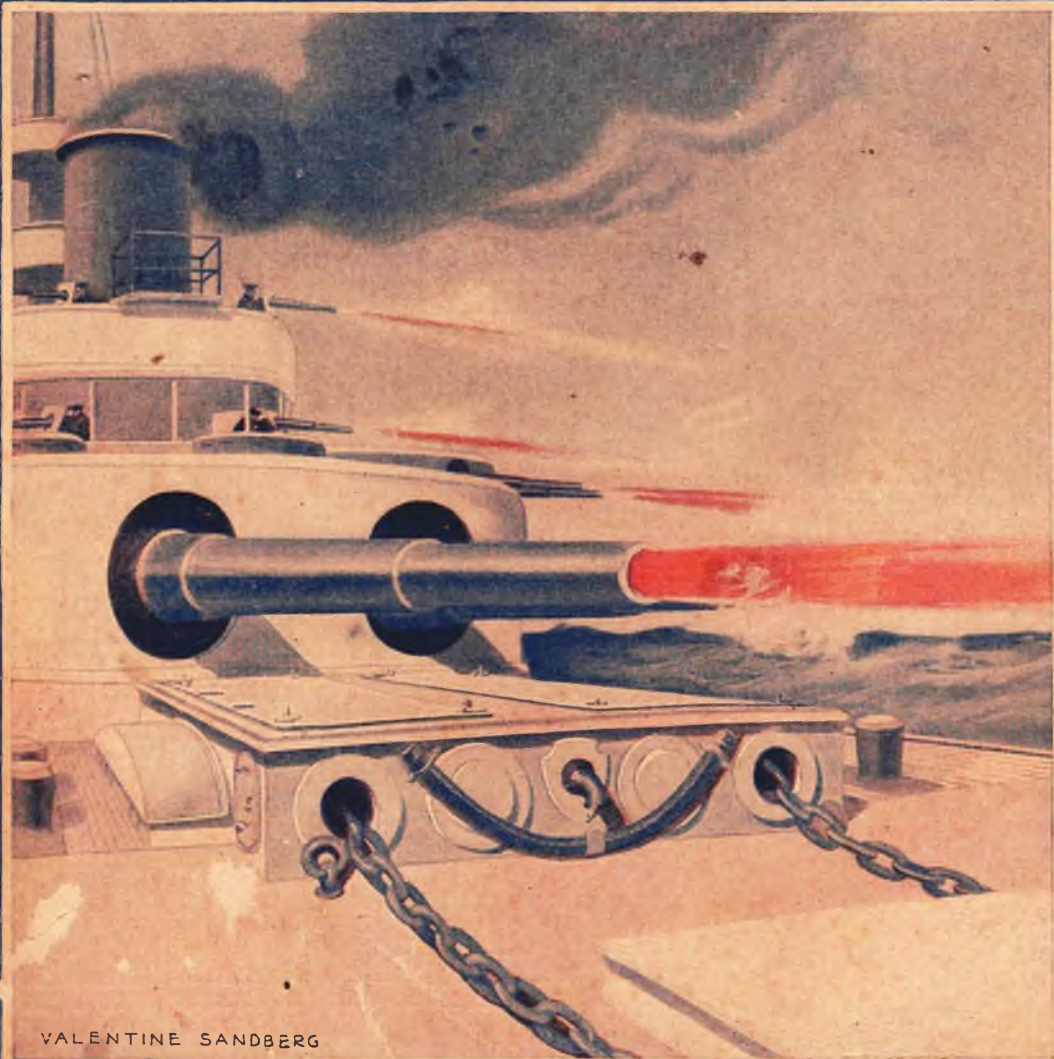


**TWO NEW SERIALS BEGIN IN
THIS ISSUE**

THE ARGOSY FOR MARCH



VALENTINE SANDBERG

Single Copies, 10c. || THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, || By the Year, \$1.00
175 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK.



The
Leading
Toilet Soap
of Two
Centuries

—
Now
As Always
Woman's
Best
Beautifier

PEARS' SOAP

was beautifying complexions when George the Third was King, and before the great historic event of modern times, the French Revolution

THAT was indeed a period of revolutions, and the revolution that was effected in the manufacture of Soap by the introduction of PEARS' SOAP was so memorable that it established a new and permanent standard in Toilet Soaps, and one that it has been impossible to improve upon in all the years that have since elapsed.

PEARS' SOAP was a scientific discovery that represented hygienic perfection, and provided beauty with a simple preservative that has had no equal from that day to this.

We have it on the testimony of the most famous beauties, and of leading scientists, doctors, and specialists, from the Georgian to the Edwardian period, that PEARS' SOAP is the most potent of all aids to natural beauty—the beauty that alone can fascinate—the beauty of a soft, velvety, refined complexion.

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.

"All rights secured."

LEARN TO WRITE ADVERTISEMENTS



THIS last man to be laid off in slack times is the advertising man.

When the advertising man has to go the whole business machinery stops, because the advertising man creates trade. There is no wonder, then, that men and women who are ambitious and want a chance to develop, are asking the Page-Davis School to prepare them for positions that pay from \$25.00 to \$100.00 a week.

The knowledge of advertising is the most important factor in every business man's life, whether he is going to be an advertisement-writer or whether he wants to advance in his present position.

Every man who makes a success in business or in a profession, knows the laws of advertising, for if he didn't, he couldn't succeed.

It isn't necessary for people to recognize your advertising ability. Many times success is attributed to all sorts of reasons, but they fail to understand that back of it all is the knowledge of advertising.

Just read what a few students say:

My Dear Mr. Page:

It may interest you to know that I am a successful student and not an advertisement-writer either. I was making \$25.00 a week in the lumber business, and before me stood a wall of difficulties through which I could not see a future. I was getting about the limit in wages and was afraid to make a move. I was in what you call a 'rut.' I can now say that your instruction opened my eyes—gave me confidence, and by applying a little of that advertising ability, I put myself right with my concern and finally succeeded in increasing my salary to \$35.00. The man who can't profit by the Page-Davis instruction is surely a 'dead one.'

*Yes Sir!
I am
a
Page-Davis Man*

And here is another condition that happens time and time again with Page-Davis students:

"Dear Mr. Page:

The unexpected has happened. Take my name off your 'want-a-position' list. I'm going to stay where I am. That letter from you informing me of an opening for an advertising man, did the trick. I went to the boss and told him I intended to quit and he wanted to know why—I told him that I had studied advertising and was going to try my hand in that line. I was surprised to hear him say that now as long as I had sense enough to learn advertising he thought I could make myself more valuable right where I am, and I'm going to stay."

In any way you look at it advertising is a great benefit to you—it makes you a better all-around man and worth more in dollars and cents right where you are now, and then you can go into the advertising business if you want to earn from \$25.00 to \$100.00 a week. Never in the ten years of our existence have we had more requests for advertising men than we are receiving to-day.

If you will write, we will send you our beautiful prospectus FREE, and give you a full and practical report of the benefits our instructions will be to you personally.

The coupon may be used if you wish, or a postal card will bring the information to you.



Fill in name and address and send this coupon to Page-Davis School and we will send you our beautiful prospectus FREE, and give you a full and practical report of the benefits our instructions will be to you personally.

Name Address
City State 341

Page-Davis School

Address (Dept. 341, 90 Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois)
Either Office (Dept. 341, 150 Nassau Street, New York City.)

In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention THE ARGOSY.



J.H. JOYCE, PRESIDENT

EARN YEARLY \$3,000 TO \$10,000. IN THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS

We will teach you by mail the Real Estate, General Brokerage, and Insurance Business, and appoint you

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

of the oldest and largest co-operative real estate and brokerage company in America. Representatives are making \$3,000 to \$10,000 a year without any investment of capital. Excellent opportunities open to YOU. By our system you can make money in a few weeks without interfering with your present occupation. Our co-operative department will give you more choice, salable property to handle than any other institution in the world.

A THOROUGH COMMERCIAL LAW COURSE FREE TO EACH REPRESENTATIVE. Write for 62-page book, Free

THE CROSS COMPANY, 1129 Reaper Block, Chicago, Ill.

The original real estate co-operative company—no connection with any other concern of similar name.

**FREE
BOOK**

Music Lessons Free

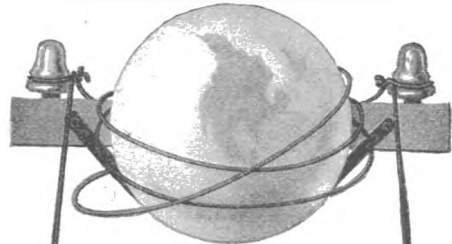
IN YOUR OWN HOME.

A wonderful offer to every lover of music whether a beginner or an advanced player.

Ninety-six lessons (or a less number if you desire) for either Piano, Organ, Violin, Guitar, Banjo, Cornet, Sight Singing, or Mandolin will be given free to make our home study courses for these instruments known in your locality. You will get one lesson weekly, and your only expense during the time you take the lessons will be the cost of postage and the music you use, which is small. Write at once. It will mean much to you to get our free booklet. It will place you under no obligation whatever to us if you never write again. You and your friends should know of this work. Hundreds of our pupils write: "Wish I had known of your school before." "Have learned more in one term in my home with your weekly lessons than in three terms with private teachers, and at a great deal less expense." "Everything is so thorough and complete." "The lessons are marvels of simplicity, and my 11 year old boy has not had the least trouble to learn." One minister writes: "As each succeeding lesson comes I am more and more fully persuaded I made no mistake in becoming your pupil."

We have been established nine years—have thousands of pupils from eight years of age to seventy.

Don't say you cannot learn music till you send for our free booklet and tuition offer. It will be sent by return mail free. Address U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC, Box 1, 225 Fifth Ave., New York City.



ELECTRICITY Girdles the Globe

It is the giant force of the Century.

Electricity offers larger rewards to PRACTICALLY trained followers than any of the other professions.

Learn it and you have mastered the most fascinating and BEST PAID calling of to-day.

Our school, the most thoroughly equipped in the United States, teaches PRACTICAL ELECTRICITY in all its branches, and nothing else.

Individual instruction, day or evening, by skilled teachers.

Booklet "21" tells the story. Write for it. It's FREE.

THE NEW YORK ELECTRICAL TRADE SCHOOL
30 West 17th Street, New York

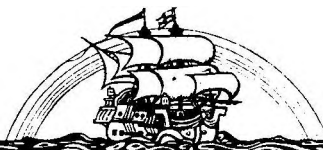


PRIZE OFFER

We have just made arrangements whereby we are able to offer a valuable prize, to those who will copy this cartoon. **Take Your Pencil Now**, and copy this sketch on a common piece of paper, and send it to us today; and, if in the estimation of our Art Directors, it is even 40 per cent. as good as the original, we will mail to your address, **FREE OF CHARGE FOR SIX MONTHS,**

THE HOME EDUCATOR

This magazine is fully illustrated and contains special information pertaining to Illustrating, Cartooning, etc., and published for the benefit of those desirous of earning larger salaries. It is a Home Study magazine. There is positively no money consideration connected with this free offer. Copy this picture now and send it today. **Correspondence Institute of America, Box 812, Scranton, Pa.**



The Argosy for March

One Complete Novel

HIS GOOD RIGHT HAND. The sudden affliction that put an express clerk out of business and the luckless experience that befell him in his new job.....**DOUGLAS PIERCE** 577

Six Serial Stories

WITH SEALED LIPS. Part I. A story of the sixties in which an army officer obtains leave of absence and finds himself in worse case than any that the war thrust upon him.....**ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE** 608
LEFT IN THE LURCH. Part I. A hard-luck story, with an account of the desperate device resorted to by a man with money owing him which he couldn't collect.....**GRANT L. CONRAD** 632
THE BATTLE OF THE WEAK. Part II. The story of what happened in one case after riches took to themselves wings.....**ELIZABETH YORK MILLER** 650
THE TIME LIMIT. Part II. A disappearance which seemed to have no explanation but one which was beyond belief.....**BERTRAM LEBHAR** 667
A MAN'S COUNTRY. Part III. Terrific adventure of the tenderfoot on a visit that was meant to be purely one of pleasure.....**EDWARD P. CAMPBELL** 684
A CONFLICT WITH CÆSAR. Part IV. A story of the Roman conquest of Gaul, in which one barbarian is pitted against another.....**F. K. SCRIBNER** 699

Seventeen Short Stories

SPORT OF CIRCUMSTANCE.....**WALTER DURANTY** 606
A THAW BELOW ZERO.....**SEWARD W. HOPKINS** 627
WHEN ANN HELD THE ENEMY.....**MABEL GERTRUDE DUNNING** 645
THE E-Z MARK.....**HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY** 664
INTO THE JAWS OF DESTRUCTION.....**HOWARD R. GARIS** 678
THE MEN IN LINE.....**RALPH ENGLAND** 691
BY A SLENDER MARGIN.....**BURKE JENKINS** 715
THE BADGE OF WEALTH.....**BERTHA RUSSELL** 721
AN ARM OF THE LAW.....**J. W. EVERTS** 723
A SLAP-DASH ROMANCE.....**ELLEN FARLEY** 728
THAT FINE ADVERTISEMENT.....**LEE BERTRAND** 733
A TRICK OF CHANCE.....**FRED V. GREENE, Jr.** 739
TRAGEDY BY WIRE.....**GRIFFIN BARRY** 744
THE MAN IN THE GREEN CAR.....**F. K. SCRIBNER** 746
FOR FEAR OF A HAND.....**MARTIN CROSS** 759
THERE'S MANY A SLIP.....**MARVIN DANA** 765
THE DREADFUL THING HE DID.....**MATTHEW WHITE, Jr.** 767



TWO NEW SERIALS, "Gordon's Getaway" and "Through No Fault of His Own," will begin in the
 APRIL ARGOSY—stories of ingenious plot and graphic narrative style.



ISSUED MONTHLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY
 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E.C., London

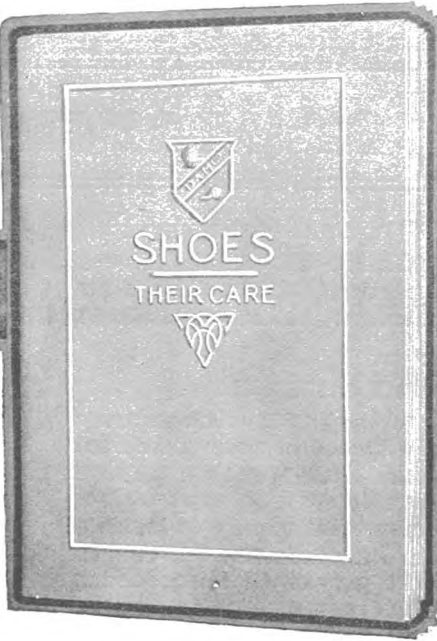
FRANK A. MUNSEY, President.

RICHARD H. MUNSEY, Secy.

EDWARD H. BORD, Treasurer

COPYRIGHT, 1908, BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY.

ENTERED AT THE NEW YORK POSTOFFICE AS SECOND-CLASS MAIL MATTER.



"SHOES AND THEIR CARE"

**USEFUL BOOKLET FREE
WRITE FOR IT TODAY**

This booklet is for every man and for every woman who wears shoes.

If you suffer from foot discomforts, either trivial or serious, it will be invaluable; for it tells how most of these discomforts may be avoided. There are many men and women whose comfort and happiness, and whose efficiency and earning-power are distinctly impaired because of foot discomforts and suffering—much of which could be avoided by following the simple instructions given in our booklet, **"SHOES AND THEIR CARE."**

If your shoes never trouble you, the booklet will still be of great value, because it tells how to make your shoes last longer and look better all the while. We send it free upon request.

It also contains illustrations showing the different styles of shoe trees manufactured by us, which are constantly increasing in popularity and are sold by leading shoe dealers everywhere.

**O. A. MILLER TREEING MACHINE CO.
131 Cherry Street Brockton, Mass.**



We Ship on Approval

without a cent deposit, prepay the freight and allow **10 DAYS FREE TRIAL** on every bicycle. **IT ONLY COSTS** one cent to learn our unheard of prices and marvelous offers on highest grade 1908 models. **FACTORY PRICES**—We will buy a bicycle or one at any price until you write for our new large **Art Catalog** and learn our wonderful proposition on the first sample bicycle going to your town.

RIDER AGENTS—everywhere are making big money exhibiting and selling our bicycles. **We Sell** cheaper than any other factory. **Tires, Coaster-Brakes**, single wheels, parts, repairs and sundries at half usual prices. **Do Not Wait**; write today for our latest special offer.

MEAD CYCLE CO. Dept. 650 CHICAGO

Near-Brussels Art-Rugs, \$3.50

SENT TO YOUR HOME BY EXPRESS PREPAID.

Sizes and Prices	
9 x 6 ft.	\$3.50
9 x 7 1/2 ft.	4.00
9 x 9 ft.	4.50
9 x 10 1/2 ft.	5.00
9 x 12 ft.	5.50
9 x 15 ft.	6.50

Beautiful and attractive patterns. Made in all colors. Easily kept clean and warranted to wear. Woven in one piece. Both sides can be used. Sold direct at one profit. Money refunded if not satisfactory.



New Catalogue showing goods in actual colors sent free.
ORIENTAL IMPORTING CO., 908 Bourse Bldg., Phila.

**NO MORE ROUND SHOULDERS FOR
MAN, WOMAN, OR CHILD**

**PROF. CHAS. MUNTER'S
NULIFE**

**STRAIGHTENS ROUND SHOULDERS
AND COMPELS
DEEP AND PROPER BREATHING**

(Patented)

NOTHING LIKE IT IN THE WORLD

"Health is Youth," says Prof. Charles Munter

NULIFE gives that perfect military bearing demanded by health and fashion. You cannot **BREATHE PROPERLY** unless you **STAND PROPERLY**. "NULIFE" holds you erect and keeps you there. Expands the chest from two to six inches, and reduces your abdomen to proper proportions. The instant effect of wearing "NULIFE" is as if one were transplanted from a stuffy room to the mountain tops, causing a natural, regular respiration, and giving a continual internal massage with Nature's tonic, fresh air, which is exhilarating, inspiring vigor and **NEW LIFE** with every breath. Wearing "NULIFE" during daily occupation means proper breathing all the time without exertion or loss of time.

"NULIFE" corrects the dangers to health arising from cramped lungs due to round shoulders and sunken chest, which prevents proper breathing. This stooped position forces the entire weight of the body on the abdomen, which should be supported by the spine and hips. "NULIFE" instantly corrects this, giving Man a commanding appearance, making Woman a perfect figure with or without a corset, causes Children to sit and stand erect and grow healthy (a blessing to children while growing).

"NULIFE" is made of a washable fabric, is self-lacing and pleasant to wear, and is so simple any child can put it on without assistance. You simply fasten the belt around the waist and "NULIFE" does the rest. "NULIFE" formerly sold at \$5.00. Now sent direct to you for **\$3.00** with my guarantee—that "NULIFE" will do all I claim for it.

When ordering, send me your name and address carefully written, with your height, weight, and chest measure (not bust measure), and whether male or female, with \$3.00, and "NULIFE" will be sent to you prepaid. Large sizes extra. Address

Prof. CHAS. MUNTER, Dept. 64, "NULIFE" Company

23 West 45th Street, nr. 5th Avenue, New York City

FREE—Our illustrated book on "NULIFE" and what it will do for you.





Change Those Restless, Sleepless Nights Into Nights of Peaceful Slumber

Are you more tired in the morning than when you go to bed the night before? During the night, do you toss and twist and turn—then doze off for a few restless moments, only to wake up again with a sudden start? Dangerous symptoms—these! Insomnia is robbing you of the nerve-refreshing rest so vital to a perfect physical condition. Without abundant peaceful sleep you cannot retain health and strength. There is speedy and pleasant relief to be found in

Pabst Extract The "Best" Tonic

It combines all the food values—all the energy, vigor and force-building elements of barley MALT with the bracing, soothing and nerve-toning effects of choicest HOPS. The lupulin properties of the HOPS not only calm, but tone up the nervous system, inducing peaceful and refreshing slumber. Then the barley MALT takes up its work. The nourishment offered in this predigested form, being easily assimilated by the blood, revitalizes the nerves and rebuilds the debilitated system. Thus a speedy return to perfect health is assured.

Pabst Extract, The "Best" Tonic, being a predigested liquid food, is welcomed by the weakest stomach. It relieves insomnia, conquers dyspepsia, strengthens the weak, builds up the overworked, helps the anaemic, feeds the nerves, assists nursing mothers and invigorates old age.

At All Druggists—Insist upon it being Pabst.

Booklet and Picture, "Baby's First Adventure," sent free on request.

PABST EXTRACT CO., DEPT. 25, MILWAUKEE, WIS.



In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention THE ARGOSY.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

\$1.50 a line. For Argosy and All-Story combined \$2.25 a line. Minimum space four lines; maximum space twelve lines. Ten per cent. discount for six consecutive insertions.

As it is impossible for us to know each advertiser personally, we ask the cooperation of our readers in keeping all questionable advertising out of these columns

Forms for April close Feb. 21st

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

LET ME SELL YOUR PATENT.—My book, based upon 17 years' experience as a patent salesman, explaining how, mailed free; patent sales exclusively. If you have United States or foreign patents to sell, call or write, W. E. HOYT, patent sales specialist, 290 N. Broadway, New York.

"ADVERTISERS' MAGAZINE"—should be read by every advertiser and mail-order dealer. Best "Ad School" in existence. Trial subscription 10c. Sample copy free. ADVERTISERS' MAGAZINE, 828 Grand, Kansas City, Mo.

START MAIL-ORDER BUSINESS—Sell goods by mail, cash orders, big profits. Conducted by anyone anywhere; our plan positively successful. Absolute satisfaction guaranteed. Write for free book "How to Make Money in Mail-Order Business." CENTRAL SUPPLY CO., Kansas City, Mo.

We start you in a permanent business with us and furnish everything. Full course of instructions free. We are manufacturers and have a new plan in the mail order line. Large profits. Small capital. You pay us in three months and make big profit. References given. PEASE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 315 Pease Building, Buffalo, N. Y.

\$5,000 TO \$10,000 YEARLY EASILY MADE in real estate business; no capital required; We will teach you the business by mail, appoint you special representative of leading real estate company, list with you readily salable properties, co-operate with and assist you to permanent success. Valuable book free. Address THE CROSS CO., 1066 Reaper Block, Chicago. See our other advertisement in the back pages of this issue.

BE YOUR OWN BOSS. Start Mail-Order Business at home; devote whole or spare time. We tell you how; very good profits. Everything furnished. No Catalog outfit proposition. For "Starter" and free particulars address, A. R. KRUEGER CO., 155 Wash. St., Chicago, Ill.

"SUCCESS IN THE STOCK MARKET." Our little book gives interesting details. It's yours for the asking. Write for it, JOHN A. BOARDMAN & Co., Stock Brokers, 53 Broadway, New York.

A Manufacturer's Permanent Business Offer.—\$50 to \$150 per week operating direct sales parlors for the best specialty dress shoe known for men and women. Outsell all others. Every person a possible customer. No risk. Answer now, KUSHION COMFORT SHOE CO., 11 E. South St., Boston.

EVERYONE INTERESTED in the Mail Order Business should have our booklet, "Mail Order Advertising," 32 pages of valuable information. Rates, plans, mediums, follow-up systems, etc. Also booklet, "The Right Way of Getting Into Mail Order Business." Both books, 29c. None free. ROSS D. BREXNER & Co., 446 Land Title Bldg., Phila.

EXECUTIVE, \$18; Stenographer, \$780; Assistant Manager, \$1800; other positions for Salesmen, Executive, Clerical and Technical men. HARGOODS, 305-307 Broadway, New York.

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BE A DOCTOR OF MECHANOTHERAPY, the wonderful new system of healing. \$3000-\$5000 a year. We teach you by mail. Greatly superior and more simple than Osteopathy. Authorized diplomas to graduates. Special terms now. Write today for prospectus free. AMERICAN COLLEGE OF MECHANOTHERAPY, Dept. 040, 120-122 Randolph St., Chicago.

ELOCUTION AND DRAMATIC ARTS

Acting, Elocution and Oratory taught by correspondence. We teach you in a short time to go upon the stage. Write for free booklet on dramatic art. Chicago School of Elocution, 234 Chicago Opera House Block, Chicago.

