"A moment white, then gone forever"

These lines of Burns fitly describe most so-called white soaps; they are white when fresh, but turn yellow with age. FAIRY SOAP is the only white soap that stays white—no matter how long you keep it. The reason is that FAIRY SOAP contains only edible products.

FAIRY SOAP—the pure, white, oval, floating cake—sells for 5c; the most possible soap goodness for the lowest possible price.

THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY,
CHICAGO

"Have You a Little 'Fairy' in Your Home?"

You Can Hire This Servant To Keep Your Entire House Spick and Span for 10c. a Month!

Old Dutch Cleanser

chases dirt. It cleans the house from cellar to attic with very little help from you. Old Dutch Cleanser contains no acids, caustic or alkali. It cleans *mechanically*, not chemically. It does *every kind* of cleaning—

Cleans, Scrubs, Scours, Polishes,

and does it easier, quicker and better than old-fashioned soaps and scouring bricks. It saves labor, time and expense.

If you cannot obtain Old Dutch Cleanser immediately, send us your grocer's name and 10c. in stamps, and we will gladly pay 22c. postage to send you a full size can.

Sold by all Grocers, in Large, Sifting-Top Cans **10¢**

Send for free booklet, "Hints for Housewives."

THE CUDAHY PACKING CO., 126 33rd Street, So. Omaha, Neb. (Branch) Toronto, Canada

THE MUNSEY PRESS, NEW YORK.