POULTRY

GREIDER'S FINE POULTRY CATALOGUE—Beautifully illustrated. Tells all about pure-bred poultry, and illustrates sixty varieties. Contains ten beautiful chromes, gives reasonable prices of stock and eggs. Tells how to cure diseases, kill lice, make money. Only ten cents, postpaid. B. H. GREIDER, Rheims, Pa.

AGENTS WANTED

LADY AGENTS and men—\$75 to \$100 per month regular. We furnish free complete sample case outfit of our high-class Flavors, Soaps, Perfumes, Toilet Goods, Soaps, etc. Our agents' big success due to our high-class goods. Write for catalog and now offers, T. H. SYDNER & Co., 8-10 North St., Cincinnati, O.

AGENTS—Portraits 35c, Frames 15c, Sheet Pictures 1c, Stereoscopes 25c, Views 1c. 30 days credit. Samples and Catalog Free. CONSOLIDATED PORTRAIT CO., 219-217 West Adams St., Chicago.

AGENTS WANTED for our Portrait and Art Novelties. Something entirely new for 1908. Catalogue and Samples free. Address N. M. FRIEDMAN & Co., Manufacturers, Box 212, Martinsburg, Mo.

A NEW ART and a fascinating rapid money maker. You can decorate china, glass, porcelain, pill-boxes, anything, in colors or not, from photographs. No talent or experience required. More popular than hand painted china. Cost small, profits large. Send stamp for information. E. O. VALLANCE CO., Elkhart, Ind.

\$5.00 TO \$10.00 PER DAY easily made representing old established Mail Order House. Over 1000 rapid selling specialties; costly outfit free. GEORGE A. PARKER, Dept. 10, 720 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa.

AGENTS WANTED in every county to sell the *Tennis racket* and *Hand Pocket Knife*. Big commission paid. From \$75 to \$200 a month can be made. Write for terms. NOVELTY CUTLERY CO., No. 77 Bar St., Canton, Ohio.

HELP WANTED

LADY SEWERS to make up shields at home; \$10 per 100, can make two an hour; work sent prepaid to reliable women; send reply envelope for full information to UNIVERSAL REMEDY CO., Dept. H, Walnut St., Philadelphia, Pa.

WANTED MEN EVERYWHERE—Good Pay—to distribute circulars, adv. matter, tack signs, etc. No canvassing. Address NATIONAL ADV. AND DISTRIBUTING BUREAU, Suite E, Oakland Bank Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES are paid well for easy work; examinations of all kinds soon. Expert advice, sample questions and Booklet L 18, describing positions and telling easiest and quickest way to secure them, free. Write now, WASHINGTON CIVIL SERVICE SCHOOL, Washington, D. C.

ADVERTISING WRITER: Experienced in cataloging engines, machinery and power transmission appliances, offices in 12 cities. Call, write, HARGOODS, 305-307 Broadway, New York.

WANTED—"Uncle Sam" wants 3,000 Railway Mail Clerks. Salary \$800 to \$1400. April examinations everywhere. Everyone eligible. Common education sufficient. Candidates prepared free. Write immediately, FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. AL, Rochester, N. Y.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS—Advice free; terms reasonable; highest references; best service. Patents advertised free of charge to inventor. WATSON E. COLEMAN, Patent Lawyer, Washington, D. C., opposite U. S. Patent Office. Send for book.

PATENTS THAT PROTECT.—Our three books for inventors mailed on receipt of six cents stamps. R. S. & A. B. LACEY, Washington, D. C. Established 1869.

PATENT SECURED or fee returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. *Guide Book* and *What to Invent*, with valuable list of Inventions Wanted, sent free. *The Million Dollars* offered for one invention \$10,000 for others. Patents secured by us advertised free in *World's Progress*; sample free. EVANS, WILKINS & Co., Washington, D. C.

"THOUGHTS THAT PAY"—free book; gives list of valuable inventions wanted, and tells how to protect them. Write for it. Patent obtained or fee returned. Patents advertised free. WOODWARD & CHANDLER, Attorneys, 1257 F St., Washington, D. C.

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

AUTOMOBILES

"LARGEST DEALERS in New and Second-hand Automobiles in the World." \$2250 Auto for \$1250. Saving \$1000 on a brand new car. That's the biggest auto bargain ever offered. We have purchased and now have on sale the surplus stock of new '37 28-30 H.P., 4 cyl. "Queen" touring and runabout cars. Guaranteed. Other bargains in high grade new autos at 40% to 60% reductions. Over 500 second-hand autos all in first class condition at ridiculously low prices. Our prices are so low on tires, sundries and apparel, it will pay you to write for our catalog and latest price list No. 205, THE TIMES SQUARE AUTOMOBILE CO., 1599-1601 B'way, New York, 309-311 Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

REAL ESTATE

FERTILE FLORIDA.—Lands produce \$100 to \$1000 per acre. Winter Homes, Oranges, Pineapples, Tropical Fruits, Early Vegetables. Healthy climate, no malaria. Write FLORIDA EAST COAST LAND DEPT., St. Augustine, Fla.

FOR THE OFFICE

WHY DON'T YOU BUY a time-saving, brain-resting "Locke Adder"? Rapid, accurate, simple, durable. Capacity, 999,999,999. Price only \$5.00. Booklet free. C. E. LOCKE MFG. CO., 55 C St., Kensett, Iowa, U. S. A.

SMOKERS' ARTICLES

The greatest novelty invented, Glogau's Flaming Pocket Lighter, patented; cheaper than matches; lights in windy weather; indispensable to smokers; 50c postpaid. Agents wanted everywhere. H. A. GLOGAU, 757 B'way, New York.

DENTISTS' SUPPLIES

BAKERS', DENTISTS' AND SURGEONS' custom made office coats are the finest for workmanship and material. Send for circular No. 2, showing 35 of the best styles. BAKER COAT CO., 155 Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

PICTURE POST-CARDS

18 POST CARDS California Views, 25c; 9 Post Cards Big Trees, 15c; 9 Post Cards Yosemite, 15c. This set of 36 cards, 50c. EMERY'S, 710 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, Cal.

STAMPS AND RARE COINS

\$5.75 paid for Rare Date 1853 Quarters.—Keep all money coined before 1875 and send 10 cents at once for a set of 2 Coin & Stamp Value Books. It may mean your fortune. C. F. CLARKE & Co., Dept. 15, Le Roy, N. Y.

FOR THE HOME

Butcher's Boston Polish is the best finish made for floors and interior woodwork. Not brittle, will not scratch or discolor like shellac or varnish. Send for free booklet. For sale by dealers in paints, hardware and housefurnishings. THE BUTCHER POLISH CO., 356 Atlantic Ave., Boston, Mass.

PIANOS

"A dollar saved is a dollar earned": the saving derived in buying a slightly used piano of a good make is large. We sell used pianos of standard makes from \$125 up; they're much better than cheap new pianos. Delivery free anywhere; easy terms. For 63 years the Pease name has stood for fair dealing. Write for complete list. Pease & Co., 128 W. 42d St., N. Y.

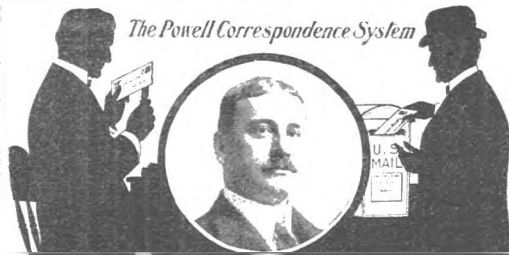
POPULAR MUSIC

SHEET MUSIC—Latest popular hits. "School Days," "Honey Boy," "Dreaming," and "Merry Widow Waltz," 15 cents each, postpaid. Catalogue for stamp. WALTON & COMPANY, Dept. 53, 2524 Webster Avenue, New York.

MUSICAL

SONGS PUBLISHED FREE. Write the words and mail to me. I will write the music and guarantee Free Publication on Royalty. I made fortunes for others and can aid you. "Coon, Coon, Coon," and "A Little Boy in Blue" are two of my many wonderful hits. Valuable booklet free. RAYMOND A. BROWNE, 88 Knickerbocker Theatre Bldg., N. Y.

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



I CAN DOUBLE YOUR SALARY

If You Earn Less Than \$25 a Week

I can double your salary or income by teaching you how to write catchy, intelligent advertising.

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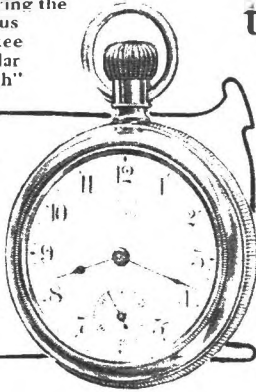
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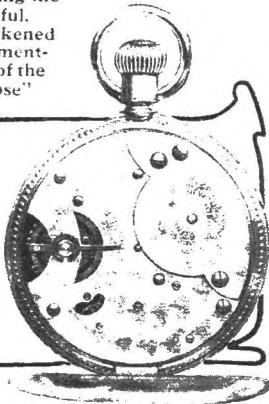
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HIS GOOD RIGHT HAND.

By DOUGLAS PIERCE,

Author of "The Shaft of Light."

The sudden affliction that put an express clerk out of business
and the luckless experience that befell him in his new job.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

A KNOCK-OUT BLOW.

"W. J. CAIN, Agt. Per B." Over and over again he wrote it—sometimes as many as six thousand times a day.

From long practise and familiarity, his hand had become so used to tracing that authoritative signature that the act was as mechanical to him as the lacing up of his shoes in the morning.

With a flowing stroke, never lifting the pen from the paper, he would dash it off as though it were a single word, appending it at the bottom of each way-bill until the daily task was complete.

The name grew to hold practically no significance to him. He wrote it in the proper places automatically and without thought, giving little more consciousness to the operation than would have been shown by a rubber stamp.

But even a rubber stamp will wear out if subjected to constant usage, and flesh and blood has likewise its limits of endurance.

The first warning that came to the writer of the persistent signature was in a somewhat painful stiffness which affected the muscles of his right wrist after his day's toil was over, and to which in the beginning he paid scant heed. But as it began to recur at more and more frequent intervals, and at times to wax so sharp that it kept him from sleep, he finally decided to consult a physician.

The doctor looked grave when informed of his patient's occupation and symptoms.

"There is no medicine I can prescribe to afford you any permanent relief," he said. "The only thing which will help you is to give that hand a rest. You are working it too hard."

"Rest?" repeated the other, with a short laugh. "You doctors always sing the same song, don't you? But it is impossible with me, so you will have to scheme some other way out of the difficulty."

He spoke with such finality that the objections about to be interposed died upon the doctor's lips, and a sudden sympathy showed in his keen, shrewd glance.

"Got to keep grinding away, no matter what happens, eh?" he questioned.

"Yes; that's about it."

"Well," after a moment's hesitation, "then I would advise you to treat that hand of yours like a baby wrapped in cotton wool. Shift the style of your chirography from front to back hand whenever you feel the slightest strain; or else learn to become ambidextrous, and so rest one hand by using the other."

"The best counsel I can give you, however," the physician continued weightily, "is to secure a position where the requirements are less exacting; for it is my duty to warn you that unless you do, and no matter what remedies you may try, your right hand will sooner or later become practically useless to you."

A highly sensible admonition, no doubt, and one well worth heeding, but as Gordon Brush left the physician's office he reflected rather impatiently that the suggestion was easier to offer than to fulfil.

Get another job, indeed! As though jobs commanding the salary he received grew upon trees, and all that one had to do was to step up and pick off whatever suited him.

He had known for himself that the pain in his wrist came from overtaxing his powers, and had been looking around for some time for a less arduous position; but he could learn of nothing where the pay was approximately so good, and he told himself that with the burden of a mother to support he could not afford to take less.

And yet it had been only a short time before that the wages for which he now toiled so wearily would scarcely have seemed decent pin-money to Gordon Brush.

He was reckoned in those days one of the rich young men of Chicago, and at the Eastern college which he attended was noted for the free-handed liberality of his spending.

Then, just as he was starting upon his senior year, had come the crash.

His father, one of the most prominent figures upon the board of trade, died suddenly, and when a balance was struck between the estate's assets and liabilities it was found that nothing remained. A great fortune had been swept away in a fruitless effort to corner the wheat market, and all that stood between Gordon Brush's invalid mother and penury was the earning capacity of her son's two hands.

Manfully the lad tackled the proposition, however. He shed his expensive habits and extravagant ways as though they had been a garment, and faced the changed conditions with something of that grim determination which had always made him such a terror on the football-field.

Within two days after he learned how complete was the financial shipwreck in which they were engulfed he had succeeded, partly by good luck and partly by means of the qualifications he was able to demonstrate, in landing a berth

at the Chicago offices of the Transcontinental Express Company, and could proudly announce to his mother that although they would have to reduce somewhat the scale of their living, he was, nevertheless, in a position to support her in reasonable comfort.

Accordingly, under his direction, they gave up to the creditors their Prairie Avenue residence, and moved over to a pleasant little flat on the West Side, where, although Mrs. Brush did not have a raft of servants at her beck and call, and a choice of vehicles to appear at the door every time she wished to take the air, she found life, on the whole, much happier, and even forgot some of her ailments in the occupation of superintending their simple housekeeping.

Still, it would be idle to deny that the burden he had assumed sometimes rested pretty heavily upon Gordon's shoulders.

They lived plainly; indeed, he felt that he could not ask his mother in her delicate condition to put up with less. Yet, zealously as he watched the family expenditures, and rigorously economical as he was on his own account, he was never able to do more than "break even" with his salary at the end of each month.

He could never lay anything aside for the inevitable "rainy day," and it was, consequently, a source of abiding anxiety as to what would become of them if perchance he should fall ill or in any manner be incapacitated for work.

More and more did this grim specter of possibility begin to intrude on his thoughts as the pain in his hand increased, and, as may be imagined, it was not lessened by the doctor's rather gloomy verdict.

Yet, what could he do? As already explained, the efforts he had made toward seeking a new position had not proven especially encouraging, and the other recommendations of the physician turned out to be but little more helpful.

He tried the plan of changing the style of his handwriting, but found that it only resulted in decreasing the amount of work he was able to accomplish, and as he held his job as much by reason of his extraordinarily rapid penmanship as by any other one thing, it did not take him long to decide that he would have to call a halt in that direction.

Accordingly, since the pain had temporarily let up a bit, he attempted to argue optimistically that all doctors were alarmists, and that if left alone his hand would ultimately adapt itself to the work and the trouble disappear of its own accord.

So he gave over any effort to relieve it, and kept his pen stubbornly scratching away at "W. J. Cain, Agt. Per B." over and over again—four, five, and sometimes as many as six, thousand times a day.

But at last there came a morning when, as he picked up a way-bill and started to sling the familiar signature across the foot of it, he found that his fingers stiffened like a board, and all that appeared upon the paper was a confusing series of illegible and disconnected marks.

Again and again he essayed the task, but with no better results. Strive as he might to force the facile hand which had never hitherto refused his bidding, it remained rigid and inert, and became warped almost into the semblance of a bird's claw.

He held it up and looked at it in frowning, puzzled fashion, a great fear dawning in his eyes. With the other hand he tugged and twisted in the vain effort to loosen those stiff, immovable muscles.

Then, white to the lips, he sprang up from his desk, and in a veritable panic fled the place.

Panting and haggard, he flung himself into the presence of the doctor he had previously consulted, and without preface or introduction thrust forward the affected member for inspection.

"What is the matter with it, doctor?" he demanded hoarsely.

The physician gave one short glance, and, pursing up his lips, regretfully shook his head.

"Ah," he said, "it has come, then. You will remember that I warned you. You have an aggravated case of writer's cramp."

"But how long will it last?" Gordon asked impatiently. "One week, two, or three?"

The other hesitated a moment; yet he knew it was idle to hold out any false hopes.

"It will last for your lifetime, my

boy. You must face the realization that you can never write with that hand again!"

CHAPTER II.

WHEN THE SLEEPER AWOKE.

THE writer once saw a man shot through the heart. A rifle-bullet aimed from half a block away struck the fellow under the left shoulder-blade as he was in the act of crossing a street at the intersection of two wide thoroughfares, and completely perforated his body.

Yet he never faltered or wavered for a second in his steady stride. Straight ahead in the direction which he was taking he pursued his way—a dozen feet or more—then suddenly crumpled up like an empty suit of clothes, and fell lifeless at the edge of the sidewalk.

"He was dead as soon as he was hit," commented one of the doctors who performed the autopsy, "but it took him that dozen feet he traveled to find it out."

There was much of the same quality to the manner in which Brush received the verdict upon his unfortunate condition.

He did not stagger back and clap his hand to his brow, nor wildly roll his eyes and indulge in broken ejaculations, as would a hero of melodrama in a similar situation on the stage; but merely nodded a brusque assent to the doctor's words, and with an indifferent remark or two left the office.

Neither did his demeanor change after he got on the outside. Pulling his hat down over his forehead, and thrusting his hands into his overcoat-pockets, he swung off down the street at quite his usual brisk pace.

He appeared a trifle absorbed, perhaps; but, to look at him, no one would ever have suspected that he had just received a solar-plexus blow which for the time paralyzed all his powers of thought.

He was really no more conscious of what he was doing, indeed, than was the man who had not yet "found out" that he was dead. Stunned and overpowered by the direful news which had been imparted to him, his movements were purely automatic.

He was like one walking in a daze, neither knowing nor caring in what direction his legs carried him.

Gradually, however, some realization of the thing which had befallen him began to intrude upon his benumbed intelligence.

He was a cripple, an incompetent, his means of livelihood as certainly taken away from him as though his arm had been shorn off with a sword. And without his earnings how was his mother to be supported?

He had three weeks' salary coming to him from the office; but the rent for the flat was due on Saturday, and after the bills at the butcher's and grocer's had been met there would be nothing left.

Then, what was to become of them? He might, it was true, learn in time to become proficient enough with his left hand to hold down a decently remunerative position, but in the meanwhile how were they to live? Credit is not long extended to the man who is out of a job.

In the black desperation of his outlook, Brush even debated for a moment the advisability of appealing to some of the old friends of their prosperity—a step from which his pride had always hitherto revolted.

But a very brief reflection convinced him that such a course would be worse than useless. These former associates had shown only too plainly their desire to forget the existence of both mother and son.

So, what remained? Nothing, apparently, but a choice between the poor-house and such a squalid tenement den as could be maintained upon the few cents which a man in his disabled shape might be able to pick up.

And either alternative, he told himself, would in a short time prove the death of the fragile, delicately nurtured woman whose happiness and comfort meant more to him than his own life.

No wonder, then, that beads of anguish bedewed Gordon's forehead, or that he ground out curses between his teeth every time he glanced down at his useless hand.

And, like many another man who has come face to face with despair, he took the worst possible means of combating his evil.

His progress, taken all unwitting of direction or environment, had by this time brought him into one of the toughest quarters on the South Side—a locality infested with low grog-shops and questionable boarding-houses where the very dregs of the city's heterogeneous population congregated.

Down the center of the narrow street along which he was passing were laid out heavy steel girders and pillars, with a quantity of other material, for use upon an elevated railroad then in course of construction through that part of town, a completed section of which could be seen looming up two or three blocks away.

These masses of steel and iron and concrete, which were being unloaded from drays constantly arriving upon the scene, at times entirely blocked up the roadway, and even encroached upon the sidewalk; and in turning aside to avoid one such accumulation Gordon was forced to step up almost into the doorway of one of the frequent saloons.

He could see men within lined up before the bar, and the sounds of laughter and merriment floated out to his ears.

"Ah," he muttered, "that is what I need—something to brace me up and put new heart into me."

He was not a drinking man; but acting upon the impulse, he pushed up to the counter, and, ordering straight whisky, drank five full glasses, one after another, as fast as he could pour them out. Indeed, he started to help himself to a sixth, but the bartender laid a restraining hand upon the bottle and withheld him.

"Hold on there!" he was admonished. "You may be the original human tank and able to stand for a bar'l of red lick underneath your belt; but if you are, I don't know it. You're a stranger to me, remember, and although we're here to deal it out as long as the coin's in sight to pay for it, we ain't exactly huntin' for no coroner cases. So, s'posin' you drop over there in the corner, friend, and sit quiet for a minute, until I sort o' get a line on your capacity. Then if I see you are standing the gaff all right I'll dish it out to you as fast as you choose to yelp."

Had Gordon been in a more normal state he would probably have resented the

caution by either stalking from the place or insisting vehemently upon his right to be served; but the fiery stuff to which he was unaccustomed was already beginning to exert an influence upon his brain.

His head had started to whirl dizzily and his knees to wobble under him, and about all his befuddled wits could comprehend was that some one apparently in authority had bade him go over in the corner and take a seat.

Accordingly, he meekly obeyed the injunction, and after sitting for a moment gravely upright, staring out glassily upon the company, started to sag slowly down in his chair, until at last his head rested on his arms outstretched across the table, and his deep, stertorous breathing proclaimed him in a drunken slumber.

"Just as I thought," observed the bartender. "He was tryin' to drown his troubles, and if I'd 'a' let him keep on, he'd 'a' drowned hisself along with 'em. Then we'd 'a' had the dead-wagon back-in' up to the door, and a lot more slush in the papers about 'Another Mysterious De-mise at the Notorious Lafferty Place.'"

"I won't fire him out, though," he decided, after a moment's consideration. "He ain't in nobody's way where he is, and maybe the bunch'll thin out enough bimeby so's I'll get a chance to go through him 'fore he comes to."

Thus Gordon slept away undisturbed in his corner, while customers came and went, and the day verged from morning into the late afternoon.

Once, in a brief temporary lull of business, the bartender made a partial investigation of the unconscious man's clothes; but, finding nothing to reward his search save sixty-five cents and a dollar-and-a-half watch, he returned the spoil in disgust, and thereafter paid no further heed to him.

Eventually, though, some semblance of returning consciousness stirred the sleeper's lethargic repose. There was no outward sign, it is true, for he still sprawled comatose across the table, his head buried in his arms, his breathing labored and heavy.

Nevertheless, although the spell of his potations lingered as a sort of paralysis, weighing down his limbs with leaden chains, his senses had begun to awake. Out of the tangle of dreams through

which his mind was groping he slowly became aware of two voices carrying on a conversation close beside him.

"You asked me to meet you here. Now, what do you want?" said one.

The tones were crisp and clear, with something of a note of authority about them.

"Sh!" exclaimed the other quickly. This voice was muffled and husky, and bore a certain furtive quality. "Not so loud. What we've got to say had better be talked in whispers. Is that lush behind you really asleep, or playing possum?" he questioned, with sudden suspicion.

"Oh, asleep," impatiently. "I've been waiting here for you the best part of an hour, and he hasn't stirred a finger-tip. Go ahead with whatever you have to say; he's as dead to the world as the chair he's sitting on."

"Well, then, to get down to biz; I understand you've got the contract for putting up this section of the L?"

"Right."

"And that you're a new man in Chicago? You've never handled a job of this kind here before?"

"Right again. But, say, look here, ain't you getting a mite inquisitive on short acquaintance? Before I answer any more of your questions, suppose you tell me just who you are and what you're trying to get at?"

The first speaker laughed lightly.

"All things considered," he said significantly, "it is more to your advantage not to know who I am or what I am driving at. Here's the situation. You've got a lot of valuable material lying out here in the street, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"And you're not particularly anxious to have it pilfered and carted away by these thieves down here?"

"Of course not. Still, I am not afraid. We intend to put on an extra large force of watchmen, and the police will no doubt give us some measure of protection."

"Humph!" almost pityingly, "it's plain enough that you're new to this burg, all right. Why, my friend, do you know how many watchmen you'd have to post around that stuff to keep it safe? You'd have to have them touching finger-tips, and then it wouldn't be a sure bet unless

they had eyes in the back of their heads. No, the only thing for you to do, if you don't care to have your supplies looted right and left, is to deal with me. Besides, I'll save you money; the only expense you'll be at with me is the wages of one measly watchman for a bluff."

"But how can you protect me?" searchingly.

"Never mind *how* I do it. The question for you to consider is *do* I do it? On that point I refer you to Dugan & Slatery, Halloran Brothers, or any of the other contractors who have been on this job. They will tell you whether or not I can deliver the goods."

"What are your charges?"

"Merely that you keep your eyes closed and your mouth shut as to what goes on around those steel piles after night."

"Oh, I see. You're a strong-arm guy, eh? And you want me to stand for that sort of thing around my work? Well, let me tell you, Mr. Crook, that you've struck the wrong customer. Before I consent—"

"Hold on, hold on!" broke in the other man. "Nobody is asking you to 'stand for' anything, or to 'consent' to anything. All we want of you is not to play the fool. You've got considerable coin invested in this stuff outside, I take it, and you're not hunting for a chance to lose. Now, what difference does it make to you whether a few stiffes are held up down here, or somebody gets knocked over the head, provided you yourself are guaranteed against finding any of your material missing? Better be reasonable," with a touch of menace in his voice. "Alvord & Swift got gay with us down on the Jackson Park section, and you know where they landed."

"And do you mean to tell me that all the other contractors have entered into this arrangement?"

"Sure, they did. That is, all that had sections where we wanted to operate. They knew which side their bread was buttered on."

"Well," weakening perceptibly, "of course I am not looking for a loss, and, as you say, it is really none of my business what goes on after I have drawn off my men and put out my red lanterns. I can't be expected to police this part of town for the city. Don't expect, though,

that I'll acknowledge you or help you if you get into any trouble."

"Certainly not. That was the reason I told you it was better for you not to know who I am or what is my business. But you needn't lose any sleep over us getting into trouble; we don't play the game that way. And now that everything is understood, let's go over and have a drink and bid one another good-by. You'll see no more of me until you have another job that I may care to be in on."

They moved away then, and Gordon, no longer disturbed by the murmur of their voices, lapsed back into his slumbers.

When he awoke to a full realization of himself and his surroundings, an hour or so later, and with a sick disgust at his weakness staggered from the dive, he could not honestly have told whether the conversation he had heard was a reality or one of the phantasms of his alcoholic dreams. It required a later and somewhat startling event to decide the question for him.

CHAPTER III.

A SEA OF TROUBLES.

It was late afternoon, verging well on toward six o'clock, when Brush left the saloon where he had slept away his day. He realized that it would be idle for him to return to the office.

Time enough to-morrow morning, he decided, to explain his plight to the chief and get what was coming to him. Then, too, he might want a recommendation some time, and to appear all red-eyed and shaken as he was might give such an unfavorable impression as to undo the entire effect of his months of sober industry.

Therefore, when he had got hold of himself to some extent by a walk up town as far as the post-office, he took the further recuperative measures of a cup of black coffee, and a good wash-up in the lavatory of a near-by hotel. Flattering himself that he looked not so very much the worse for wear, considering his experience, he started toward home.

Whether he should tell his mother or not of the blow which had fallen upon them was a question which bothered him

not a little; but after debating it pro and con all the way out on the car, he finally concluded it were better to shelve that, too, until the morrow. The solution to many a problem comes by sleeping on it, he knew, and although he had little hope of discovering any brighter outlook for the situation, he saw no reason why his mother should not be spared the unpleasant knowledge for at least one more night.

Accordingly, he strove to smooth the lines of worry from his face, and as he mounted the steps toward their door he forced his lagging footsteps to their usual eager pace, accompanying his approach with a blithely whistled tune.

But as he laid his hand upon the knob, the door was swiftly opened from the inside, and their little Swedish maid-of-all-work, her face streaked with tears and her finger laid upon her lip, halted him on the threshold.

Glancing sharply beyond her to where the door of his mother's room stood open, he saw that the lights were lowered there, while at the same moment the pungent odor of drugs came in a waft to his nostrils.

"What it is, Velma? What is the matter?" he demanded, reeling back before the sudden fear which assailed him.

"Oh, your mudder, she have t' awful bad spell dis mornin'. Ya, und I t'ank at fairst she clean gone. I roon und call t' doctor, und when he see her, he say phone for you right away. So, I phone und I phone all day, but dey say you not dere. Den purty soon your mudder come to, und she say, 'All right. Don't bodder. Gordon vill come home to dinner, anyhow, und dat is time enough. I not die before I see my boy.'"

But before her statement was concluded, Brush had pushed hurriedly past her and was inside the sick-room. The doctor, who was seated at the bedside, rose upon his entrance, and catching him by the arm, led him out again into the hall.

"She is unconscious now, my boy," he said kindly, "and any attempt to arouse her, or any agitation, might produce instantly fatal results. It's a pity that you did not arrive while she was still able to speak with you; but since she has fallen into this condition of semistupor I would

not dare sanction the risk of awakening her. It might bring on a convulsion."

"And is there no hope of her awakening of her own accord?" questioned Gordon brokenly. "Must I see her die without having even an opportunity to say good-by?"

"Oh, no; I don't go so far as to say that. There may come a rally, and a return to full consciousness before the end, although it is but fair to tell you that I regard it as very unlikely in the present case. What I especially wished to impress upon you, however, is that there must be no effort to force the issue. If you stay in her room you must be quiet, and, should she by any chance awake, you must strive to control your emotions."

The young man nodded—he did not trust himself to speak—then returned to the room and took the chair which the doctor had vacated at the bedside.

Presently the Swedish girl tiptoed in, and tried to prevail upon him to go out to his dinner, but he merely shook his head. With bended brow and hands clasped about his knees, he sat on there hour after hour, almost as still as the softly breathing figure upon the bed.

And in that long vigil Gordon Brush went down into the very depths of penitence and self-loathing.

To think that she had yearned for him, looked for him with longing eyes turned toward the door, while he had lain sunk in his swinish slumbers in that degraded dive! And now he had lost the chance to speak to her before she went!

The sacred benison of a farewell kiss was denied him. His punishment, he felt, was greater than he could bear.

So, the night passed while he writhed in his abasement, tortured by a hundred harassing regrets, until at last the dawn broke; and with the first faint gray beams which stole in at the window the invalid stirred upon her pillow, turned toward him, and opened her eyes.

Scarcely daring to hope that his almost frenzied prayers had been answered, Gordon leaned eagerly toward her, and by the light of the shaded lamp scanned searchingly her pallid face.

He had not been mistaken. The gleam of intelligence was in her eyes, and her lips were framed into a warm smile of recognition.

Falteringly she reached out her hand and laid it upon his to draw him closer, and, obeying the behest, he bowed his head until it almost rested on the pillow beside her own.

"Gordon"—the words came weak and tremulous, in the faintest of whispers, yet as distinctly audible to him as though they had been enunciated through a trumpet—"Gordon, you have made me a proud and happy woman, for no mother ever had a better son. You have nothing with which to reproach yourself, my boy. You have been faithful to your trust, and I know from what I have seen of you that you will be faithful to every trust which life may bring. God bless you, and—good-by."

There was a long pause before the last word was uttered, and when it did come, had he been listening less acutely, he could not have been sure that it was spoken. As she finished, he raised his head and laid his lips to hers, but there came no answering pressure. She was already dead.

A week later, Brush stood alone in the little flat. The funeral was over, and he was saying farewell to the home where he and his mother had been so happy.

He had sold the furniture and most of their belongings in order to pay the doctor and the undertaker, and now, with scarcely a penny in his pocket and with his right hand crippled and useless, was starting out alone to face life anew.

He could not honestly grieve for his mother; indeed, there was rather a feeling of thankfulness in his heart that she had been spared the thorny path which he now saw stretching ahead of him.

Nevertheless, as he went now through the familiar rooms for the last time, gathering together the few things which he was taking with him, a sense of great desolation weighed down his spirit. He had no longer an object in life; and friendless, heart-sick, dejected as he was, the game seemed anything but worth while.

In this despondent mood he chanced to run across, in one of the drawers he was emptying, a loaded revolver—a relic of his college days—and as he brought it to the light a great temptation seized him.

After all, what was the use of keeping up the struggle? He could never now be

anything but a hanger-on in the battle. Fate had ruthlessly handicapped him from taking the part to which his ambitions had looked forward.

Why not end it, then, once and for all? The muzzle of the weapon pressed to his temple, and a touch upon the trigger would do it. Then he would be free of all the perplexities and irritations which encompassed him.

Almost involuntarily his hand closed around the butt of the pistol, and he started to carry it to his brow; but at that moment a recollection came to him of his mother's parting words—so strong that it almost seemed as though he again heard them spoken aloud.

"You have been faithful to your trust, and I know that you will be faithful to every trust which life may bring!"

To every trust! Was not this very existence, of which he had just now been about to deprive himself, a trust placed in his hands to make the best of that he could? Would he not then be a coward and a faithless recreant if he failed to sound it to its fullest depths and get out all there was in it?

How dared he say that life was over for him simply because his right hand had been stricken? He still had the left; although it might take him some time to attain facility with it, other men had triumphed over even greater obstacles.

John Milton, after blindness came upon him, made his name immortal with "Paradise Lost"; St. Paul, despite his "thorn in the flesh," was able to establish Christianity upon a lasting foundation.

As these thoughts surged over Brush, the arm which held the pistol dropped to his side, and he straightened up almost with an air of defiance.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "handicapped or not, I'll be faithful to my trust, and I'll fight on some way or another until I manage to win out!"

Then he laid aside the revolver and proceeded with his packing; so that, as it happened, the weapon was the last thing to be put in his trunk.

At last he reached for it, and whether it was because he handled it awkwardly by reason of his crippled hand, or whether he inadvertently pressed the trigger, he never could tell.

But as he picked it up, there came a flash, a deafening report, and, glancing quickly down at his left hand, he saw that the first two fingers had been blown completely off.

"Well, that seems definitely to settle the question of my doing any writing," he remembers muttering to himself as he gazed stupidly at the mangled stumps.

Then he dropped down in a dead faint upon the floor.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE DRIVER'S SEAT.

WHEN the time came for Brush to leave the hospital, whither he had been taken upon his discovery by those who, alarmed by the report of the pistol, broke open the door and found him weltering in a pool of blood, he was not, as may be imagined, in a particularly buoyant or cheerful state of mind.

His right hand was so warped and twisted that it was of just about as much use to him as Captain Cuttle's hook, no more; while the left, minus its two most important fingers, was about equally inefficient.

"In short," he remarked, with grim humor to the nurse, "I am pretty near the condition of the man who said that, outside of chronic indigestion and liver complaint, rheumatism in his arms and a sprained ankle, sick headache, a bad cold and high fever, he was really feeling first-class.

"And so with me," bitterly. "I have a brain active and alert as an electric dynamo, and no way to employ its power. I have a normal, healthy stomach, and no way to fill it. I am all right in one way, it is true; but in another I am all wrong."

"Oh, don't get blue," urged the nurse. "In a place like this, one very soon gains the conviction that men are like cats, and have nine lives apiece. I've seen them leave here in a good deal worse shape than you are, and yet, somehow, they always managed to get along. It's really not hands, nor feet, nor eyes, nor ears that counts, after all, according to my experience; but a cheerful spirit, and a determination to succeed.

"So, keep up a stiff upper lip, and

remember that it is always darkest just before the dawn. You can't see anything ahead now but failure and discouragement; yet it may be that before the end of this very day something will turn up which will make you wonder that you ever permitted yourself to be downhearted."

Brush smiled skeptically for answer; still, in spite of his misgivings, the nurse's optimism did bolster up his courage a bit; and, although he could hardly be said to take a bright view of the situation, he no longer gave himself over to absolute despair.

Indeed, although perhaps he did not recognize it, the cheery presence and tactful sympathy of his nurse had done much for him before this conversation. A word of comfort and hope goes a long way when we are sick, and from Gordon's first reception into the hospital, this fair-haired, deft-handed girl had seen that it was medicine for the mind rather than the body that he needed.

Consequently, whenever she stopped beside his cot to smooth his pillow, or to render him some attention, she had a sunny smile for him, and a sentence or two of sanguine assurance.

Little by little, too, without intruding upon his reticence, she drew from him his story, and her gentle heart was filled with womanly pity for the strong, handsome young fellow, whose career seemed thus blighted at its outset.

After that, more than ever did she strive to console him, and it was really due almost entirely to her efforts in this regard that Brush retained his reason. Staggering under the successive blows of misfortune, his mind would almost certainly have given way at this crisis had it not been for the interest she was able to instil into his life through her frequent talks with him and the magnetic spell of her personality.

Her name was Madeline Bowman, she told him, and she was just completing her course in the training-school with the idea of taking up nursing as a vocation, and assisting her father, a celebrated Chicago surgeon, in starting a private hospital which he was anxious to establish.

Gordon said nothing when she informed him of this ambition; but as he

looked at her he could not help wondering how long she would stick. Most nurses appear like angels to their patients; but even a well man would have had to concede Miss Bowman's beauty.

"No," he said, with a shake of his head, "she was never meant to spend her days in a nurse's uniform, looking after sick folks. It'll not be long before a fairy prince appears upon the scene; and then good-by to all her present fancies and aspirations.

"A lucky fellow, he'll be, too—the man that wins her," he told himself.

A light was beginning to sparkle in his eye and a soft smile to curve about his lips; but just then his glance fell upon his hands lying outside the coverlet—one maimed and bandaged, the other cramped and twisted out of shape—and his face changed.

"No," he frowned, his lip curling in self-contempt. "Such dreams are not for me. A pretty fairy prince I would make!"

And turning upon his side, he buried his face in the pillow, and lay there quiet for a long, long time.

So Miss Bowman found him when she next came through upon her rounds, and at first supposed that he was asleep; but he quickly disproved this, for silent as was her approach, and noiseless the rustle of her dress, he heard them, and started up eagerly to greet her.

"Ah," she said, "I was just coming to tell you that the doctor says you may have the bandages removed and be discharged to-morrow morning. And I have something else for you," bringing out a hand which she had hitherto held behind her. "It is a letter which managed in some way to go astray, and has consequently only now been delivered. Perhaps it may contain the good news which I told you to look out for."

Gordon was rather doubtful of any such culmination; nevertheless, he lost no time in tearing open the missive, and when he had scanned the five or six typewritten lines it contained, he dropped the sheet and gazed at her with an expression of half-incredulous wonder.

"By Jove, you are pretty near a prophetess!" he exclaimed. "How in the world could you foretell that any

such amazing piece of luck as this was coming to me?"

"Oh, I felt it in my bones. But is it really good luck?" she questioned, her eyes shining. "Has the tide actually turned at last? How glad I am! How glad I am!"

"Well," answered Brush, "I don't know that I would have considered it any great shakes once upon a time, but just at present the news in this letter comes to me like manna from heaven. It is, in short, an expression of sympathy from the express company for my accident, and a notification that if I care to accept it I may have a position as the driver of one of their wagons."

"And you will accept?"

"Of course. Beggars shouldn't be choosers, you know; and, while the work is not of a very exalted character, nevertheless it is respectable, and at least affords a certainty of board and lodging while I am keeping my eyes peeled for something better."

He bade her good-by then, for he would be leaving in the morning before she came on duty; but that he did not soon forget her was evidenced by a big bunch of roses which arrived for her at the hospital on the first pay-day after he took up his new job.

There was no card attached to the flowers other than the brief inscription, "From a grateful patient"; but Madeline guessed from whom they came, and dropped an appreciative tear or two upon the offering as she thought of the self-denial which must have been practised in order to save the money for the purchase of American Beauties from the meager wages of an express driver.

It was no especial sacrifice to Brush, however. Having no one to care for but himself, he decided to put by one-half of all he made by living in the very simplest fashion, and thus create a fund which would some day permit him to prepare for a higher station in life. Hence it was not so difficult for him to buy the roses as she perhaps imagined, while he esteemed it a privilege and pleasure, the one extravagance in which he allowed himself to indulge.

As to his new position, he did not find it distasteful on the whole. Indeed, to tell the truth, after he got used to it, he

rather preferred it to his old job at the desk.

The drivers were a wholesome, jovial set of fellows, with whom he got along splendidly, and the work out in the open air, with plenty of healthful exercise, made him feel like a new man.

Then, too, he had always liked horses, and although it sometimes brought a smile of whimsical amusement to his face to think of the difference between the fast trotters he had once owned and the plodding beasts over which he now held the ribbons, nevertheless a horse is a horse, and he learned in a short time to feel a genuine affection for Bill and Bonny, the placid members of his team.

He was a careful driver, with an excellent knowledge of the city, and hence had no difficulty in handling his position; but there was one duty allotted to him which he would have been just as well content to see awarded to some other of the jehus.

This was the task of meeting a 10 P.M. train from New York and bringing to the office a safe filled with money and securities, the value of the remittances often running as high as fifty or one hundred thousand dollars.

There was really but little danger, for on this trip he was always accompanied by a guard armed to the teeth. Yet they had to pass through a pretty tough section in coming from the station, and Brush could not get over a certain nervous dread whenever he thought of the responsibility placed upon his shoulders.

How well these apprehensions were justified was shown one night about three or four months after he had taken up his new employment.

The safe was handed over to him at the station—containing an especially large consignment of funds, by the way—and he had progressed without incident probably half a dozen blocks toward the office, reaching the very locality whither he had drifted on that desperate day when he was first seized with the writer's cramp.

The elevated road, which was then mere inchoate masses of iron and steel, was now well up, and its skeleton-like structure threw the street below into shadow. There were also piles of litter and materials lying about, left there by

the workmen, and as these made driving rather hazardous, Gordon was proceeding slowly.

As he came to one of these heaps, he was suddenly startled by a hoarse command to halt, while at the same moment a man leaped out and caught the near horse by the bridle, and three or four dark forms ranged up on either side of the wagon.

For a second the young fellow was paralyzed by the unexpectedness and boldness of the attack; then he heard his companion, the guard, exclaim, "Held up, by gosh!" and realized that it was time for him to be doing something.

Snatching the whip from the socket, he flicked the long lash toward the man standing at the horse's head, and as this chap gave back with a cry of pain and a muttered oath, he brought the lash down again, crack, crack, across the backs of Bill and Bonny.

Unaccustomed to such a welting, they lunged forward, and then as Gordon did not spare them, but still laid on the whip, broke into a dead run, while the wagon behind them swayed and jolted over the uneven pavement.

Meanwhile, the guard was giving an equally good account of himself. The surprise was so complete that one or two of their assailants had clambered up onto the wagon; but when the guard's pistols began to speak they did not long remain.

Standing up in the front of the careening vehicle with a gun in either hand, he kept firing as fast as he could work the trigger.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! His bullets flew right and left wherever he saw a head, whether on the wagon or in the street. And Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! came back the answer of their foes.

But, as is generally the case with such excited firing, no one was hit on either side, and in a few seconds it was all over. The guard ceased shooting because he had emptied both his weapons: the hold-up men, because the wagon had passed out of range.

Seeing that the danger was ended, Gordon now ceased further plying of the whip, and, instead, devoted all his energies to the stopping of his runaway

team, sawing on the bit and tugging at the reins so effectively that he was able to halt them within the space of a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards.

As they came to a standstill, the police, attracted by the noise of the fusillade, appeared, running up from every quarter.

"What is the matter?" they demanded, crowding around the wagon.

"We've been held up!" exclaimed Brush and the guard at one breath. "A gang of thugs came after us down there by the new L."

"And did they get anything?" addressing Gordon.

"No, we were able to stand them off, all right."

Then, as he swung around to take a survey of the interior of the wagon under the electric-light, he gave a gasp of consternation.

The safe was gone!

CHAPTER V.

ON THE BLACK LIST.

THE police, apprised of the loss, naturally wasted no time in scouring the entire neighborhood; but although their investigation was complete and exhaustive, no trace could they find either of the missing safe or of the thieves who had taken it.

Indeed, their search had not continued very long before they began to wax openly skeptical of the story told them, and to cast more and more suspicious glances in the direction of Brush and his companion.

At last the lieutenant in charge of the squad, after conferring with several of his subordinates, accosted the pair in a speech which was tantamount to an accusation.

"Look here, you two," he said roughly. "I'm not denying that this is pretty clever work, but you have played it just a bit too strong. A safe of that weight and size isn't going to be whisked out of sight in a minute, as you would have us believe. So, you see, you'll save time and trouble by cutting out the fairy-tales and giving us straight goods."

"What do you mean?" expostulated Gordon and the guard, both once more

speaking together. "You don't think we're trying to lie to you about this affair, do you?"

"Yes, I do just think you're trying to lie to me about this affair," mimicking their tone of shocked incredulity, "and I tell you for your own good that you'd better drop it. You know that between you, you planned to get away with that safe yourselves; so 'fess up, and maybe you can keep out of any very serious trouble."

"Planned to get away with the safe ourselves?" demanded Brush hotly. "What then did we do with it, you lunk-head?"

"What did you do with it? Ah, that is what I want you to tell me. The rest of the job is as plain as a red patch on a pair of blue trousers. I can tell you chaps what you did just as sure as if I'd been sitting up on the wagon riding along with you.

"You dropped off the safe down the road a piece at the house of a friend where you'd previously made arrangements to have it taken in; then you drove quietly along with the empty wagon until you reached this part of town, and decided to begin on the fireworks.

"It was a slick little scheme, as I said before, and might go down with folks that aren't wise; but there are two points that don't dovetail in, and so give you away.

"In the first place, you were a little too long in getting from the station to the point where the gun-play started. You told me, you know, that you left the station at exactly five minutes after ten, and even an express horse ought to be able to make this corner easily in a quarter of an hour; yet I looked at my watch just before that first shot was fired, and it was then twenty-five minutes to eleven. What were you doing in that spare fifteen minutes, I'd like to know?"

Gordon started eagerly to explain the delay by pointing out the littered condition of the streets; but the policeman, perceiving that he had failed to score, cut him short with an impatient gesture.

"That wasn't the main thing I wanted to bring to your attention, though," he proceeded rather hurriedly. "It was the silliness of your story that any crook, or gang of crooks, could have

walked off with that safe in the short time before he got down here, and nobody have spotted 'em. Pish! you talk like the safe was a lady's pocketbook that they could have stuffed under their coats, and strolled away with down the street.

"Now, see here, boys," insinuatingly, "drop this absurd rot and give it to me straight. We're sure to trace it up to you in any case, and you can save yourselves lots of trouble by making a clean breast of it, and telling us where we can go to get the safe. Probably, if you do this, the express company won't even care to prosecute; but otherwise you'll be lucky if you get off with less than ten years in Joliet."

The unexpected charge thus vigorously pressed had at first knocked Gordon practically speechless; but now he turned to his companion, quivering with protest.

"Well, what do you think of that, Bill?" he demanded indignantly. "Here we have gone to work and risked our lives for the darned old express company, put up as good a fight as we knew how against a gang of desperate cut-throats, and all we get for our pains is to be told that we are crooks ourselves, and a threat of ten years in Joliet. By George, it's enough to disgust a fellow with trying to keep straight."

The other could only nod a gloomy assent. His feelings over the way that things had turned out were too strong for him to permit himself to give them utterance.

The police lieutenant broke in, however, with evident disappointment.

"Well," he questioned sharply, "are you chaps going to show some sense, or do you intend to keep up your bluff until it lands you over the road? I'll give you one more chance to tell the truth, and if you don't choose to take advantage of that, I wash my hands of you. Come now," turning to Brush, "you look like a pretty sensible young fellow. Can't you see that the game is up, and that the best thing you can do is to tell us where you put the safe?"

Gordon shook his head.

"There is only one story I can tell you," he protested, "and you don't see fit to believe that."

The lieutenant frowningly turned toward a couple of his patrolmen.

"Casey," he said, "you and Halloran take these two obstinate young pups down to the station-house and lock them up. We'll see if a night behind the bars won't lead them to change their tune."

Accordingly the two unfortunates were marched away; and not one night only, but three did they spend in durance, while policemen, detectives, and representatives of the express company browbeat and bullied, wheedled and worked upon them in the effort to make them confess.

When it was seen at last, though, that neither the "third degree" nor any other measure of compulsion was able to produce a deviation from their original story, they were taken before a magistrate and discharged, on account of lack of prosecution.

"And have we no redress for this unjustifiable arrest?" demanded Brush as he started to leave the dock.

The thick-necked man upon the bench elevated his eyebrows.

"Redress?" he repeated. "Why, you ought to consider yourself in luck that you're not held to await the action of the grand jury. Redress, indeed! If you had your deserts, you'd probably be on the road to state prison at this very moment. Next!"

And such the two men found was the general opinion on the outside concerning them.

When they reported for duty at the express office, a grinning clerk informed them that their places had been filled, and that their services would no longer be required.

"Do you mean to say," questioned Brush, "that we are fired on account of this false and ridiculous charge which was trumped up against us?"

"Not at all," airily. "The complaint against you, as I understand it, is that you were three days absent without leave."

"But we were locked up. We couldn't get here. Everybody about the offices knows that."

The clerk thrust his tongue into his cheek.

"Oh, I guess you fellows don't want to work very hard," he said mockingly.

"It's a pretty good bluff to seem poor just at present; but it won't be long before you'll be wearing diamonds, and taking your ease off the money that was in that safe."

"You scoundrel," roared Gordon, inflamed now to a pitch of fury, and making futile efforts to get at his tormentor through the little window, "come out of that cage, and tell me I'm a thief to my face, if you dare to!"

The other, however, did not accept the invitation.

"Well, if you're not," he muttered sullenly, "then all I can say is that you're in mighty bad shape. Everybody about the office is so sure you are guilty, that you've been put on the employers' black list. You couldn't get a job in all Chicago, if you would agree to work for nothing."

Gordon forgot his anger in the face of this fresh calamity. Wide-eyed and aghast, he turned to his companion.

"Good Heavens, Bill!" he cried, "did you hear that?"

There was no need for answer. The gloomy look on Bill's face showed that he plainly understood. Only too well did these two know what it meant to be put upon the "black list."

They were to be denied the right to live. Every avenue of employment was to be closed to them. It was a virtual fiat of banishment from Chicago.

Do what they might, strive to mask their identity as they would, they could not hope to evade its stern decree. They were henceforth marked men, to be followed up, and watched, and sooner or later ousted from any berth which might chance to fall their way.

Stunned by the news, appalled at the dreary prospect opening up before them, they turned away from the company's offices without another word and strolled hopelessly off up the street.

"What can we do?" asked Brush at last, breaking the silence which rested between them. "There is no chance to appeal, no possibility of getting a hearing. We are simply tagged and turned loose like a couple of rats with bells around our necks, so that no one will have anything to do with us. It is unjust, unfair, outrageous!" his voice rising high in protest.

"That is all true," admitted his fellow unfortunate; "and yet, as you say, there is nothing we can do to help it."

He had evidently been meditating as he walked along, and now he squared back his shoulders with a gesture of decision.

"I'm going to shake the rotten town," he announced. "No bucking against a stone wall for me, when I know where I can get my 'three square' and a place to sleep elsewhere. Back to the farm for little Willie, and if you are wise, Brush, you'll come with me. The wages may not be so high, but a man can at least live while he is living, and they don't have any black lists. Come, what do you say? It'll be no time at all before I have you following the plow as good as anybody."

But Gordon shook his head.

"No," he said determinedly, "that may be all right for you, Bill; but I was born in Chicago, and brought up here, and I'm not going to let myself be run out of my home town when I haven't done anything to deserve it. I'm going to stay here and fight it out; for I've got enough money saved up to keep me for a little while, and I don't believe I can ever employ it to better advantage than to use it right now in proving my innocence."

Unconsciously, in his earnestness he had raised his tone, and every word he spoke was distinctly audible to a man who had followed close behind them all the way from the express office, but whom in their absorption neither of them had hitherto noticed.

This personage, a thick-set, shrewd-faced fellow, quiet and unassuming in appearance, now surprised Gordon by suddenly stepping forward, and slapping him on the shoulder.

"That's right, young fellow," he said cordially. "I admire your grit, and I'm here to tell you that I'll stand by you and help you out of this little mess you've got yourself into."

"You don't know who I am, eh?" smiling at the undisguised amazement in the glances turned toward him. "Well, I don't mind telling that I am from the headquarters staff, and was assigned to the job of shadowing you two in order to get evidence of your guilt. From what

I heard this morning, however, I am convinced that you are innocent of stealing that safe, and now I am going to do my level best to help you prove it.

"Here is my card," extending a slip of pasteboard upon which Gordon read: "George Remick, City Detective."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DIAMOND SUNBURST.

"BUTTON, button, who's got the button?" said Remick that evening when Brush met him at the down-town hotel where the detective had appointed a conference. "That is the little game we have to play. In order to clear your skirts, we've got to find who took the safe, and how they made away with it.

"As I understand it, you claim that the thing was on the wagon all right at the point where the thieves attacked you, and that the disappearance was between there and the corner where you met the police two blocks above?"

"Yes. I am positive we had the safe when they set upon us, for I had turned and seen it in the wagon not a minute before."

"What do you suppose became of it, then? The patrolman two blocks below, and those along the intersecting streets on either side, claim that no vehicle except yours passed them at that time, and it is certain that the thieves could not have carried an article of that weight very far in their hands without having been observed. The houses of the vicinity, too, which were in any way suspicious, were immediately ransacked by the officers; so I am free to confess that, as far as I am concerned, the problem has me cornered.

"If your story is straight, there seems no way to account for the disappearance except that the safe went up into the air or down into the ground—the first of which is absurd, and the second disproven by the fact that there is no break in the asphalt.

"Still," removing the black cigar from the corner of his mouth, and gazing frowningly at its glowing tip, "there is always some ridiculously simple explanation to these things which at first appear so mysterious. The puzzle is to hit upon

it, and not go chasing around wasting one's time hunting up a lot of false clues; and as two heads are better than one, I thought I would ask you if you had any theory or suspicion of your own in regard to how the deal was worked."

"No," Gordon answered. "Or, stop," struck by a sudden thought. "Have there been many hold-ups and robberies down in that section within the past three or four months?"

"No more than usual, I guess," returned the detective. "It's a pretty rough part of town, you know. Still, to make sure, I'll telephone over to headquarters and find out."

He was not in the booth longer than three minutes, but when he came out there was a light of growing interest in his eye, and an added respect in the tone with which he addressed his companion.

"You are right," he said. "Crimes of violence have increased over fifty per cent in that neighborhood within the past quarter; and, what is more, not an arrest has been made, nor a clue turned up in as many as twenty important robberies. But what do you make of it?" eagerly. "Why did you ask me the question?"

"Simply because I happened to remember an incident in my own experience, which it struck me might have a bearing on this case."

Then Brush related the conversation he had overheard that day in the saloon.

"And could you identify either of these men?" broke in Remick.

"No; you must remember I did not see them. Indeed, the matter made so little impression upon me at the time that I doubt if I could even swear positively to their voices. But of one thing I am certain, that the man I heard bargaining with the contractor is the head of an organized band of thieves operating down there from among the steel piles under the elevated road, and equally am I sure that it was he who planned and directed the robbery of the express company's safe. All we have to do is to lay our hands upon him to clear up the mystery of the disappearance."

"Very good; but how the dickens are we to lay our hands upon him? If you could identify him, I might take you through the places where gentry of his

sort congregate, and have you pick him out; or if you could recognize the contractor, we might be able to force him to tell us something. But, as it is, I don't see that we are much farther along than we were before."

"Ah," interrupted Gordon, "but you fail to grasp my point. I not only want to catch the fellow who took the safe, but also to show how he did it. This robber captain is no ordinary crook; but as indicated both by his manner of speech and by the success which he has achieved, a past-master at his business. Just think, twenty important robberies can be charged to his credit, in which the police have failed to discover a single clue. Would it not be rather a feather in your cap to lay such a chap by the heels?"

"Well, I guess yes," admitted Remick; "but I still fail to see how it's going to be accomplished without your being able to identify him. Besides, how can you say that he is responsible for all these robberies? I only told you that there had been that many in the district; somebody else may have engineered many of them."

"But that is against reason," eagerly contended Brush. "This fellow obtained the exclusive privilege of operating under the contractor's protection, and it is far from likely that he would let any other gang poach on his preserves. Again, as you say, robberies have increased there over fifty per cent. Does not that look as though it were due to the advantage he possessed? No. I'd be willing to bet almost any amount that he was at the bottom of every one of those affairs up to and including the taking of the safe."

"And, if such is the case," he questioned sharply, "you don't for a moment believe, do you, that the taking of the safe is the last trick he will try to turn?"

"No."

"Well, then, doesn't it logically follow that if a fellow were to go down there every night, and keep his eyes well open, he is going to see something sooner or later which will show him just who is doing this work, and how it is being done?"

"I'll tell you what I have decided to do, Remick. I am going to rent a room down in that block where I was held

up, and spend every night on watch, if I have to keep at it for a month; but, as I say, I'll wager that long before that time I'll have all the evidence I need to prove that I am an innocent man."

"Good," commented the detective enthusiastically. "It's a dandy scheme, and if your theory is as sound as it looks to be, it can hardly fail to work. You do that, Brush; and I'll put in all the time I can spare on the same lay. Between us, we ought certainly to nab the gentleman the first time he pokes his head out of his hole."

Accordingly, the next morning, Gordon disguised himself sufficiently to appear like one of the denizens of that section, went house-hunting down under the shadow of the L, and without much difficulty succeeded in obtaining a front room which answered all the requirements he had in mind.

Here, as soon as darkness had begun to fall, he stationed himself at a window and kept up an unceasing vigil until morning.

Nothing happened, however, to reward his watch, nor did anything occur for a week, although he sedulously adhered to his program by sleeping in the daytime, and spending each night on sentry duty at the window.

By the eighth evening, as may be imagined, he was growing pretty sick of his wearisome task, and was beginning to wonder if, after all, it might not be labor spent in vain?

Might it not be, he questioned doubtfully, that the thieves, satisfied with the hauls they had already made, especially with the rich booty gained from the express company's safe, were willing to let well enough alone, and take no further risks?

Oppressed with these misgivings, the early hours of the night fairly dragged along to him, and when he glanced at his watch at eleven o'clock, he could hardly believe that the timepiece had been ticking right along, and that it was still so far from morning.

Unable to sleep much that day on account of the rattling and banging which had been kept up by the workmen on the elevated structure, he was dead fagged out now, and he found his eyelids involuntarily closing from time to time, and

his head nodding forward upon his breast.

Stronger and stronger grew the temptation to give over the watch for that night at least, and to retire to his bed.

But all at once, his weary eyes caught sight of something over under the pillars of the L which effectually banished all thoughts of sleep from his mind, and brought him up broad, staring, awake.

Over across the way, behind the piles of steel and barrels of concrete in the street, he had caught a glimpse of men moving stealthily about in the shadow, and thereafter he sat with elbows resting on the window-sill, his chin buried in his hands, gazing toward the spot as alert and attentive as a cat at a mouse-hole.

For a long time nothing occurred. No further sight was vouchsafed him of the lurking, furtive forms across the way, and with the closing of the saloon on the corner, the street below lapsed into quiet.

One or two belated pedestrians passed, their steps more or less suspiciously unsteady, and a mail wagon rattled by on the road to the station. For the rest the thoroughfare was as silent and deserted as a country churchyard.

At last, though, the sound of horses' hoofs and the rolling of wheels upon the asphalt caused Gordon to prick up his ears. Around the corner came a well-appointed brougham with a stately coachman on the box, and turning up along the line of the elevated road drove steadily on.

Also, out of the corner of his eye, Brush saw the band across the street steal out from their lurking-places, and range themselves along the roadway.

The time for action had arrived.

Quick as thought, Gordon grabbed up a revolver from the bureau and dashed from the room and down the stairs.

Just as he reached the outer door, he heard the tense, low command of the robber captain's "Halt!" and saw the brougham stop as an imperative hand was laid upon the horse's bridle-rein.

At the same moment the dignified coachman, with a howl of affright, rolled off the box into the street on the side toward himself.

Brush paid no heed to him, however, but skirting to the rear of the waiting carriage, charged directly toward the

thieves, heedless of the personal danger which he ran. And as he circled the farther wheel, he heard a shrill feminine scream, and saw one of the ruffians withdraw his arm from the brougham door, with a diamond sunburst in his grasp.

"Hands up!" ordered the rescuer whirling down upon him with leveled revolver; but the fellow, instead of obeying, turned with a startled oath to fly.

From up the block came the sound of hurrying feet, and a vigorous rapping of night-sticks.

"The police!" came a warning cry from some one, and the dark figures of the raiders scudded back into the cover of the steel piles like autumn leaves before a blast of wind.

Brush, however, was too close upon his man for the fellow to escape. With a snarl, he turned at bay, and reached for his pistol.

But before he could use it, Gordon fired. The thief gave a howl of pain, and dropping the sunburst, clapped the hand which had held it to his right arm, where it dangled helpless at his side.

Another second, and the wounded man would have been a prisoner; but as ill luck would have it Brush stubbed his toe just then against a piece of scantling and went sprawling upon hands and knees, while the thief, with a triumphant chuckle, disappeared into the darkness.

It needed but a glance to see that the quarry was irretrievably gone, and it was therefore with considerable chagrin that the pursuer started to pick himself up.

As he got half way upon his feet, though, he saw the diamond sunburst glittering there before him where it had been dropped in the street, and he stooped to possess himself of it.

"Well, at any rate," he muttered, "I've got this."

"Yes," said a stern voice behind him, as a vise-like grip closed down upon his shoulder, "and I've got you!"

He turned quickly to find himself in the clutch of Remick, the detective.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WORSE PLIGHT THAN EVER.

"GORDON BRUSH by all that's holy!" gasped Remick as he dragged his

prisoner out into the light, and saw who he was.

Then an expression of profound mortification overspread his features.

"Well," he said disgustedly, "you certainly did play it slick on me, making me believe that you were down here doing your level best to catch the thief, while all the time you were the thief yourself!"

"Don't be an ass, Remick," broke in Gordon as he tried to wriggle free from the other's grip. "While you are fooling around here with me, the real robbers will get clear away. After them, I say; they can't have had time to get very far."

"Oh, I guess there's no use of breaking my neck," jeered the detective. "I've got all the thieves I need right here under my thumb."

"Listen to the idiot!" exclaimed Gordon with impotent rage. "And he has the chance to round up every one of this gang, too. For Heaven's sake, whatever got it into your thick head that I was the crook? Oh, will nothing move you to show just a few grains of ordinary common sense?"

"I guess that's what I'm showing now for the first time since I've had any dealings with you," retorted Remick with a grin. "And as for what got it into my head that you were the crook, I certainly didn't have to look far, when you had the evidence right there in your hand," pointing to the sunburst.

"Oh, shut up!" he continued roughly as Brush attempted to explain. "It makes me sick when I think of all the lies of yours I've swallowed already, and I don't want to listen to any more. You're the thief, and that is all there is to it."

"That's w'at 'e is, hoffer," corroborated the coachman, who having recovered the breath which was knocked out of him by his fall, now came pushing through the little circle which was gathering around Remick and his prisoner. "'E's the miscreant w'at stopped my 'casses, and knocked me off my box. I reckonizes 'im, and w'at's more Hi'll identify 'im hunder hoath before hany court w'at axes me."

"You hear," said the detective in triumph. "Now, if the lady will iden-

tify you, too, I guess I've got all the case against you that is necessary. How is she, by the way, Jack?" turning to a patrolman who had just stepped up.

"Coming around all right. She wasn't hurt any, as we at first supposed. Merely keeled over from fright and got a bit hystericky. But she bears the coachman out in his story that there was only one fellow that tried to turn the trick. She says she looked out of the window as soon as the carriage stopped, and she didn't see no one but the one chap that grabbed her sunburst."

"That about settles your tale of a gang, I guess," observed Remick to Gordon, with a significant curl of the lip. "Don't you think it is about time to come down off your perch, and admit that you are fairly treed?"

"No, I don't," persisted Brush, white-faced but still defiant. "As for this chuckle-headed idiot," with a contemptuous glance at the coachman, "he was so scared that he don't know what he did see, and the lady is simply laboring under a mistake when she says there was but one man in the attacking party. I counted no less than five of them from my window."

"Well, of all the obstinate crooks I ever saw in my life, you are undoubtedly the limit," commented the detective impatiently. "Most guys will weaken when they see they are up against it; but you keep on sticking to a ridiculous story when every prop is knocked out from under it."

"Come on over here to the lady," jerking him along by the arm. "I'll let her have a squint at you, and then I'll take you up to the station-house and lock you up."

Accordingly, Gordon was haled across a narrow space to the brougham, and stationed with his face toward an electric light so that his features might be visible to the occupant of the vehicle.

"Yes," she said in answer to Remick's question, and her voice caused the man under scrutiny to give a quick start, and draw back under the detective's restraining grasp. "Yes, I think that is the man who seized my sunburst. At least, it was a person of about the same height and build. I would not want to say so positively now, though, for I am consid-

erably shaken by my experience, and might make a mistake.

"Can you not wait for my identification until morning. I have given my name and address, and promised that I would appear in court, whenever you had need of me."

"Certainly, madam, certainly," responded Remick gallantly. "Only sorry that we should have had to trouble you at all. But this chap is about as cute as we get 'em, you see, and I didn't want to run any chances of his wriggling away from us. However, I guess we've got all we need to send him over the road as it is, and if you'd prefer to take your look at him by daylight, why, suit yourself in regard to the matter."

So, that arrangement having been effected, the coachman was summoned, and the lady allowed to proceed upon her way, while Gordon, in charge of a couple of stout patrolmen, was marched down to the station-house, and once more introduced to the interior of a cell.

Very different, however, was his present plight from that of his former incarceration. Then he had been merely slated under the charge of "suspicion," and he had known that he could not possibly be detained for longer than two or three days; but now there was a specific and definite accusation of felony against him, and furthermore it was supported by strong circumstantial evidence.

Before, too, he had company in his misery, while now he had to face the music all alone. He wondered, rather dolefully, if he had not been somewhat of a fool to turn down the offer of Bill with respect to that job on the farm.

He was certainly in a bad plight. Against the damning circumstance of having been found with the stolen sunburst in his hand, and the assertions of the coachman and his mistress that there was but one man concerned in the robbery, together with the former's false identification, he had nothing to oppose but his own unsupported denial, and a story which he himself had to admit must sound more or less fishy.

In fact, he realized thoroughly that the whole question as to whether or not he would go to state prison for a long term depended upon the force with which the coachman's statement might

be backed up by the lady who had been in the carriage.

And who was she? When she had first spoken, he thought he had recognized her voice; indeed, he would almost have been willing to swear that it was one he knew; yet now, in thinking the matter over, he told himself that this could not be—he had merely been misled by a similarity of tone.

He had not long to wait, however, to resolve his doubts. It had been late when he was brought to the station, and morning came around almost before he knew it, with a summons about eleven o'clock to the captain's room, where it was intimated to him that he would be brought face to face with his accuser.

Palpitating between fear and hope, he traversed the corridors under the guidance of a turnkey, until at last a heavy door was thrown back and he was ushered into a large, well-lighted chamber where a number of people were assembled.

Blinking and dazzled at the change from the semigloom of his cell, he could not differentiate them plainly at first; but then, as though a mist had suddenly cleared away from his eyes, two figures stood out vividly before him.

One was a gray-bearded man of professional appearance, who frowned at him with anything but a friendly expression, while the other, who leaned upon his arm, was a slender girl whose hair twisted like woven sunlight about her brows.

As his glance fell upon her, Gordon gave an audible gasp of recognition. His ear had not been mistaken then, after all.

The woman in the carriage had been his "angel of the hospital," Madeline Bowman—and she believed him guilty!

CHAPTER VIII.

IN AND OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN.

BUT if Brush was taken aback at the encounter, his emotion was as nothing compared to the astonishment depicted upon the girl's speaking countenance.

As he stepped forward into the light she gave a low cry, and leaned forward to gaze at him, her eyes dilated with shocked incredulity.

"Mr. Brush!" she stammered, as though she could scarcely credit her own vision. "Oh, this is a hideous mistake of some kind."

"No mistake at all, madam," interposed Remick, pushing hastily toward her. "This is the same man whom your coachman identified, and whom last night you yourself declared strongly resembled the man who snatched your sunburst."

"Oh, but the light was imperfect then," she pleaded eagerly; "and I was so agitated that I scarcely knew what I was saying. I did not know—I did not recognize of whom I was speaking. Why, I am well acquainted with this gentleman, and I am positive that he could never have done such a thing."

"Did you get a good look at the face of the thief when he grabbed your diamonds?" probed Remick.

"No," she was forced to admit, "I did not. I was so taken aback at the unexpected attack, and it was all over so quickly, that I have only an indistinct impression of the man's appearance."

"Then you could not be absolutely certain of the thief, even though he were standing before you?"

"No; not absolutely."

"This prisoner, however, fits to your recollection of him in height, build, and general features? At least, that is what you said last night."

"Oh, what I said last night should not be taken into consideration," she protested with some irritation. "As I have already told you, I was so excited that I was in no condition to make a binding statement, especially not on such an important matter as this."

"This morning, though," she faltered for a moment, then set her teeth and threw back her head, "this morning I can positively affirm that Mr. Brush does not resemble the robber in any particular."

At this unqualified demurrer Remick drew back, nonplused for the instant, and a little murmur of disappointment arose from the officers and detectives gathered in the room.

Dr. Bowman bent quickly toward his daughter.

"Are you sure, Madeline?" he asked searchingly. "You should not let pity

for this unfortunate man, or the fact that you have previously known him, sway you in this matter."

"Nor do I," she insisted. "I am positive that Mr. Brush is not the man."

Remick, however, had recovered something of his assurance by this time, and thrust himself quickly forward to confute her damaging declaration.

"But how can you be positive, Miss Bowman?" he demanded. "You say yourself that you caught merely a fleeting glimpse of the thief, and that you gathered only an indistinct impression of his appearance. Again, you stated last night that the prisoner in height and build was very similar to the man who attacked you, while this morning you would have us believe that there is no resemblance at all. As against the straightforward identification of the coachman, and the fact that Brush was captured running away with the sunburst in his hand, it does not seem to me that we can afford to attach much importance to your denial."

"I suppose you still stand to your story that there was only one man in the attacking party," he added, a bit sharply; "or has the passing of the night brought new light to you on that subject also?"

A tinge of color came to the girl's cheek at the rather offensive sarcasm of his tone; but she held herself well in hand and answered with dignity:

"As I told you, I saw but one man, the fellow who snatched my diamonds. There may have been others in the party, but if there were I did not see them."

"Then," said Remick, turning to the police captain with an air of satisfaction, "in spite of Miss Bowman's failure to identify, it seems to me that our case is practically complete. Contradicting the prisoner's story that a band of five or six was engaged in the affair, we have the evidence of both herself and the coachman that it was managed by only one person; and the coachman, who had the better opportunity of seeing, asserts that this man was unquestionably Gordon Brush."

"Finally, I can swear that I caught him trying to get away, and with the proofs of his guilt upon his person. Does it not look to you, especially with

the record of the recent safe-robbery against him, as though this ought to be enough to convict?"

"Yes," the captain nodded sagely. "I guess he's guilty, all right."

He turned to the turnkey who had Gordon in charge.

"Take the prisoner back and lock him up; that is all we shall need of him for the present."

But Madeline sprang forward, with glowing cheeks, to utter a protest.

"There is no use in locking him up," she declared vehemently. "I know he is innocent, if you do not; and I shall refuse to prosecute the case."

The captain looked at her with grave disapproval. If there is anything which enrages a police official, it is to have the prosecuting witness weaken in an important case.

"That is a matter in your own discretion, Miss Bowman," he said shortly; "but it really makes small difference to us whether you do or not. This being a particularly heinous matter, the department will prosecute on its own account, and all we shall require of you is to appear in court and tell your story, a thing which can readily be obtained by placing you under subpoena."

"I may caution you, however," he added warningly, "not to let your undue sympathy for the prisoner lead you too far astray. There is an offense called 'compounding a felony' which our courts are not disposed to regard with any great amount of leniency."

Thus squelched by the majesty of the law, there was nothing for Madeline to do but subside; and Brush was led back to his cell to face the depressing prospect before him with what equanimity he might.

He found, however, before many hours had passed that the captain's threat had not subdued the girl's desire to help him, and that she could act as well as speak in his behalf.

When he was brought out for his preliminary hearing, and having waived examination, was held for the grand jury in \$5,000 bail, he could see nothing ahead of him but three or four months of waiting in jail, with almost certain conviction at the end of them.

On the outside, he might perhaps be

able to do something for himself, resume his espionage down at the scene of the successive robberies, and possibly prove his innocence by catching the real culprits. But behind the bars, and with nobody placing the slightest belief in his story, what hope was there for him?

As for securing bail, that was a contingency upon which he did not speculate even in his wildest dreams. Who was there in Chicago who would come to his aid, especially while he rested under the stigma of such an accusation?

Consequently he scarcely waited for the magistrate to finish his perfunctory formula, before he turned toward the door leading back to the prison, anxious to get away from the gaze of the gaping crowd in the court-room.

But a bailiff stopped him with a touch upon his shoulder.

"What's your hurry, young fellow?" he whispered jocosely. "Are you so stuck on our hotel that you don't want to leave it; or is it that you didn't expect your friends to 'rally around the flag, boys,' quite so soon?"

"My friends?" repeated Gordon dazedly, as he faced about. "I have no friends to help me out in this affair."

"Is that so? Then I only wish I had some enemies of the same stripe; for that old whiskers over by the clerk's desk is certainly fixing to go on your bond. See, they are beckoning for you to come now."

Following the direction in which the official pointed, Brush saw, with a quick leap of the heart, that the man so disrespectfully referred to as "old whiskers" was none other than the celebrated Dr. Bowman, and that he was in reality arranging to act the part of a "friend."

Five minutes later the bond was signed, sealed, and delivered; and the prisoner was once more breathing the air of liberty.

CHAPTER IX.

BACK TO THE SENTRY-BOX.

"MR. BRUSH," said the physician, thrusting his arm through Gordon's as they reached the street, and drawing him toward a carriage which waited at the curb, "if you have no objection, I want you to go up to the house with me for a

little talk. I have taken a risk on you, solely as you may surmise on Madeline's representations, and because I have discovered that you are the son of my old friend, Jefferson Brush.

"Naturally, however, I want to ask a few questions, and satisfy myself that I have made no mistake; my daughter also wishes to do a little probing into this affair. I thought I would ask you to run over your somewhat extraordinary version of last night's adventure where we could be free from eavesdroppers and interruption.

"And tell me," he questioned a bit suspiciously, while they drove along, "how is it that a young man of your birth and education came to be an express driver? For I understand that it was to clear up your record in such capacity that you happened to be in the locality where you were arrested.

"If it was for some reason of which you'd rather not speak," he added hastily, "don't embarrass yourself; but if you can give a satisfactory explanation of the fact, I think it would be better all around."

"Certainly," replied Gordon; "it is nothing of which I am ashamed. I simply had to do something, and as my hand had become disabled, that was about the only work for which I was eligible."

"Your hand disabled? What was the matter? Ah," picking up the young fellow's wrist, "a bad case of writer's cramp, eh? But why didn't you learn to use the left hand? That is what most fellows in your position do."

For answer Gordon showed him the absence of his two fingers.

"It was through them I came to meet Miss Madeline," he said. "She was my nurse at the hospital."

"Ah, yes, I remember now," confessed the doctor. "She told me about your case at the time, laying especial stress upon your bravery in the face of such discouragements, and she referred to it again this morning, as an added proof to her mind of your innocence. I have so many things on my mind, though, that it slipped me for the moment.

"And have you never done anything for that cramped hand?" he questioned, seizing it again and examining it with interest.

"What was there to do? The doctors told me it was hopeless."

"Then you have never heard of Steinkopf, of Berlin, eh? He claims to have relieved cases fully as bad as this by subcutaneous injections, coupled with a stretching of the tendons, and a general massage of the affected parts. It has never been tried in this country, I believe; but if you would care to hazard the experiment, I should be delighted to put you into my hospital and see what could be done with you."

"Oh, if you would, doctor!" Brush glanced up toward his benefactor with sparkling eyes, as this doorway of hope was unexpectedly opened to him.

Then his face suddenly clouded over.

"How long would it take to try the cure?" he asked.

"Oh, about three and a half or four months; certainly not less than three."

"And would I have to remain in the hospital all the time?"

"Unquestionably. I should not only want to have you under my eye continually, but it would also be imperative that you should spend a good part of the period on a cot, so as to insure the arm's having perfect rest."

"Then I am afraid I shall have to decline," regretfully. "I appreciate your kindness, doctor, and I would give almost anything in the world to accept your offer; but just at present I feel that all my time and energies must be devoted to running down this gang of thieves, and establishing my innocence."

"Well," said the doctor, "of course, if you succeed, this cure can be taken later on; but I warn you that you are taking a serious risk in putting it off. Steinkopf lays stress upon giving the treatment at as early a date as possible, and says that in advanced cases the percentage of failures is necessarily very large."

"Nevertheless," rejoined Brush determinedly, "I think I shall have to wait. A crippled hand, as you may comprehend, is no slight misfortune; but as between that and a crippled character, I should have to choose the former every time."

"By Jove, you are right," assented the other, struck by his earnestness; "and I give you credit for it, knowing

the temptation my offer must have been to you. You go ahead in your own way to clear your good name; and then when that is done we'll tackle the hand. And if professional skill and the most careful attention count for anything, we'll win out there, too.

"But here we are at the house," he broke off suddenly as they drew up before a handsome residence on the Boulevard. "Madeline will be simply dying to hear how we got along."

Accordingly, ensconced in the doctor's cozy study, an account of the court proceedings was duly rehearsed; and then Brush was given the floor and encouraged to tell his story in full detail.

Beginning at the time of the robbery of the safe, he related to his interested audience of two all the inferences and deductions he had drawn, and all the circumstances which had arisen as a result of his desire to get his name off the "black list."

The doctor listened attentively, nodding his head from time to time as Gordon made his successive points, and showed plainly that both the manner and subject of the narrator had made a most favorable impression upon him.

"There is only one mistake that I can see you have made, my boy," he commented, when the tale was finished; "and that is, you tried to carry too much upon your own shoulders. If you had had a partner with you, instead of trying to do the whole thing yourself, you would not have been placed in your present false position."

"And I very much fear," he added thoughtfully, "that unless you do take on an associate, your future efforts along this same line will only land you in deeper difficulties."

"But I did have a partner," contended Brush with a laugh. "It was he who placed me under arrest."

"Ah," said the doctor, "but I mean some one who could be with you all the time, and who would be in a position to substantiate your story, and clear you, if you should happen to fall into any more suspicious circumstances. Don't you know of somebody whom you could trust and to whom the police would also give credence, if the necessity for it arose?"

"No," returned Gordon; "that is, nobody but Remick, and I suppose he is so thoroughly convinced by this time that I am the crook, he would refuse to have anything further to do with me."

"Ah, Remick," pondered Dr. Bowman. "The very person, provided his prejudices are not so rabid that there is no possibility of getting him to see reason."

"I'll tell you, Brush," stroking his beard, "don't you do anything further until I have had a talk with Remick, and see if I can't convert him from the error of his ways. If you can get him to join hands with you, I believe your chances of success will be increased fully one hundred per cent."

Accordingly, Brush waited; and whether it was that the doctor's arguments were particularly persuasive, or whether the method of "conversion" was in the shape of a good-sized check, certain it is that the detective hunted Gordon up a day or two later, and rather sheepishly announced that he was prepared to join issues with him.

"I'll tell you how it is, Brush," he said with rather startling candor, "I believe that you are a crook, and when your case comes up, I am going to do my level best to prove you so; but I am always willing to be 'shown,' and as there isn't any reason why we shouldn't be friends in the meantime, I am going to give you every opportunity to prove to me that you are an honest man."

"I have taken a three weeks' lay-off from the department, and if you want me, I stand ready to go down to that rat-hole of yours every night, and watch by your side. Then, if anything happens to prove what you claim is the truth, I'll take off my hat to you and do everything in my power to square the wrong I've done you."

As a result of this conversation, Gordon found himself stationed that night in his old room across from the L, eagerly watching for the appearance of the robber band, while at the other window, equally on the lookout, was the detective.

And this time they did not have to endure any long period of waiting; for it was not later than ten o'clock on that very first evening that Brush suddenly

started to his feet with a quick sigh of satisfaction, and with a light touch upon the shoulder of his companion signified to him that it was time for them to "get busy."

CHAPTER X.

WHAT THE HAND-CAR MEANT.

THE incident which had attracted Brush's attention was the approach of a hand-car over the rails of the L.

Ordinarily, perhaps, he would not have given a second thought to the circumstance, supposing merely that some after-hours' work was being done, or that a superintendent was making a night trip of inspection over the line.

But as the grind of the wheels struck upon his ear, it came back to him, with a snatch of vivid recollection, that without paying any heed to it, he had heard the same sound after he had stopped his horses on the night that the safe was taken, and again just after he had been placed under arrest on the evening that Madeline Bowman was held up.

Could it be that there was some connection between the trips of this hand-car, and the various robberies which had taken place? At any rate, it would do no harm to find out.

Hurriedly leaning over he imparted his suspicions to Remick, and the latter agreed with him that it was a feature which might well repay investigation. The pair thrust their revolvers into their pockets and slipped from the house.

Along the sidewalk they sauntered carelessly, so as to throw off the scent any one who might be on the watch, and then, when they had strolled thus a couple of blocks, made as if to cross the street.

But once under cover of the L, they dodged swiftly to one side, and making their way cautiously among the piles of iron and steel, shortly reached a point underneath the structure about opposite to where they had started out.

Up one of the pillars then they swarmed, Gordon in the lead, but Remick following close behind, and soon stood side by side upon the superstructure, their heads just level with the rails, their feet resting upon the stringers below.

There was a little landing for an oil-barrel just here along the tracks, which served as an admirable screen for them, and as the night was dark in addition, they felt themselves reasonably sure from detection.

The hand-car had halted a short distance down the road, and for a moment or two they felt a little anxiety lest they might have chosen their view-point too far up; but this misgiving was quickly stilled by the sound once more of approaching wheels, and peeping out from their retreat they could see the clumsy vehicle rapidly approaching them as four stalwart men worked away at its beam.

So interested did Gordon become in watching their advance, that Remick grabbed nervously at his arm, and pulled him down to keep him from being seen.

"Duck, bo, duck!" he hissed. "That white face of yours don't look well so high up in the air. It's no use rubbering now until we find out just who they are, and what they're up to."

They had not long to wait for intelligence upon this score, however; for the hand-car came on, and stopped directly opposite the spot where they were lurking, and a blind man could almost have told that its passengers were not railroad men, but were bent upon an entirely different mission.

Not a word was spoken among them; but each one of the party seemed to understand as though from long training just what he was expected to do, and he wasted no time in accomplishing it.

Rapidly the car was braced to the rails; then upon it by the aid of a winch was erected a small but powerful crane, which was slewed around with its depending chains projecting over the side of the track.

These preparations completed, the one among them who seemed to be the leader gave a low-toned command, and two of his companions followed him over the edge of the ties, and down a pillar to the street.

The fourth member of the party remained above beside the car, as though to stand on guard.

The voice in which the leader spoke had given Brush a thrill, for he recognized it distinctly as the one he had heard in colloquy with the contractor that day

in the saloon; and if he had required further proof that these were the thieves, he gained it when he cautiously raised his head and secured a better view of the sentinel left beside the car.

It did not need the arm carried in a sling to tell him that this was the man he had chased in order to recover the diamond sunburst, and whom he had winged with a shot from his revolver.

Hitherto, since the car had halted so close to them, the only communication between Remick and himself had been by means of silent but eloquent nudges; but Gordon became so excited over these discoveries that he could not resist the temptation to acquaint the detective with them.

"Arm in a sling, eh?" whispered back the other elatedly. "That makes it all the better for us; since it is a cinch that we shall have to overpower him, and one of us take his place. The only risk we run is that he may sight us, and give a yell of alarm before we can get to him and shut off his wind. However, we'll have to take a chance on that; so off with your shoes and follow me."

Stocking-footed and silently as cats then they drew themselves up over the sleepers, and scarcely daring to breathe, stole cautiously toward their unsuspecting victim.

Seated on the side of the car with his face turned away from them, and all his interest centered in the movements of his comrades below, he evidently did not have an idea that there was an enemy within a thousand miles; so that it must have come as a complete surprise to him when Remick's hand reached suddenly out from behind and closed around his windpipe.

Nevertheless, considering the odds against him, he put up a savage fight; and by reason of the insecure footing upon which they battled, it is doubtful if at one time he might not have freed himself from the detective's grip, and managed to let out a yell of warning.

But just at that moment, Gordon got hold of the chap's injured arm, and by a dexterous twist upon it soon brought him into submission.

It was the work of but a minute then to bind and gag the man securely, after which Remick, with many pleasantries

which did not seem to be appreciated by the prisoner, relieved him of his most noticeable articles of apparel, and with Brush's aid deposited him in a convenient tool-box which stood on the little landing beside the oil-barrel.

"How do I make up as the late lamented?" inquired the detective, as he rapidly invested himself with the garments filched from their unwilling captive, pulling the latter's cap down over his eyes, and knotting a handkerchief about his shoulder so as to make a sling for his arm. "Good enough to pass in the dark, I hope: for I've not only got to fool these fellows when they come back to the car, but I've got to stay with them until they get back to where they came from, and it would hardly be healthy for me to have them discover that I am only an understudy."

"And now, bo," laying down his instructions to Gordon, "seeing that you can do no further good here, supposing you sneak back to the ground again, and hike off down the street, tipping the copper on every block to keep his eyes peeled for the passage of this sporty old hand-car. If it goes by him, he is to pay no further attention; but if it stops anywhere on his beat, tell him to phone to the nearest station-house for a squad of men without delay, and to follow the guys aboard the car at every hazard, and no matter where the trail may lead them."

"Impress upon their minds that any failure to abide by these directions will probably result in their being assessed for a floral tribute to be sent up to my house, and I don't think you'll have any trouble with them."

"But suppose they don't believe me, suppose they get it into their heads that I am trying to give them a josh?" suggested Gordon.

"By Jove, that's right. Here, take my badge," unpinning it from his vest, and passing it over. "It's got my name on the back of it, and they'll pay attention to it, the same as if it was me myself coming walking down the street."

"But aren't you doing a pretty dangerous thing?" asked Brush with a significant smile, "handing over your badge to a man that you believe is a crook, and are going to do your level best to prove so?"

"Oh, quit your kidding, and get along with you," retorted Remick, giving him a playful push. "Even the best of us will sometimes make mistakes."

And then with a hearty grip of the hand, the two comrades parted, Gordon to shin down a pillar, and after some maneuvering among the steel piles to hurry off on his Paul Revere-like errand, while the detective remained on guard, safe for the present, but with a prospect fraught with peril looming up ahead of him.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE TURN OF THE LIGHT SWITCH.

FOR about fifteen minutes after Gordon's departure, nothing occurred to arouse Remick's interest in any way; but at last, as he could perceive from his vantage-point, there began a concerted movement among the three crooks below him on the ground.

Stealing out from their respective hiding-places, they met where the shadows lay thickest along the roadway, and ranged themselves up in line.

The reason for this activity on their part became apparent a moment later when around the corner hove into view the wagon of the Transcontinental Express Company, returning from the ten o'clock New York train.

On it came, the driver and guard lolling back on the seat all unsuspecting of any danger, until they reached the spot where the bandits lurked in ambush.

Then came the sharp, imperative command to halt. The leader stepped out to seize the bridle of the nearest horse, while his two confederates, as though drilled to their parts, leaped into the rear of the wagon, and tossed out the safe.

The rest was an almost exact replica of what had taken place in the robbery in which Gordon was concerned.

Seeing that the safe was out of the wagon, the leader stepped away from the horse's head, giving a simulated cry of pain, and the team, feeling themselves freed and urged on moreover by the driver's whip, started off on a dead run.

A few scattering shots were let fly by the leader then, in answer to the steady rattle of the guard's revolvers; but this

was evidently largely a bluff on his part, and intended more than anything else to frighten away any curious-minded persons in the neighborhood, so that his companions, who were lugging away the safe, would have time to get it back under the L structure unobserved.

Remick witnessing all this, instantly conjectured what his part must be in the proceedings, and wishing to carry out his rôle, quickly loosened the chains attached to the crane, and let them down.

A moment later, everything having been made fast below, he was joined by the two thieves, and then ensued a feverish working of the winch until the safe had been hoisted high above the tracks, and by a turn of the crane swung around aboard the car.

Hardly had this been accomplished before the police appeared upon the scene blowing their whistles, and flashing their lanterns about among the steel piles; and the leader, who had remained below to cover up the retreat, came panting up over the side muttering curses at the others because they had been so slow.

"Unless you fellows learn to get more of a move on yourselves, we are all going to be nabbed some of these fine nights," he growled. "Dunderheads though they are, you can't expect the cops always to keep on believing that it's the express messengers who do these things themselves. Some of these days, they are going to commence looking around a little, and as soon as they begin to do that, our goose will be cooked good and brown.

"There is no use of our attempting to pull out now," he went on vexedly. "That would only serve to draw their attention to us. All that we can do is to lay low, until they are gone, and pray that in the meantime none of them will happen to look up, and get to wondering why a hand-car is standing out here at this time of night."

Accordingly, the four crouched in a huddled bunch on the narrow platform of the car, a situation which, as may be imagined, was far from comfortable to the detective.

True, there had evidently been no question of him as yet on the part of his companions; but he knew that the least chance word or gesture might reveal that he was an impostor, and if that were once

guessed, although he had a score of friends on the ground below, he did not believe his life would be worth a minute's purchase.

All that he could do, indeed, was to sit somewhat apart from the others, and to keep his face as well turned away as possible; yet he could not tell but that this might be the very means of drawing suspicion to himself, since, for all he knew, the man he was impersonating might be an extremely chatty and conversational individual.

No wonder then that the cold sweat oozed out of the detective's pores, and that he felt each minute as though, if the strain continued for thirty seconds longer, he should certainly be compelled to scream.

Fortunately, however, the circumstances were such as to render absolute quiet on the part of the quartet almost a necessity; and although to Remick it seemed a century, the order was really not so very long protracted.

At length the police withdrew from their search, and with a clear coast the leader rose to his feet, and gave the curt command to start.

Then, indeed, Remick did shave discovery by a narrow margin; for so anxious was he to appear equally proficient with the others that he quite forgot that he was supposed to be injured, and grabbed the handle-bar with both hands.

Only when he saw the man next to him give a look of surprise did he realize his mistake, and then with a well-simulated grunt of pain, he quickly drew back the hand and replaced it in the sling.

"Say, boys," commented this fellow with a laugh. "What do you think? Jerry's in such a hurry to get away from the cops that he clean forgot he's got a sore arm."

There was a little appreciative amusement at this; but it did not last long, for by this time the car was in motion, and when one is engaged in exercise of that kind there is not much opportunity for either mirth or conversation.

Evidently, the men were anxious to get home, for they pumped away with a will, sending the car fairly racing along under the impetus of their swift, regular strokes.

Block after block was thus passed, until at last the end of a completed section of the L was reached, and a gap showed ahead before another section began.

Here a halt was made, and the crane being again called into requisition, the safe was duly lowered to the ground and lifted into the cab, which came driving up in response to a whistle from the leader.

The three crooks clambered into the vehicle after it, while Remick, seeing thankfully that there was no place for him inside, climbed up and took a seat on the box beside the driver.

Away they went, then, through the very heart of Chicago and up into the swell residence section until, to the detective's surprise, they halted before one of the most showy places in the neighborhood, a big stone dwelling surrounded by spacious grounds.

Driving through the gates, they proceeded back to the stable, and after what appeared to be a sort of password had been exchanged between the leader of the expedition and the man who answered his knock, a door was opened, and the trio from inside the cab started to carry the safe within.

Remick looked about him a bit nervously.

Not a sign had he seen as he came along of any police following upon his trail. Was it possible that Brush had failed to deliver his instructions or had got them confused in some way? If so, then he was in a more ticklish predicament than he had yet been throughout the whole adventure.

Still, there was no chance to back out now. To evade the issue before him would be not only to rob himself of the fruits of his endeavors, but also the surest method of awakening suspicion.

Therefore, taking his courage in his hands, he stepped boldly forward and followed the others through the door.

The room into which he penetrated was pitch dark at first; but no sooner were all inside and the portal closed than some one touched a button and a dozen electric-lamps flared out.

Then, as though guided by a common impulse, every eye in the place—and there were fully a score of men present

—turned in startled question upon Remick.

Some one cried, "A spy!" and at the word a dozen weapons flashed into the air. Drawing his own guns, the detective backed to the wall, prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROUND-UP.

MEANWHILE, Gordon had been having some adventures on his own hook.

Leaving the detective, he gained the sidewalk in safety without having been observed by the thieves, and struck off down the street.

It was useless to go north, he knew; for the L was completed practically in that direction no farther than this point, and it therefore stood to reason that the car when it started would journey south.

Consequently, he followed the tracks as far as they extended, delivering Remick's message and showing the badge to the patrolman on each block through which he passed.

Arriving at the terminal, however, he decided, after giving the cop there his instructions, to do a little prospecting on his own account; for he had an idea—not so much an intuition as a shrewd inference from the lay of the land—that the hand-car on its return trip would come clear through to the end of the line.

Accordingly, he nosed about through that locality for an hour or more, never straying so far away from the L as to be out of hearing of the sound of car-wheels on the rails; yet pretty thoroughly exploring all the streets of the vicinity for a block or two in every direction.

And in the course of his peregrinations he chanced to notice one peculiar thing. A cab stood all that time on a side street for no perceptible reason.

It was certainly not for the convenience of any one in the houses along there; for he satisfied himself by investigation that every residence on that block was closed up and its occupants abed.

Thirsting for information, he puzzled over the question quite a little, and was almost on the point of accosting the driver himself with a direct inquiry,

when suddenly the possibility flashed upon his mind that this mysterious "night-hawk" might have some connection with the case he was following up.

What more natural, if the hand-car should come this far on its return, and if the thieves should still have some distance to go—especially if they expected to be burdened with heavy loot upon their return—than that they should have a cab posted in waiting to convey them to their destination?

Struck by the force of his arguments, Brush lost no time in communicating his suspicions to the patrolman.

"I'll tell you," he suggested, "instead of having a squad come over here afoot, in case the car should run out this far, you telephone in for the bunch to come in a 'hurry-up wagon.' Then, if my suspicions turn out to be correct in regard to this cab, it'll be no trick at all to follow it."

"But shure, won't th' dhriver know he's folleyed whin he sees th' po-lice-coach a-paradin' behind him?" objected the bluecoat with Celtic shrewdness.

"By Jove, that's right! We shall have to use some strategy here. Ah, I have it. We'll get a couple of messenger kids on bicycles, one to keep the cab in sight and the other to scoot off every now and then, so as to keep the police back to a course along parallel streets. In that way we can be right at their heels all the time, and they'll never drop onto it."

And this, as a matter of fact, was the way Brush and the police handled their task; so that as it happened, when the cab turned in at the gates of the stately mansion and Remick was in such trepidation lest his plans had gone awry and he should find himself deserted, a patrol-wagon full of stalwart minions of the law was but one short block away.

So, as he backed up to the wall to face the threatening phalanx of his foes, there came an interruption in the shape of a thunderous knock upon the door, and the portentous summons, "Open in the name of the law!"

Instantly the lights went out, but as the darkness fell Remick made a dive across the room and, pinioning his arms around the robber captain, dragged him with himself under the shelter of a convenient table.

Here Brush and the police found him five minutes later when the door, having gone down before the blows of a lustily wielded ax, the lights once more blazed out and the forces of law were in control of the situation.

"Are you all right, Remick?" questioned Gordon anxiously.

"You bet I'm all right," responded the detective with elation. "Thanks to you, I've scored the biggest hit made in the department in years. I've bagged the original gentleman cracksman. Here he is," dragging out his captive, "the Honorable Montgomery Bustick, philanthropist, art connoisseur, and high-roller generally, and if I don't get to be an inspector on account of it, then there is no justice left in this world. Why, Brush, this night's work will be the talk of Chicago for twenty years to come!"

Three months later Gordon Brush, seated in an invalid's chair at Dr. Bowman's hospital, was reciting to Madeline, who had just returned from a visit to friends, the wonderfully successful results which had manifested themselves in his case from the Steinkopf treatment.

"And you say that you really use your hand as well as you ever could?" she questioned with amazed delight.

"Every bit. So well, in fact, that in two weeks' time I may assume all the clerical work of the hospital here, including the correspondence, keeping of accounts, and all the rest of it. The institution has grown to such an extent that your father has found it absolutely necessary to place the business details of its management in the hands of some one else, and hereafter devote himself en-

tirely to the professional and scientific side of the work. He has very kindly offered me the position at a most munificent salary."

"And you have accepted, of course?"

"No, I waited to do so until I had a chance to consult you."

"To consult me? In regard to what?"

"Well, for one thing, to see if you thought I could write well enough to take it."

"How perfectly absurd. Of course you can write well enough."

"But I am by no means certain," he persisted. "Won't you look at a specimen of my chirography and tell me what you honestly think of it?"

"Why, certainly, if you put it that way. Still, I cannot help thinking you are very silly."

Turning to the table beside him, Brush dipped a pen into the ink and with his old swinging stroke wrote a single line across a sheet of paper and handed it to her.

She glanced at it, then quickly averted her eyes and a vivid, burning blush swept up across her face to the very roots of her fair hair.

On the paper were the three words, "I love you!"

"Well," he asked after a minute, and there was a certain tremulous anxiety in his tone. "what do you think of my specimen?"

A mischievous smile broke upon her lips. Stepping around him to the table, she, too, picked up the pen and wrote underneath the line he had transcribed: "Graded perfect. One hundred per cent."

THE END.

MY LIFE.

My life is like the summer rose,
That opens to the morning sky,
But, ere the shades of evening close,
Is scattered on the grass—to die!
Yet on the rose's humble bed
The sweetest dews of night are shed,
As if she wept the waste to see—
But none shall weep a tear for me!

Richard Henry Wilde.

SPORT OF CIRCUMSTANCE.

By WALTER DURANTY.

A vivid tale of one man's agony of mind after an episode
in a Paris street that set a mob of avengers upon his trail.

"SURELY you, Forbes, will agree that my view is the right one?" The man thus appealed to had been listening to a discussion on cowardice, fear, and remorse in the liner's smoking-room. He had that air of lofty aloofness which the English affect away from home; only the prominence of the whites in his eyes indicated his excitable nature and the interest he really felt.

"It seems to me," he replied, "that the matter is wholly physical. Time will dull the smart of remorse; each age-long moment whets the edge of fear. Fear will drive even the innocent to madness. Every child knows the black dream of agony as it flies from an unknown terror and wakes pale and gasping in the clutch of Fear.

"Have any of you ever known what it is to fly blindly like a hunted beast, to see hatred and hostility on every side, on every face, and then, when you have escaped for the time, to wait, sick with terror, for the agony that will climax anticipation. This is the murderer's real punishment, and I who have endured it know how awful it is."

He paused as if challenging reply, but no one spoke. His air of indifference had vanished, but it was with a certain reluctance, as if unwilling to reveal part of himself, that he continued:

"One Monday morning nearly two years ago I was hurrying to the art school, where I studied in Paris. I had spent the night at Montmartre, and as I crossed the Pont Neuf I remember admiring the effect of the mists that still hung over the river. One of the great towers of Notre Dame was shrouded in the pearly vapor, while the other stood out sentinel-like above the city, its windows gleaming gold in the sunlight. Below rippled the Seine, caged in its network of bridges like a captive beast, tame and harmless now, but alert with the

memory of the days when its stream ran red.

"As I passed down the narrow Rue des Saints Pères toward Montparnasse I felt an almost personal pride in the peace and security of the twentieth century, with all its progress and discoveries. 'The only thing now needed,' I said to myself, 'is a universal language, so that I can ask my way without having to think for five minutes how to do it.'

"Having prepared my sentence of inquiry, I was hesitating at the corner when suddenly a girl rushed up, caught me by the arm, and began to speak in a rapid, excited tone.

"Of course I didn't understand a word, but there was no mistaking her meaning. Her look of frightened appeal told more than any words, while her disordered hair, torn scarf, and forehead smeared with blood, showed that she had real need of my protection.

"Before I could frame some sort of reply I heard quick steps behind me, as a lithe, Spanish-looking man sprang past, threw himself at the girl and plunged a knife into her side. There was a swift gush of blood and she fell writhing at my feet, while the man turned with a shout, holding up the dripping knife.

"Before he could escape I caught his wrist and fixing my hand in his neckcloth tried to throw him down. Desperately he struggled to free himself, then with a loud curse he struck me heavily in the face and tore loose, leaving me holding the knife.

"For a moment I stood dazed. To this day I recall the disgusting smell of garlic in the air and the stickiness of the knife in my hand. Then I dashed after him up the street, shouting murder.

"Soon a crowd joined in the chase, and we were gaining fast on the murderer when suddenly he darted round a corner and when I turned it he was out of sight.

"I rushed on unswerving, but at the next corner a man gave a cry and tried to trip me, then a woman screamed 'assassin,' and flung a great pan at my head, and all at once I realized that I was now the hunted instead of the avenger, and that my eagerness and the knife I carried had betrayed me.

"Loud behind clattered the sabots of my pursuers; their savage yells warned me of the fate that would follow capture. A stumble, and I would be torn in pieces by the furious mob.

"My feet now moved without sensation like stumps of wood. In despair I resolved to turn and fight, when I saw a little passage on my left and rushed down it with a final spurt.

"I found myself in a churchyard, where I stumbled across the graves and ran round the church looking wildly for shelter. Built up against its side was a small porch with a flat roof. Spurred by fear, I leaped at this and somehow by a last great effort dragged myself on to the top and lay there exhausted.

"Huddled up against the wall, I heard the crowd sweep round the corner and spread out in search of me among the tombs. All the while as they hunted they called to one another like children that grow hot or cold at hide-and-seek, so that now the voices sounded more distant, now some new cry would ring out almost below my hiding-place.

"At last the shouting died away and I dared to look around. The churchyard was empty, and the trampled grass was the only sign of my pursuers.

"Feebly I crawled home and without a word to the surprised concierge tottered to my room and flung myself on the bed.

"My mouth was dry and cracked, though my hair was damp with sweat. My clothes were stained with dirt and mold, my face was bruised where the man had struck me, and my hands were covered with horrible sticky crimson.

"With a dull wonder I saw that it was not yet ten o'clock; hardly an hour ago I was admiring the river mist round Notre Dame. Suddenly I sprang to my feet as a new danger thrilled me. I was not yet safe, the concierge had noticed my condition, hundreds had seen me with the knife in my hand. Soon the murder would be widely known, I would be

traced, and, friendless in a strange land, would never free myself from the net of circumstance.

"With trembling haste I washed the blood from my hands, not even waiting to fling out the reddened water. Then I seized a coat, pulled down my hat to hide the bruise, and drove swiftly to the Gare Saint Lazare.

"I reached the station just in time for the ten-thirty mail, and never will I forget the dragging centuries before we left the station. The carriage was crowded, and it was only by fixing my eyes on a small metal notice opposite that I was able to control my impatience. To this day the words '*C'est défendu de se pencher dehors*' rise up before me in white letters when I awake in the darkness, printed by fear on my brain, though I did not know their meaning or even think of it.

"Rouen was the only stop before Dieppe, and there a further terror awaited me. An official passed slowly down the train, looking in at every window, obviously in search of some one. I could not withdraw my head, but watched him, fascinated. At our carriage he stopped, looked at me closely, then, just as hope died, he handed a telegram to one of my fellow passengers, saluted, and retired.

"After an agonizing delay the steamer at last left Dieppe, and my numbed brain began to stir. The shock I had received was so great that I seemed unable to think clearly or make any plans for the future, but as the days passed and I heard no more of the tragedy I gradually recovered confidence and resumed my usual life, though often at night I used to wake screaming with the fear that mastered me."

The Englishman paused and looked at his hearers apologetically, as if ashamed of the weakness he had confessed, the whites of his eyes showing more clearly than ever as he nervously wiped his forehead.

"But did you never hear anything more?" asked Lewin at length. "Did you never go back to Paris and find out if they collared the real murderer?"

There was silence for a minute, then the Englishman replied in a dry, constrained voice with his gaze averted and the same curious air of apology.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I did hear more, everything, in fact. Some months later I met a friend who had just returned from Paris, full of the wonders of the city and the sights he had seen there. As he described the delights of a third-rate vaudeville show he had seen there, I felt a vague surprise that any one should have pleasant memories of so hateful a country.

"By the way, old man," he continued, 'I almost forgot to tell you, an awfully curious thing happened at this place in connection with you.

"After the dancing was over they

had some moving pictures. The last scene was called "Le Crime d'Amour." A girl runs up to a tall man standing at a street corner with his back to the audience. She is followed by another man who stabs her in the most realistic way—you could just see the dagger drip—then the two men fight and the crowd join in and the villain is chased round the corner, and do you know, my boy, that just at the end the tall man faces round and it was you to the life, with a splendid expression of horror on your face. Wasn't it awfully funny?"

"Yes," I said, "it was—awfully."

WITH SEALED LIPS.

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "On Glory's Trail," "Their Last Hope," "The Scarlet Scarab," etc.

A story of the sixties in which an army officer obtains leave of absence from the President and finds himself in worse case than any that the war thrust upon him.

CHAPTER I.

"I APPEAL TO CAESAR."

I FELT ridiculously like a schoolboy who is summoned into the august presence of his head-master. And I was ashamed of myself for the feeling.

I clicked my spurred heels together as I stood at "attention." I let my saber clank gently and reassuringly against my polished cavalry boot, and drew myself up to the full and powerful six-foot stature nature gave me. In fact, I looked as imposing as I knew how.

But it was no use. The squat-figured, long-bearded, spectacled tyrant in whose presence I stood seemed to look past all these flimsy defenses and to read the truth—that I was afraid of him.

Yes, I was afraid. Not of anything he personally could do to me, but of the power he possessed to prevent me from doing the one thing around which my hopes and very existence now centered.

It was he who broke the silence that had fallen between us at the conclusion of my appeal.

"Well, sir," he said, in that dry, impersonal voice I had grown to loathe, "is that all?"

"Yes, Mr. Secretary," I replied sullenly. "That is all."

"You may return to your regiment."

He crossed the room and busied himself with some papers on his desk. Evidently he considered the interview at an end.

I stood irresolute. A pompous, obese man with white side-whiskers rolled into the office. I recognized him at a glance for Senator Blankley, the Middle-West political boss whose woodcuts I had so often seen.

"Hello, Stanton!" hailed the newcomer with a breezy confidence that seemed to me a trifle overdone. "You got my note, I suppose?"

"I received a note from you this morning, Senator," replied the great Secretary, "and I—"

"So it's all right, then!" broke in the other. "You see, the two men are constituents of mine and I—"

"It matters nothing whose constituents they are or who intercedes in their behalf!" snapped Stanton, his dry voice scaling an octave in his sudden anger. "They were rightfully condemned as deserters and they will take their punishment. Let us understand each other,

Senator?" he went on, forestalling an indignant protest. "I am Secretary of War, and as such am responsible for the discipline and well-being of the Union army. You are responsible merely for a certain share of the Senate's deliberations. There is no point where our duties clash.

"I do not seek to influence you in the discharge of your work and I consider it as an affront that you should seek to influence me. Now we understand each other, and I must ask you to leave my office, as I am pressed with work to-day. One thing more: another time, please wait your turn in the anteroom instead of pushing your way in here past the doorman. I allow no favoritism in this department. That is all. Good day!"

I fairly gasped at Stanton's audacity. Blankley was a man who held political destinies in the hollow of his hand and juggled with official preferences as a conjurer might manipulate colored spheres. Yet Secretary Stanton was treating him as though he were an auditor's clerk.

My amazement, however, was nothing to the Senator's. He gurgled, turned an apoplectic red, took a step forward, then, muttering incoherent defiance, stamped out of the room. It was not a retreat. It was a rout.

Stanton's cold, spectacled eyes followed the receding figure to the door. Then, turning, they rested on me, where I stood in the alcove by the window.

"Captain Bruce," he snorted wrathfully, "I ordered you to return to your regiment!"

"But, sir," I began.

"Leave the room!" he thundered.

It was now or never. I had no intention of imitating Blankley's crab-like exit from the austere presence. Moreover, I had too much at stake to accept such a dismissal.

Disregarding the snarling command, I stepped forward and faced my department chief.

I have served with many a man since famous. Yet none of them so affected me by his personality as did this brutally upright, universally-dreaded War Secretary. I have fought under Grant—silent, swarthy, omniscient, ever smoking, imperturbable. Under Sherman—enthu-

siast, born leader, scathing in his rebukes, father-like in his praise. Under McClellan, Burnside, and Logan, too. But I would rather have braved the combined displeasure of all five than the merciless pale eyes that now glared on me.

Yet I advanced until only the office center-table separated us. Then unbuckling my saber, I tossed it down amid the litter of papers and maps that strewn the board.

"I regret to inform you, sir," said I, coming to salute, "that I hereby resign my captaincy in the Ninety-Ninth New York Cavalry, and request leave to quit the service at once."

"You would desert?" he growled, incredulous.

"There is scarcely need to answer that question, sir. My time of compulsory service elapsed eight months ago. I am legally free to—"

"To turn coward and leave your regiment in the midst of the war?" he sneered. "I—"

"If you choose to put it so," I retorted, now as angry as he. "I won my first lieutenancy for what the despatches were pleased to call 'distinguished bravery,' at Shiloh last year; and my captaincy for rallying my broken regiment and turning the Confederate flank on the second day of Vicksburg. If that is cowardice, it is a pity you have not a few more brigades of such poltroons. The Northern press might find less to ridicule in your war policy, and Lee might turn fewer of your projects into fiascos."

I had not meant to say it. And before the words had fairly left my mouth I would have bitten out my tongue to recall them. For I had defeated my own ends, as the white glow in Stanton's eyes told me even before he spoke.

The former heat was gone from his dry voice, leaving his tones dead and monotonous.

"You have tendered your resignation, Captain Bruce," he said slowly, "but, as you know, until the formal acceptance of that resignation, you are still in the service of your country. While yet an officer of cavalry, you have just grossly insulted your department commander and have taken it upon yourself to criticize my conduct of the war. For this double act of insubordination I order you

under arrest. You will leave this office at once and surrender yourself to the provost marshal. A few months in the military prison will perhaps change some of your impulsive views. Then—"

"A few months," I echoed in desperation, "I have not a single month to spare. I explained that to you and—"

A cold smile stretched the tight, smooth-shaven lips above his long beard—a smile that held anything but mirth.

"Your family affairs are of no interest to the Federal Government," he answered. "Go to the provost marshal. I will send instructions after you."

Oh, if only I had not been such a crass idiot as to lose my temper! All might then have been well. True, I should have been forced to sacrifice my beloved military career, but the chief aim of my life could have been fulfilled.

Now, I must wait in prison, perhaps half a year, until Stanton might choose to bring my case up for court-martial. By that time it would be too late to do what I had planned.

I could scarcely recognize my fuming, chagrined self in the calm young cavalry captain who, half an hour earlier, had applied to the War Secretary for "three months' leave of absence in which to arrange urgent family affairs."

So great was my need and so desperate my case that I was for a moment minded to quit the office, as he had commanded, and, instead of seeking the provost marshal, make my escape from Washington. Yet an instant's reflection told me how futile such an act would be. The secret-service men would have me by the heels within twenty-four hours. And then the charge against me would be the vilest a soldier can sustain—desertion!

Well, I had brought my fate upon myself. Here was a fine ending for a promising career!

But I would at least rob this bloodless War Secretary of further satisfaction from observing my impotent rage. Again I clicked my spurred heels together, squared my big shoulders, gave the debonair salute so popular with the cavalry, wheeled about and slouched jauntily toward the door.

I liked to feel that in every pose and movement I showed my contempt for the statesman who had just proven himself

my master. But even this scant satisfaction was denied me. For as I neared the threshold I could catch Stanton's reflection in the wall-mirror. He was not looking at me, but was bent over his desk, writing rapidly.

My hand was on the latch when the door was swung open from the other side and a man's figure filled the space.

At sight of this newest arrival I instinctively gave back a step or two. There was no jauntiness nor disdain—nothing but reverential respect—in the salute I instinctively performed.

The doorway was perhaps seven feet high, yet this man's silk hat almost touched its upper frame. He was long rather than tall, thin to emaciation, awkward of attitude and dressed wholly in rather ill-fitting black.

But, who that knew him ever stopped to consider that man's clothes or bearing? It was his face that always riveted my gaze and that brought a strange contraction to my throat. Homely it certainly was, in its angularity, its tuft of beard, and spare, unrelieved outlines. Yet in it were written more than I or any other man could read.

First of all, that face told of infinite sadness, then of an all-encompassing gentleness whose basis was a granite strength. Humor and kindness played about the firm mouth. Wisdom, pity, calm power looked from those big brown eyes.

Yes, and some other quality I did not then recognize. But I saw its counterpart, years afterward, in a famous picture in the Vatican. The picture was called "Justin, the Martyr." Then, and then only, did I understand, in the light of a later tragedy, the prophetic look that had so often puzzled me in Abraham Lincoln's face.

I have described him bunglingly. Who could do otherwise? For not even his best portraits caught the indefinable "something" that was the chief charm and characteristic of our first martyr-President.

Stanton, at sight of his visitor, rose respectfully and came forward. But I could see he did not welcome the intrusion.

"Blankley's just been to see me," observed the President, a smile in his eyes and a hint of friendly mockery behind

his slow voice. "It seems you've stirred up his feelings considerably, Stanton. He was threatening all sorts of things, and I volunteered to act as mediator. What was the real trouble?"

Mr. Lincoln had scarcely noticed me, beyond returning my salute. He doubtless took me for one of the Secretary's office staff; and as such spoke freely in my presence.

Stanton, however, glowered over his glasses at me before replying to the President, and his eyes ordered me from the room as plainly as any spoken words.

But I was not minded to obey. An idea was dawning in my troubled brain. I stood where I was.

"Blankey says," went on the President, "that one of those two constituents of his, arrested for desertion, ran away from the army to see his mother, who was dying. Now, if that's really the case—"

"He deserted in the face of the enemy," snapped Stanton. "There is no excuse that—"

"Oh, come, come!" urged Lincoln pleasantly, as though humoring a fractious boy. "An army may be a machine, but its members can't *all* be de-humanized. And when a man's mother is dying, surely there should be some leeway—some—"

"Pardon me a moment, Mr. President!" intervened Stanton. Then turning to me, he said:

"I ordered you to report to the provost marshal for arrest. Must I send for a guard to carry you to him in irons?"

His hand was on the bell-cord as he spoke.

Clearly, I had no time to lose. Mr. Lincoln's words had crystallized the desperate, half-formed idea that had first checked my departure.

My mind was made up. I strode forward, ignoring Stanton, and facing the Chief Executive eye to eye.

"Mr. President," I blurted out, taking scant time to choose my words or marshal my facts, "I am Guy Bruce, captain in the Ninety-Ninth New York. I have fought for the Union since the first battle of Bull Run. I have done what I could to deserve well of my country. You spoke just now of leniency in the case of a man who turns his back on army duty to visit his dying mother. Is not

the same leeway due to one whose family honor and whose father's very life and happiness are at stake? I am such a man, sir, and I demand justice!"

"Leave the room!" roared Stanton, jerking the bell-cord.

CHAPTER II.

A REPRIEVE AND A PROMISE.

"LEAVE the room!" Stanton reiterated as I did not at once obey.

I paid heed to neither words nor gesture. In anticipation I could see myself hauled ignominiously to the guard-house by a half-dozen soldiers. But I still had one faint chance left, and that chance I would take.

The President, though manifestly surprised, had not turned away nor silenced me I hurried on.

"My honor—my father's honor—perhaps his life—depend on my getting three months' leave. I applied for it. It was refused. Then I insulted Mr. Stanton. For that I am willing to serve ten years' imprisonment, if need be. All I beg is three months' leave first. At the end of that time I solemnly pledge myself to return and submit to any punishment a court-martial may see fit to inflict."

Stanton laughed jarringly. The President checked him with a motion of his hand.

"Captain Bruce," he said, not unkindly, "this is very irregular; but your services in the past speak for you. Were you not the Lieutenant Bruce mentioned in General Grant's despatches as doing such gallant work at Vicksburg? And, once before, the despatches mentioned you, I think. At Shiloh, was it not?"

I eyed him in wonder. This man, on whose bent shoulders hung the weight of a nation's destiny, could bear in his overburdened brain the memory of one obscure captain's name and deeds! I had heard similar tales of him before, but had not credited them.

However, it was the time for action, not for conjecture. I spoke again, as an orderly entered in reply to Stanton's ring.

"My poor services are more than paid by living so long in your memory, Mr. President. Yet may I urge them, once

more, in a personal plea for justice? For *mercy*, perhaps, though it galls a grown man to beg for such a thing."

The President glanced at Stanton. I fancied there was conciliation—almost appeal—in his look. The Secretary turned his back on us. A faint flush touched Mr. Lincoln's pallid cheeks.

"You may dismiss your orderly, Stanton!" he said, a shade less gently than was his wont. "I shall not need him. I am going to hear what Captain Bruce has to say."

"I suppose, sir," grumbled Stanton, "there is no use in pointing out to you—"

"Not the slightest," answered Lincoln blandly. "That reminds me of a little story I heard at Columbus. It—"

"You will pardon me, sir, if I have not time to hear it," returned Stanton brusquely. "I am very busy. I need not add that my office is quite at your service as long as you choose to occupy it."

He flounced out of the room, like a cross girl, followed by the wondering orderly, and leaving me alone with the President of the United States.

The foregoing scene did not astonish me as much as it might. Rumors of ever-recurrent clashes between Lincoln's gentle, broad sense of justice and Stanton's rigid, marrow ideas of military discipline were continually afloat in the army.

Though President and Secretary were warmly attached to each other, yet the latter's fiery temper too often led him into demonstrations of positive ill-breeding toward his chief. The fact that these ebullitions went unrebuked is merely a small testimony of that chief's boundless patience.

Mr. Lincoln seated himself on one of the office camp-stools—ridiculously small, frail support for his great bulk—and nodded me to another stool.

"Now," he said, "I am ready to listen to you. And, for my own sake, I hope your story will justify the offense I've just given Mr. Stanton. Go ahead."

I spoke. At first haltingly, for it is no small embarrassment to feel one is taking the time of the busiest man in America. Then, forgetting all else in the interest of what I was saying, and in the kindly attention in my hearer's eyes, I became more fluent.

I spoke as concisely as might be. Yet I will here relate still more briefly the substance of what I said:

Though I am American by birth, and a West Pointer by training, yet I am half English. My father, Sterling Bruce, Wall Street banker, married an English girl, who died when I was a mere child. My father loved her almost to the exclusion of all else, and worshiped her memory as that of a saint. So it was that when her brother's son, young Stephen Kent, was left an orphan, my father sent to England for him and brought him up as his own child.

When Stephen was but eighteen he tired of America and returned to his own country, where a liberal allowance from my father supported him in comfort. He entered the British army, my father buying him a commission in the Guards and continuing the allowance.

Between Kent and myself there was little love lost. He dabbled in nearly every form of dissipation, and a dozen boyish peccadillos, unknown to my father, had made it clear to me that he was preparing to be the black sheep of the family. Tales of his heavy gambling and other escapades floated across now and then from England. I was at pains to keep these rumors from my father's ears. But at last the crash came.

The London partner of my father's banking house was O'Hara Bradway, Member of Parliament and Irish landowner. My father was unsatisfied with the way the London house was conducted and with the fact that large sums were recently paid out at various times on insufficient collateral.

He wrote to remonstrate. Bradway replied by sending an agent to America, who told my father that the London partner had in his possession no less than three heavy personal drafts, purporting to come from my father and two other New York bankers, drawn in favor of Stephen Kent.

These drafts Kent had presented at the London house. Bradway had proven them forgeries, but had paid Kent the money, and now held the drafts as proofs of Stephen's dishonesty. The papers would readily send my cousin to prison for at least a twenty-year term.

Briefly, Bradway was holding the

drafts as a whip over my father, to extort increasingly large sums from him. The shame of the blackmail, and especially the horror lest the nephew of his adored wife should be branded as a felon, had broken down my father's already enfeebled health.

He was a mental and physical wreck; his whole remaining aim in life was centered upon the longing to recover those drafts and to free himself and Kent from the blackmailer's power.

Too weak to endure the long ocean voyage himself, he had appealed to me, begging me to undertake in his stead the mission of going to England, interviewing Bradway and, by diplomacy and any reasonable cash offer, secure the drafts. Knowing the greed of the man, my father believed the thing could be arranged if the right agent were sent over to negotiate.

He dared trust the secret to no one else; nor could the crafty Bradway be lured into setting pen to paper in regard to the matter.

My father had, a few days before, suffered a severe relapse. His physician had written me that unless a mysterious trouble over which he brooded could be lifted within a month or so, there was no hope of his recovery. I well knew what this trouble was, and, as soon as I could leave my regiment, I had hurried to Washington to secure the necessary permission to absent myself from service for three months.

"It is a forlorn hope at best, sir," I ended my recital to the President; "but I could never forgive myself if I neglected it."

"I should be ashamed to own you as an officer in the United States army if you could neglect such a chance of saving your father," replied the President, rising. "You see, young man, I trust you implicitly. I will be your personal guarantee to Mr. Stanton that you will return to your duties at the end of three months. I will also beg him as a favor to me to overlook your unpardonable language toward himself. Go, and may you succeed! Remember, I am the surety for your return at the specified time."

For the moment I could only feel a surge of gratitude that left me speechless. But at a later day that last trustful sen-

tence of my chief's was destined to sting and sear me like white-hot iron.

CHAPTER III.

"THE GIRL WITH THE HAIR."

THE Inman liner, *City of Berlin*, was making what promised to be her record eastward trip. The captain had said that noon at dinner if the speed of those first forty-eight hours could be kept up throughout we should make Liverpool in fifteen days from the time of leaving Sandy Hook.

Meagher and I were lounging against the lee wall of the aft deck-cabins. For there was a half-gale blowing, and a position on the windward side of the ship had too many points in common with a shower-bath to be wholly pleasant.

I liked Meagher, and for many reasons. His Irish gaiety and buoyant spirits were a relief from my own worried thoughts. There was a mystery about the man—or he liked to make me think there was.

I had met him in New York three days before I sailed. Short though our acquaintance had been, the manner of its making had bridged all formality.

I had been on my way to the steamship offices to engage my passage when, taking a short cut through one of the dozen alleys off Water Street, I had come upon a decidedly one-sided fight. Three men, who had the air of plain-clothes detectives rather than dock loafers, were trying to overpower a young chap who was fighting a battle as plucky as it was futile.

A look at his face, flushed and distorted though it was, showed me he was a gentleman. I brought the handle of my thick malacca down on the head of one of his assailants. Man and stick went earthward together; the former stunned, the latter splintered.

A left-hander on the jaw made a second of the trio collapse before he was fairly aware of my presence, while the third took to his heels.

I picked up the attacked man's hat, restored it to him, and asked if he was hurt. He replied, thanking me most warmly in a voice which, though free from actual accent, fairly throbbed with Celtic intonation.

He told me he had been set upon as he was on his way to the Inman offices, and that his antagonists had evidently been trying to "shanghai" him aboard some ship.

When I expressed a doubt at such high-handed proceeding in broad daylight, he hinted darkly, yet half humorously, of people who would be glad enough to see him safe out of the way for a time.

Together we went on to the steamship offices, to find the delay had caused us to reach there after closing time. At my new acquaintance's invitation I dined with him at the St. Nicholas, and we spent a jolly evening together.

It seemed we were both to sail on the City of Berlin. He said his name was Meagher, and that he was an Irishman who had been traveling for some months in America.

"For my health," he added, with a significant grin, as he surveyed his own strapping, powerful physique.

I told him my own name, and added that for private reasons I was going to take passage for England under an alias.

Indeed, I had good cause for doing this. Not only was I anxious to prevent Bradway from learning prematurely of my arrival, from the passenger lists in the London papers, but my father had asked me to remain incognito, for a time at least, in order to watch Stephen Kent, if possible, while he was unaware of my presence, in order to see if rumor had exaggerated his reckless mode of living.

These reasons, and the cause of my journey to the other side, I, of course, did not divulge to Meagher; nor was there cause.

He asked no questions, but on learning that I was to travel under an alias, inquired bluntly:

"What name have you picked out?"

"None yet," I answered. "I was going to rely on inspiration when I bought my ticket."

"Take mine!" he exclaimed, in boisterous mock generosity. "I'll make you a free gift of it for as long a time as you like. Now, don't hang back!" as I started to speak; "but grab the fine bargain I'm offering. 'Tis a grand old name, is 'Meagher.' There's a county, in the old land, by that name. I'll gladly turn over to you for the time my good-

will and equity in the title of 'Brian Meagher, Esq., of County Meath, Ireland.'"

"And you'll go nameless meanwhile?" I laughed.

"Not a bit." I'm tired of being snubbed as an Irishman by the officers of English ships. I'm going to sail under the name of Schmidt. I was going to, anyhow. With the queen—God bless her—married to a German, every Dutch name gets decent treatment in England these days. Schmidt I shall be—Heinrich Schmidt. And the far better name of Brian Meagher'll be going around without a master meanwhile, unless you'll take care of it for me."

Though I could scarce keep my face straight at the idea of Meagher's trying to pass himself off as anything but an Irishman, yet the oddity of the conceit took hold of me. After all, one name would serve as well as another to preserve my incognito.

So, as "Brian Meagher" I took passage, and shared a stateroom with that title's recent owner, whose assumption of "Heinrich Schmidt" was usually received with a smile by all to whom he introduced himself.

We were two days out, as I have said. The wind had been favorable to our course since we left harbor, but had blown far too heavily for comfort. As a result, nearly half the passengers had not yet appeared on deck or at table.

One by one they were beginning, on this second day, to crawl out of their staterooms. Having plenty of time on our hands, Meagher and I fell to taking note of new faces, and to chatting with each other about them. This, in fact, we were now engaged in doing as we lounged against the warm lee wall of the deck-cabins.

"Did you see *her*?" queried Meagher, when we had verbally disposed of a large Western Congressman, who had taken a seat at our table that noon.

"Who? Congressman Thorley's wife?" I asked.

"His wife? Not much. Nor any one's. But I wish she was mine."

"Which is she?" I queried, eying the scattered groups huddled along the wall at irregular intervals.

"She's not here at all. She's below,

I suppose. She only came up to dinner, and then hurried back to her stateroom. The steward told me she's traveling with an old lady that's ill. She's a wonder, I can tell you. Why, she—"

"Who? The old lady that's ill?"

"No, no, man! The girl with the hair."

"A lot of girls have more or less of it," I suggested.

"Not hair like this, my son. It's the color of sunshine that's caught fire. And it's all around her head in a sort of halo like a saint's—all standing out, and—"

"Why doesn't she brush it?"

"Have you *no* soul at all? It isn't sticking out untidily, just billowing out like a sort of wave on all sides of her little head, and—"

"Waves and fire and sunshine? Grand combination! Is the rest of her made up of the various elements, too, or is it only her hair that—"

"I'll tell you not a word more of her!" snorted Meagher. "You've no appreciation. I'm going below for a nap. Maybe I'll dream of her."

"Look out you don't get sea-tan from all that sunshine and fire!" I called after him.

Then, curling up in my deck-chair, I lighted my pipe, and my mind fell back upon the eternal theme that had so long and so sadly occupied it.

Even with youth and optimism in my favor I was forced to realize how scanty a chance I had of winning the drafts from Bradway. When the one great obstacle of gaining three months' leave of absence was still unmastered, the mission had seemed easier to me. Now that I was actually on my way to England, the future grew hourly more uncertain.

Even should I succeed, I knew my military career was practically at an end. For Stanton was not a man to forget such an affront as I had put upon him. Nor would he lightly forgive me for the humiliation of having the President take my case out of his jurisdiction and grant my leave of absence over the War Secretary's head.

But I had chosen my course. My duty was plain. My only care henceforth must be the fulfilment of the mission whereon hung my father's hopes and health. I must—

I drew aside to allow some one to pass out through the narrow door leading from the deck-cabin against whose partition my chair-head rested. I had barely time to note that the "some one" was a woman of rather fragile build, when a terrific sweep of wind, eddying about from the near-by corner of the chart-house, caught her skirts and voluminous wrap, and whipped them about her till she was swathed like a mummy, fastening her arms to her sides and impeding her every movement.

She was near the rail at the time, and a lurch of the ship sent her careening forward, despite her futile struggles. Hampered as she was, she must have been hurled with great force against the rail, or else have been pitched clear over it.

Luckily I saw the danger while she was still spinning helpless across the narrow promenade. It was an absurdly simple matter for me to jump forward and interpose my own big bulk between her and the rail before her uselessly but bravely resisting figure reached the edge.

I caught her as gently as I could, by the shoulder, with my left hand, checking her impetus. At the same instant my foot slipped into the wet scuppers, and I was down on one knee, with a nastily sprained ankle. She had meantime recovered her balance and freed her arms.

A silly enough picture I must have made. On my knees before a woman who was a total stranger to me; in full view of my amused fellow passengers.

I have found that no woman—be she old or young—enjoys being made ridiculous. Bearing this in mind, I scrambled to my feet.

The sharp sting in my ankle turned me sick. But I shifted my weight to the other foot, and, clinging to the rail with one hand, made shift to raise my cap to the cause of my misadventure.

As I did so, I looked at her, fairly, for the first time.

The hood of her cloak had fallen back, and I was aware of a pair of very big blue eyes peering mischievously, yet gratefully, at me from out of a very small, flushed face. Her hair, wind-whipped and glorious, flew about her little head; its strands blowing across her brow and cheeks and swirling, half-loose,

in a sort of tempestuous aureole around her forehead. Meagher's words of extravagant praise flashed into my mind.

"Why!" I exclaimed idiotically, "you're the—"

"The Girl with the Hair," she interpolated, a gentle mockery in her soft voice; "and very, *very* much in debt to you for saving me from a bad accident."

But her latter words scarcely reached me.

"The Girl with the Hair!" I echoed, amazed. "How did you ever—"

"If men *will* talk about a girl at a time when they happen to be leaning against the outside of her cabin, within a yard of the open port-hole, they must expect to be overheard."

"It was awfully rude of us," I murmured in confused contrition. "You see—"

"I saw you did not echo your friend's rather poetic ideas."

"That was because I had never seen you. I—"

"And now that you've not only seen but rescued me, perhaps you will complete your work of knight-errantry by piloting me back to the deck-chairs? When I came out I had no idea the wind was so strong. It almost knocks one over."

She held out her hand, evidently expecting me to help her across the gale-swept, slippery flooring. But I stood helpless, awkward, red with chagrin.

I saw the expectant look in her blue eyes fade into one of displeased surprise. Then she must have noted the pain lines about my mouth, for a look of quick sympathy flooded her mobile little face.

"You're hurt!" she cried.

"My ankle's a bit twisted. It will be all right by to-morrow. It's nothing to—"

"And I've kept you standing on it all this time! Wait! I'll call the steward, and—"

"And have me bundled off to my stateroom, and not see you again for days, perhaps? No, thank you."

She searched my face in a swift glance; but apparently reading there only the boyishly blatant admiration my words had conveyed, she flushed again and broke into an embarrassed laugh.

"I'm afraid a prolonged talk with me

would hardly cure your twisted ankle," she said.

"Will you give the experiment a chance?"

"That would be a sorry return for what you've done for me. Suppose we compromise."

"Gladly. How?"

"If you will let me call a steward, and have him take you to your cabin, where your foot can be bandaged, and if you happen to be helped on deck again when the bandaging is done, and if you *should* chance to choose the same seat you were occupying a few minutes ago, why, I—"

"You'll *happen* to take mercy on me by choosing the seat next to mine?"

She nodded. I liked to see her nod. There was something so unaffectedly childlike about the action, and, besides, it gave the sunlight such splendid chances to work miracles in the tangles of her hair.

"It's a bargain!" said I. "I'll be back in ten minutes."

"It will take me longer than that to arrange my hair. It's in such a hopeless mess from all this wind. Just look at it!"

"I *have* been," I replied; "ever since I met you."

"Don't!" she commanded, frowning.

"But you told me to," I protested.

"You know what I mean. I hate compliments, Mr. Meagher."

"Mr.—*What?*"

This time I was genuinely puzzled. She misunderstood my sensations, and replied:

"You're surprised that I know your name? I heard the purser call out to you when you dropped your cigar-case; coming up the companionway after dinner. It is a very well-known name in Ireland."

"You are Irish? You don't seem like—"

"No. But many of my relatives are. And I've lived there a great deal."

It somehow galled me to have this pretty girl know me by my alias. But there was no help for it. I could not explain, to the satisfaction of a perfect stranger, that only the highest motives actuated me in the suspicious course of traveling under an assumed name.

"You have the advantage of me," I

remarked, to check my own growing embarrassment, "for I don't know you by any title except—"

"The Girl with the Hair?" My real name is less fanciful. It is Osborne—Ruth Osborne. Ah, here comes a steward. Will you hail him? And I'll—"

"You'll keep your share of the compact?"

A repetition of that delicious child-like nod, and she was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

I TREAD DANGEROUS GROUND.

WE were pacing the deck together, Miss Osborne and I. It was the evening of the fourteenth day out. My wrenched ankle was quite strong again, but my once stout heart had undergone its first wrench.

In other words, I had of late begun to realize I was coming dangerously near to falling in love with the Girl with the Hair.

On shipboard, people who form any acquaintance at all are apt to bridge in a week gaps of conventionality that on land would go unspanned for months. The constant propinquity, the enforced idleness, the absence of shore ties and restrictions, the temporary community of interest—these, coupled with moonlit nights, play havoc with the barriers of reserve.

Or at least it was so in my day.

I had seen much of Miss Osborne during the past two weeks. In fact, I had managed to monopolize almost all the time she could spare from the ailing aunt who, nurse-attended, had not once left her cabin.

Meagher had jeered me unmercifully on my devotion. I had little rivalry to fear from him; since, despite his outspoken admiration for Miss Osborne and his easy self-confidence among men, he was bashful as a tongue-tied schoolboy in the presence of women, and from this very diffidence shunned their society.

"It's been a jolly fortnight," Miss Osborne was saying.

"The pleasantest I ever spent," I agreed a bit more warmly than her banal remark demanded.

"And I suppose by to-morrow night you'll be in Liverpool," she added.

I noted the slight accent on the pronoun.

"You?" I repeated. "You mean 'we.'"

"No," she answered, "for my uncle is coming to take us off on the revenue boat when we reach the Mersey, and we are to catch an earlier train to London. Our luggage will follow. You see, he wants my aunt to reach home on the express. She is too weak, he thinks, to stand the bustle of the custom-house and the slow 'boat-train.'"

"He must have some influence with the authorities to be able to do that," I hazarded.

"Oh, he's a Member of Parliament, and a rather prominent man, you know."

As a matter of fact, I didn't know. We had had more interesting things to talk about during the lazy, happy days than mere uncles. I knew nothing about him and cared less.

I was, indeed, beginning to feel quite an impersonal resentment against him for prospectively robbing me of the last few hours of Miss Osborne's society.

Now that our already shortening period of companionship was destined to be even further curtailed by this plan of the "rather important" relative's, I realized, in a distressing rush of feeling, how closely I had allowed myself to become bound to this fragile, dainty English maiden whom I had known so short a time.

She looked very lovely in her clinging sea-cloak, with some fluffy-white, cloudy lace thing thrown over her spun-gold hair. I had a crazy desire to take her in my arms and tell her how precious to me she had grown to be.

I had, oddly enough, reached the age of twenty-six without a single love affair serious enough to deserve the name.

War had made me older than my actual age. Worry over my father and the impending family disgrace had further removed my thoughts from matters of the heart. But in this two weeks' lull in the storm of my life I had had ample opportunity to make up for lost time.

I had it in mind to say something of this, and the words were trembling

on my lips. But I checked myself in season. What right had I to offer marriage—even to think of such personal concerns—when my life was, for the present at least, consecrated to my father's rescue? When every atom of thought, time, and labor at my command must be lavished on the delicate mission whereon his future hung?

Then, too, I was a soldier. My country was at war. I must, within three months, return to active service. A man so placed has no business to win a girl's promise, when for all he knows he may be shot or sabered in his next battle.

Yet I was young. And Youth beat madly, rebelliously, against the leaden bars of Duty.

We had paused in our stroll and were leaning over the aft-rail, watching the swirl of blue phosphorus thrown upward by the screw-tossed wake. Out and beyond, the moon's track lay silver and ghostly across a sea as still as a mountain lake.

A faint breeze blew a strand of Ruth's fragrant hair across my lips. Clearly, it was no time for sanity.

"Miss Osborne—" I began, and my voice was a little above a whisper, for something had contracted in my throat, and my heart was thumping more loudly than the distant engines of the ship.

She must have known what I was going to say—a woman always knows, I think—for I felt rather than heard a little nervous gasp, and the shoulder that was lightly touching mine moved ever so little.

The sound and the movement, imperceptible as both were, partly brought me to my senses. I spoke more guardedly than my first wild impulse had urged me to do.

"Miss Osborne," I said, "I am on my way to Europe on a difficult—it may be perilous—mission. A mission that demands my whole heart, my every faculty. When I return to America I shall be launched for a time on an occupation that will bring me—as it has brought me often before—very close to death. You can see from this that my life is not for the present my own, to offer or to use as I may wish. But some day, please God, I shall be my own master again. And as soon as I am, I shall take the very first

ship back to England. I think you know why."

She did not answer me. All her interest seemed to be centered on the phosphorescent wake.

"When I come, shall you care to see me?" I urged.

"I—I shall always be glad to see you."

She tried to make the words formal and civilly indifferent, but failed most deliciously.

"Does that mean—?"

"It is quite late," she faltered. "I ought to go to Aunt Sarah. She might be lonely. I—"

"She will have you every day," I said, laying my hand detainingly on hers as it rested on the rail. "And I have long months of loneliness stretching before me. Can't you give me a little more time on this last evening of ours?"

She did not try to draw away her hand, and my fingers closed more tightly over it.

"Shall you be glad to see me when I come to England again—Ruth?" I asked once more.

"Yes," she murmured.

And now there was not even the affectation of indifference in her dear voice.

A wave of exultant, glorious life surged through me. I turned—all common sense quite gone—toward her. A fat elderly passenger, waddling bedward, came around the bow of the life-boat under whose davits we were standing, and looked at us with bland interest.

I drew back, sanity and propriety hurrying to my aid. I had been on the verge of throwing away every wise and good resolution in my possession. I ought to have been thankful for providentially being saved to duty and reason. But my gratitude took the form of a lively desire to pitch the blundering interloper into the sea.

The spell was broken.

"I must go back to my cabin, Mr. Meagher," said Ruth.

Yet she lingered. Perhaps because my hand was still imprisoning hers. But for the first time I ceased to be aware of the contact with those white, cool little fingers. She had called me by my absurd alias.

And this reminded me that I had al-

lowed myself to arrive at the very brink of a proposal to a girl who did not even know my real name.

Determined as I was to preserve my incognito, I could not of course let Ruth go on thinking of me by that bashful Irishman's cognomen. I must tell her who I was, enjoin secrecy upon her, and ask that she have faith in me to tell her some day my reasons for putting myself in so false a position.

Or—better still—why not tell her everything? I could trust her. And oh, the joy it would be to share my bitter secret with such a girl!

"Ruth," I said, "there's something else I want to say before you leave me. Will you stay and hear it?"

"I—I ought to go," she demurred doubtfully. "It is striking four bells and I'm afraid Mrs. Bradway will be worried."

"Mrs.—*Who?*" I exclaimed.

"Mrs. Bradway, my aunt," she rejoined, surprised at my change of manner. "She worries if I am on deck late. I—"

"Is she—is— What is the first name of her husband—your uncle? The 'Member of Parliament and rather important man' who is coming out to meet you to-morrow?"

"O'Hara Bradway. But he's not so very important, except just in London. He's more or less prominent in politics there and a member of the Bruce & Bradway banking house on Cannon Street. Why do you ask? Have you ever heard of him?"

"Yes," I answered dully, "I have heard of him."

I had been on the point of confiding my name and mission to O'Hara Bradway's niece!

CHAPTER V.

I ATTEND A QUEER FUNCTION.

I WATCHED the revenue cutter swing alongside as we lay in the "Roads," and noted the big man who came aboard with the officials.

He wore the pot-hat and black frock-suit so dear to the upper middle-class Englishman of the more severely respectable sort. His hair—what was left of

it—bristled a fiery red through its patches of gray.

His eyes were light and expressionless, like a fish's, standing well out from his bullet head. His upper lip was ridiculously long, and his mouth puffed and flabby.

So this was the worthy O'Hara Bradway, M. P.! From my deck-chair I sized him up, as a prize-fighter might keenly take stock of a prospective opponent.

The more I watched him the less I liked him, and the slighter grew my hope of appealing to anything good in his nature. Yet, at knowledge of the increased difficulties before me, my spirit, as is its odd way, rose the more eagerly to meet and grapple with those difficulties. Mrs. Bradway appeared, supported between two stewards and followed by a third, who staggered under a mighty load of hand-luggage.

I was on my feet by this time. For I was resolved to have at least one word of farewell with Ruth Osborne as she should leave her cabin. I had not seen her all day. Not since my interrupted confidences of the previous night.

The news that she was niece to my father's enemy and mine had staggered me, I confess. Yet after thinking it over coolly, I could see no valid reason, scriptural or otherwise, why the sins of the uncle should be visited on the niece; nor why, my mission once over, I should not be at liberty to return to woo her. Hence, I stood, all expectation, awaiting her appearance.

And in a minute or so they came out of the cabin, she and Bradway. She was talking; he listening with an unaffected interest. Her eyes met mine and she touched Bradway's arm.

I divined from her gesture and from his response thereto that I had been the subject of their conversation. For as she indicated my whereabouts, he stepped briskly forward, with outstretched hand, not waiting for her introduction.

"Mr. Meagher," he said, with a cordiality that was as genuine as it was unexpected, "my niece has been speaking to me of you. Yet it seems as if we two hardly need an introduction. I am glad—heartily glad—to meet you."

So he and I hardly needed an intro-

duction! Now what, I marveled, in the name of all that's uncommon, did the fishy-eyed man mean by that? And wherefore all this cordiality? But he was speaking again, this time in a slightly lowered voice.

"I hope Miss Osborne violated no confidence," said he, "in telling me you are in England on an errand that may prove difficult and even perilous? I place myself wholly at your disposal, for any aid in my power."

A light was dawning on my perplexed mind. He evidently recognized me (though I had not seen him before since I was a boy of twelve) and, divining my mission, was meeting me half-way.

"I thank you," answered I guardedly, "but—"

"But this is no time nor place for talking, you'd say? And quite right you are. If you will wait until I speak to the commandant of the cutter I will arrange to have you taken off with us. Then you can run up to London on the express in our company. You must dine with us to-night. In fact, there is a gathering at my house this evening which I should very much like you to attend. Perhaps you'll throw together your hand-luggage as quickly as you can, while I arrange to have you go with us? Your boxes can follow on the regular train."

This was splendid. Infinitely better than I had dared to expect. And I fear my joy was less due to the fact that my way to success with Bradway promised to be paved for me than to the prospect of those extra hours on the train and at dinner with Ruth.

As I was climbing the companionway, ten minutes later, luggage-laden, I encountered Meagher on his way from the smoking-room. I halted him to say farewell, and explained my early departure.

"Good-by," old man!" he cried, wringing my hand. "It's been good to meet you, and we must see a lot of each other in town. Where is it you'll be stopping? The Victoria, eh? I'll look you up without fail. I can't say yet just what my own address'll be. You'll still be wanting the use of my unworthy name? Well, keep it as long as you will. There's no extra charge. Only—" hesitating for the last fraction of an instant—"don't count too much on its bringing

you luck. And don't blame me if it doesn't. Good-by once more. I'll see you in a day or two."

But he didn't. I never saw nor heard from him again. Nor to this day do I know exactly what he intended to convey to me by those ambiguous words of his.

Neither do I know how far he was conversant of what was in store for me. Remembering his Irish buoyancy, his pleasant manner and infectious laugh, I like to think he meant nothing—that he foresaw nothing of the black pit of horror yawning almost at my very feet.

The London-ward journey through the sweet green fields, quaint towns, and low oak forests of England was a delight. Bradway had reserved a *compartment de luxe*, and spent the trip helping the nurse keep his ailing, peevish wife entertained. I had no word in private with him. But, ensconced with Ruth in a far corner I felt anything but regret for this.

Arriving in town, we separated; I to hurry to the Victoria, take a room, throw on my evening clothes, and then to hasten out to the Bradway villa at Hampton. I have a confused recollection of entering quite the largest, most pretentious hotel I had then ever seen, bathing, shaving, and dressing in record time; then of taking my first ride in a hansom (a vehicle not at that time used in America) through miles and miles of lighted, busy streets.

I had never dreamed a city could be so large. From the Battery almost to Fortieth Street, New York, was a practically continuous mass of houses. Yet its size, compared to the metropolis through which I was now driven, was as nothing.

I seemed to be in a wholly new world. Leaning far out over the "apron" of my cab, I stared from side to side, drinking in the novel sights.

The people seemed less in a hurry than do we in America; and I noted divers other differences, too.

I reached Bradway's well past the dinner hour, and found there some nine or ten men who had arrived ahead of me. Ruth, who did the honors as hostess, was the only woman present.

It seemed an odd apportionment of the sexes for a dinner party; but I had

scarcely time to take mental exception to it when the meal was announced.

Nor was the table talk such as I had been accustomed to hear. It ran chiefly to politics of a rampant sort, chiefly directed, as nearly as I in my ignorance could gather, to strictures against the British government.

I found myself most hospitably—even warmly—greeted by all the guests, and was so fortunate as to sit at Ruth Osborne's right. Under cover of the general talk we found many opportunities for fragmentary *tête-à-tête* conversation.

I was very happy. Not only was I near her, but Bradway was treating me more like an old and trusted friend than as a comparative stranger. Everything was being smoothed for me.

I had had qualms about accepting an invitation to the house of a man I so cordially detested and who had so deeply wronged me and mine. But his hint of a confidential talk later in the evening had decided me.

I had no right, I felt, to throw away a single chance of pushing my quest to an early and successful conclusion.

Dessert was cleared away and coffee and liqueurs brought on. Ruth rose to leave the table.

"I shall come to the drawing-room the first moment I can," I whispered as I held the door open for her to pass out.

"I shall not be there," she replied in the same tone. "My uncle always likes Aunt Sarah and myself to efface ourselves as early as possible when he has these meetings. But, won't you call to-morrow?"

Even as I murmured eager assent, I was more than puzzled.

"Meetings?" This was apparently a dinner party, in spite of the rather unconventional dress of several of the guests. Was it a dinner to a few of Bradway's business friends and were they going to discuss some financial deal afterward? If so, perhaps I should be in the way.

I returned to my seat, debating whether to make excuse to leave the party to their business confidences and postpone my interview with Bradway until the morrow or to ask for a ten-minutes' conference with him in private before leaving.

But thus far there was no talk of busi-

ness. The political tirades had begun again. And, now that the company were relieved of Ruth's presence, the language grew more and more unrestrained. Louder and fiercer the talk waged on every side of me.

Frankly, I was bored. I had no interest in British politics. The terms these men used were unfamiliar to me. Their violence seemed to me ill-bred.

When a man is head over heels in love for the first time, and when, moreover, the saner half of his mind is wholly absorbed in a mission such as mine, he has scant attention to bestow on the discussion of a foreign country's political issues.

I had decided, so soon as business should be broached, to take my departure. Until such time I would remain and suffer myself to be bored to extinction.

So, while trying to look politely interested in their excited talk (whereof I made no effort to understand a word) I withdrew into my own happy, hopeful, confused thoughts, and let the discussion run on unheeded.

One man pulled from his pocket a sheet of paper and read a list of names and figures. I could make no sense of it all, nor did I attempt to. But it produced a profound impression on the others.

A second man read a similar list, which was received in moody silence. A third evoked cheers.

I roused myself sufficiently from my roseate reverie to fancy that these lists must be part of the "business" at whose advent I had decided to retire. I straightened in my chair to make my adieus.

But Bradway's voice, speaking my own name, stopped me.

"Mr. Brian Meagher," he was saying, "has, as you know, just returned from canvassing the Western States of America. More than once, while he was there, English hirelings tried to silence him. That should show how the government fears him. And I hear plans were even made to arrest him on his arrival at Liverpool. I luckily blocked the game.

"Although Mr. Meagher was a stranger to the members of this especial 'chapter' till to-night, there is no one here who does not know of him and of

the daring work he has accomplished in the past. You can vouch for it that his report will be of greater interest and concern to us than all the rest we've heard put together. It was chiefly in the hope of our learning its contents that I begged him to come here."

A murmur of applause swept the table. All eyes were turned on me.

There I sat, dumb, astounded, uncomprehending. What, in Heaven's name, did all this rigmarole mean?

I rose to my feet, my mouth open to demand an explanation.

But before one word could pass my lips, the door at the far end of the dining-room was flung open and a young man of about my own age entered. He was immaculately dressed, stocky and powerful of build; on his ruddy face vice had already set its ineradicable stamp.

Even before he spoke I recognized him at a glance as my cousin, Stephen Kent, cause of all my family troubles and of my presence in England. Stephen Kent in the house of the man who was blackmailing my father on his account!

"Good evening, all!" he said, somewhat thickly, as he glanced about the table, nodding to one acquaintance after another. "Sorry to be so late. Just back from Ascot. Jolly crowd we were. Forty quarts of champagne to eighteen of us. But we managed to—*Guy Bruce!*"

His unsteady gaze had fallen on me, where I stood, and the surprise of the encounter wiped the drink mists from his brain as by magic.

The rest, quite failing to grasp the meaning of Kent's sudden change of manner, stared from one to the other of us, as we faced each other there across the white expanse of table. But Bradway laughed.

"You're mistaken, Steve," said he. "Those forty quarts of champagne have affected your eyesight. This is Brian Meagher, of—"

"You fool!" yelled Kent, lurching forward, "this is my cousin, Guy Bruce. What's he doing here? He isn't one of us. Calls himself 'Meagher,' does he? He's a spy! That's what he is!"

The room was in an uproar. Every man had sprung up at the word "spy," and a babel of questioning broke out.

In the confusion, brief as it was, I caught a glimpse of O'Hara Bradway before he had time to gain control over his heavy features. And in those fishy eyes of his I read a fleeting glance of such abject terror as never before nor since have I seen on mortal face.

The man was a born coward. That one glimpse into his soul told me so, past all doubt.

And I felt a pulsation of savage joy. For, when I should meet him later, man to man, I relied on that same cowardice to wring from him the papers I had come so far to secure.

But now the guests were closing threateningly around me, while Kent continued to bellow wrathful denunciation and threat from across the table.

I stepped back to the wall, holding up one hand for silence. The oncomers paused—probably from curiosity—and I spoke.

"Gentlemen," I said, "this drunken cousin of mine for once in his life has happened to tell the truth. I am Guy Bruce, captain in the United States army, and in England on personal business. My reasons for taking the name of Meagher are of no concern to any one here. If I have been welcomed among you under false pretenses, the fault has not been mine.

"It seems I have intruded unwittingly on some sort of secret society. If it is any comfort to you to know it, I have not the remotest idea what you've been talking about, except, in a vague way, that you are opposed to the British government. Your affairs are of no interest to me. My business here is with Mr. O'Hara Bradway. If he will first grant me a short private interview I shall be glad to quit this house and leave you unmolested to play your silly little conspiracy game to your heart's content."

"He lies!" shouted Kent. "He is a dirty spy!"

And again his hearers made that ominous general movement toward me.

CHAPTER VI.

JUST WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED.

It was Bradway who averted the impending battle. Jumping between me

and his guests he checked their onset with upraised arms.

"Wait!" he urged. "Leave this to me. I'll be responsible for him. The man wants a word with me in private, he says. Well, I'll give him the chance he's looking for. Then I can judge, by what he says, whether or not his excuse is the true one."

The men hesitated. Bradway caught me by the sleeve.

"This way!" he said, piloting me into an adjoining room, and closing the door behind us.

I could hear through the panels the dull murmur of the others' excited voices, punctuated by the louder, sharper tones of Kent. We were in a big, luxuriously furnished study.

A grate fire glowed at one end of it, eking out the soft-shaded light of a single big table-lamp. The walls were lined with books, the center-table littered with papers and letters.

Between the long French windows that led apparently to the garden beyond, stood an iron safe, squat but massive.

My host motioned me to one of the big leather chairs. He himself remained standing near the fireplace. Drops of perspiration—evidences of his late fright—spangled his forehead, and there was a yellow pastiness about his face that had not been there an hour ago. The man had had a shock, and was still unnerved.

He cleared his throat before speaking, and looked at me in worried appeal. But I would make no lead. At last he was forced to open the duel.

"What is it?" he asked querulously. "What do you want of me?"

"I want the drafts which you are using to blackmail my father," I replied.

"I—I thought so. That is why I granted you this respite from—"

"From your revolutionary friends in the dining-room?"

He fidgeted and looked apprehensively at the door through which we had passed.

"How did you get hold of Meagher's name?" he queried.

"That is my affair and it has nothing to do with the business in hand. I want those drafts," I answered. "What will you take for them?"

"They are not for sale," he faltered with increasing nervousness.

"Oh, yes, they are," said I. "Everything is for sale, where a man like you is concerned. It's only a question of price. How much?"

"I purchased those drafts at an exorbitant rate in order to save your father's nephew from prison. It—"

"Listen!" I broke in. "It is a degrading thing for a white man to have to do business with such curs as you, and I want to get the wretched job over as quickly as possible. There is more in this thing than I understand. You are holding a whip of exposure over my cousin; yet he is received as an apparently welcome guest at your house. Whether or not you two are combining to rob and disgrace my father I do not know; or, indeed, whether my cousin is aware that you have discovered he is a forger. That is your concern. Not mine. What I want is those drafts. I am prepared to pay a fair price for them."

He had recovered some of his self-assurance.

"I repeat," said he, "they are not for sale."

I was fast losing the tight-held grip on my temper. Yet I played, on inspiration, one more card.

"In the other room," I remarked, "I gave your friends the idea I did not understand the purport of this gathering. But I leave it for you to judge if a man who has sense enough to choose Brian Meagher's name as an *open sesame* to such a meeting would be ignorant of what went on there. How long will you remain in Parliament—or out of prison—if I tell the British authorities what I know?"

His fat shoulders quivered and he slipped into a chair, where he sat eying me fishily.

"But your cousin!" he ventured. "He, too, is implicated. Surely for your father's sake—"

"It would not disgrace our family to know a member of it was arrested for political reasons so much as if he were jailed as a common felon," I retorted. "Will you sell me those drafts or am I to—"

"Oh, wait! wait!" he begged, passing his puffy hands over his face. "I must think. What am I to do? Give me time, can't you?"

As if to emphasize his appeal, the noisy voices from the dining-room rose once more in dispute. The man's terror was pitiable.

"What am I to do?" he sputtered helplessly. "If I take you back there they'll yell like a pack of bloodhounds and make me explain. If—"

"I can take care of myself," I answered. "I want those drafts."

"I—I can't make terms now. They're liable to come in here on us any minute. For mercy's sake, man, can't you see I'm driven to the wall? Have some pity! Give me time to think—to—"

"To hunt up a way to crawl out of the hole?" I suggested. "No, thank you!"

"Crawl out?" he echoed miserably. "How can I crawl out while you hold this Fenian business over my head? Since you've heard what you have to-night how can I get out of your power? Give me time!"

There was truth in what he said. I held the whip-hand. He was as surely mine as the hooked trout is the angler's prize.

Since my task was thus unexpectedly made so easy it might be well to follow the fisherman's example and "play" him judiciously, rather than to risk the chance of spoiling all by over-haste.

"I do not see what can be gained," I urged, nevertheless, "by wasting any more time. Put a price on the drafts and I will give you my check now."

"Well!" shouted Stephen, through the door, "have you finished?"

Bradway glanced piteously about the room, like a forest animal in a trap. The sight of such abject terror softened me, even while my contempt for the miserable coward momentarily increased.

"You see how it is!" he chattered. "We can't talk any longer now. And how can I think clearly when those brutes may interrupt us at any moment? Here!" getting to his feet and struggling for self-control, "I must get you out of this. Those men will think nothing of killing you. And then I'll be in a worse position than if you betrayed us."

"I thought you seemed to be their leader."

"I am. But only as a lion-tamer is leader of his animals. They'd turn on

me in a minute if they suspected me or if I crossed them. I must get you out of here."

He flung open one of the long French windows.

"Go out this way," he begged. "The path from this window runs straight to the rear gate in the garden wall. It's a bare fifty yards. Here's the gate key. Take it. You can let yourself out and be in the road in half a minute."

"Why should I run away?" I asked, fingering the key he had forced on me.

"They'll kill you."

I laughed and sat down again.

"They'll kill *me*!" he urged further.

"I'm sorry," I said civilly, "but—"

"If they kill me the drafts will go into the hands of my executors or of the police, with the rest of my effects. *You'll* never get them."

Again there was sense in what he said. I hesitated.

"I have it!" he cried. "Go by way of the garden. I'll say you got away in spite of me. Then I'll get rid of those fellows as early as I can, and wait here in my study for you. Come back at the end of an hour. Come by way of the garden gate and tap on this window. I'll let you in and we can talk the thing over in peace and come to some agreement."

"There is only one agreement we *can* come to," I answered, "and as for sneaking in here by the rear gate and rapping on a window for admittance, I don't like the idea. There's no sense in it. I will give you the hour's respite you ask to get rid of your fellow Fenians. But I'll come back, as any other business acquaintance would, and ring at the front door."

"And have my servants know you returned and that you were closeted with me? No, no! It—"

"Why not? Aren't—"

"How do I know how many of them may be spies of—"

"Of your guests out there? Surely a noble society that sets spies on one of its own leaders! It is pathetic to observe the simple trust they all seem to have in you!"

He winced at the sneer, but was too scared to resent it. Then rubbing his hands nervously together he pleaded:

"It's the only way I can see to—"

"All right!" I interrupted. "Have it as you will. I'll go. But be prepared to name your price for the drafts as soon as I come back. Let's see: It's ten minutes to twelve. I'll be here by one o'clock sharp."

As I closed and relocked the garden gate behind me, my heart beat high. Victory already was mine. All that remained was to agree on the mere terms. In one evening I had accomplished what had threatened to take me months.

And all because, by crass luck, I had blundered upon a certain alias and had, in consequence, been present at the deliberations of a society of whose nature and secrets I was still in almost total ignorance. I was almost disappointed at the commonplace way everything promised to turn out.

"It takes an American to play a good old game of bluff!" I chuckled to myself as I lounged along the deserted streets of the suburbs, consulting my watch from time to time to make sure of keeping my appointment. "I hadn't a card in my hand, and that poor old poltroon thought I held four aces."

From this my mind strayed to less sensible aspirations. I would mail the drafts to my father the very next day; then, for a week or two I would treat myself to a holiday; a holiday wherein Ruth Osborne should be the central figure.

True, I should scarcely be the sort of caller her uncle would choose to have at his house; but he must put up with my visits and I must in turn endure the chance of meeting the man I despised, for the sake of seeing Ruth.

The war would not—*could* not—last very much longer. It was only a question of a few months, perhaps, before I should come again to England to seal that half promise made on shipboard and claim Ruth for my wife.

It was Mrs. Bradway, not O'Hara himself, to whom she was related. So much I had learned on the train. Hence, there was none of his cowardly dishonest blood in her veins. And, once married to her, there would be no question of further intercourse with the Bradway family.

Then I remembered the light touch of her gold-red hair when it had blown across my lips in that moment of physi-

cal and spiritual nearness on shipboard, and again my pulse went like a trip-hammer.

All this was poor mental preparation for a momentous business interview. But I was only twenty-six. And when youth and business clash it is seldom youth that goes to the wall.

It wanted but a minute or so of one when I let myself through the back gate into Bradway's garden.

I looked, first, up and down the road to make sure no policeman or idler should witness my entrance. It would be hard to explain matters to a constable, should one inquire my business there at that hour.

I hated Bradway the more for placing me in so false a position and forcing me to slink into his house secretly, like a felon, at dead of night.

The situation got on my usually steady nerves, the gravel of the short path seemed to rattle like hailstones under my feet, and I could fancy a hundred eyes peering at me through the darkness.

I should not care to become a burglar. I wonder they have any nerves left.

I reached the French window of the study in safety. Not a light showed throughout the whole big house. What if Bradway had changed his mind and decided to put off the interview till morning? The idea vexed me and I rapped with perhaps unnecessary loudness on the pane.

But at once my doubts were set at rest. The window swung silently open and as I stepped in I heard Bradway whisper:

"Why did you knock so loud? You might have waked some one."

I made no answer, but followed him, gropingly, into the pitch-black room. Closing the window and drawing the curtains behind me, Bradway struck a match and lighted a small iron night-lamp.

His hand shook, but the active fear on his face had merged into a look of sullen defeat. I saw at a glance that he recognized himself hopelessly beaten.

"Well," said I cheerfully, seating myself on the corner of the table and lighting a cigar, "you've decided to give them to me?"

"To sell them to you," he corrected sulkily. "Don't speak so loud. Some one might hear."

I could have laughed. His was a common case—the beaten man who seeks to cloak his discomfiture by weak, violent crossness.

I shifted my position. My knee struck a big leather bag at one end of the table. It fell to the hardwood floor noisily, a half-dozen letters spilling out and sliding and scurrying along the polished surface.

At sound of the tumble, Bradway jumped as though I had driven a knife into him. As he saw the cause, his strained face relaxed.

"Oh!" he gasped in relief, "it's only the post-bag. I thought—"

He did not finish the sentence, but stooped and picked up the receptacle, restoring to it, one by one, the scattered letters.

I eyed the transaction with some slight interest. From my father I had heard of the old English custom of leaving a mail-bag on the table in hall or library for the reception of all letters written by the household during the day; the butler each morning emptying out its contents into the itinerant postman's sack. But this was my first sight of such a bag.

His task completed, Bradway came back to the table where I still sat.

"What do you want for the drafts?" I asked once more. "I am not in the humor for haggling. If only I myself were concerned I'd force them from you without paying a penny, for they have been paid for twice over. But my father ordered me to accede to any price within reason. What are your terms?"

He hesitated, cleared his throat, glanced furtively from side to side, then mumbled:

"Sixteen hundred pounds."

Eight thousand dollars! It was exorbitant. The more so, since the face value of the three notes together barely amounted to half that sum. But my father had bidden me pay any amount up to ten thousand dollars, and I felt I was justified in acceding to the iniquitous demand, lest my opponent's shifty mind undergo another of its frequent changes and the whole deal fall through.

"You are a thief!" I said curtly, "but I will pay."

"In cash?" he asked eagerly.

"Do you suppose I carry eight thousand dollars about in my pockets in a strange city?" I snapped.

I thought he looked chagrined. I continued:

"No, I'll give you a check on the Bruce-Bradway Company. I have here a blank check of my father's, made out to me. I will fill in the sum and indorse it to you. Is that satisfactory?"

He nodded. His face was livid and tremulous.

"Are you ill?" I demanded, wondering at his growing emotion.

"No, no," he croaked from a dry throat. "Make out the check."

"When I get the drafts."

"The check first. Make it out."

"That will be when the drafts are in my pocket. Come, Bradway! I can't trust you and you know it. You *can* trust me, and you'll have to."

He demurred no longer—a fact which for the instant struck me as strange in so ultra-cautious a man.

Crossing to his safe he unlocked and swung open its heavy metal door, pulled out a drawer or two, and from the rear of the receptacle produced a small blank envelope, which he handed me.

It was unsealed. I opened it and drew forth the three slips of paper. These I examined keenly, bending over the lamp to see the more clearly.

Yes, they were undoubtedly the originals. I held in my hand my father's freedom from blackmail and disgrace.

I returned the drafts to their envelope and wrote on its back: "*Sterling Bruce, Esq., 57 Wall Street, New York City, U. S. A.*"

All that remained now was to stamp this precious document, drop it in the nearest pillar-box, and my mission would be accomplished.

On the desk before me lay a sheaf of penny stamps. I was minded to ask Bradway to sell me enough for my letter; but on second thought I decided to be under no obligations—even for a minor courtesy—to such a man.

"Now, the check!" he muttered. He was positively feverish in his perturbation and haste. "Sit down here—here at this desk—where you directed your letter—and make it out. Here is the pen."

With amused malice I took pleasure in prolonging the delay as far as possible: the more to enjoy his fuming impatience.

He had caused my father months of heartache and suspense. A few moments of similar treatment would do him no harm.

So I first picked up the envelope containing the drafts, looked at it with deliberate solicitude, testing the ink to make sure it was quite dry. Then I made show of lengthy investigation of first one pocket and then another in search of one that was suitable to hold the envelope.

In those days all of New York's streets were not so well lighted nor so safe by night as now; and it was the custom of many men to have their evening clothes made with a secret, or double-inner pocket, wherein to place such bills of large denominations as they might chance to be carrying. The pockets were new, in that era, and were really quite cleverly concealed. It would require more than a casual search for a marauder to locate an article hidden in one of them.

Into this inner pocket I at last slipped

my envelope. Not that I feared to lose it, but because the pocket took longest to locate.

Bradway was beside himself with impatience. He fussed about the desk in a paroxysm of timid anger, scarcely noting my actions at all, but arranging and rearranging the pen, ink, and sand-shaker.

At last, weary of the sport of tantalizing him, I strolled across to the desk, drew out my wallet, and extracted from it one of the several blank checks my father had signed and given me.

I sat down, filled in the amount, indorsed it to Bradway, then leaned over for the sand-shaker to dry the ink.

"I have made it out for eight thousand and five dollars," I said. "The extra five dollars is to pay for the very good dinner you gave me to-night. I don't wish to count myself your guest."

Even as I stretched my arm across to reach the shaker, the desk and floor together leaped up toward my face. There was a crash and a flare of myriad lights, and then I seemed to sink quietly into the depths of an ocean of cool blackness.

(To be continued.)

A THAW BELOW ZERO.

By SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

What happened when the parties to a lover's
quarrel struck a flag-station in a snow-storm.

"THEN, you won't go with me as my promised bride."

"I won't go with you at all."

"But, my dear Nell! The Senator—"

"Don't you dare call me your dear Nell. And as for the Senator, he may think what he likes. You are a jealous, hateful man. I hate you."

"Do you mean that, Nell?"

"Miss Winston, if you please."

"Very good. Then Mr. Dolliver will say farewell."

This wasn't all of it. Paper is poor stuff anyway, and the best of it would scorch if the entire quarrel between Nellie Winston and Tom Dolliver was printed.

It was a bitter quarrel. Possibly it

was a foolish one, but quarrels generally are. Anyway, it was all over between them. The ring Dolliver had purchased and which had been scorned remained in its plush box and Dolliver wended his way homeward, full of that bitterness and gall that comes to a man who thought he loved a girl only to find out how much he really hated her.

All lovers who quarrel are like that, and some married people.

Miss Winston, after Dolliver had departed, went to her room and looked at her flushed, angry face in the mirror.

"Hateful, spiteful thing!" she said, and then she had a good cry.

All girls who quarrel with their lovers do that.

Dolliver reached his room, lit a cigar, and swore that he would live and die a bachelor. All lovers who quarrel with their sweethearts make the same vow.

But there was the Senator's invitation. The Senator and his wife were not only friends of the two belligerent parties, but in a roundabout sort of way they were relatives. And in the genial kindness of their hearts, not knowing that a terrific war was imminent, they had invited the two to spend a pleasant week-end at their country house for a good old-fashioned winter's sport, sleighing, skating, tobogganing, and all that goes to make the country worth while in the snow period.

And Dolliver, to make the occasion pleasanter, had bought the ring, and before he had said a word about it the quarrel had begun and ended and two raging mortals had put the pleasures of the Senator's country house entirely beyond the possibilities.

Miss Winston did it first. On her finely scented note-paper she wrote that owing to a severe headache, the nature and cause of which was puzzling three reputable physicians, she regretted that it would be impossible for her to accept the very kind invitation. She could not stand the trip in the stuffy cars with no ventilation, and she did not wish to spoil the visit for any one else.

Then Dolliver wrote that he had sprained his ankle on a slippery sidewalk and had taken cold waiting for some one to come along and pick him up, so he could neither skate nor go sleighing, and would only spoil the fun of the others by coming.

The Senator's wife was much perturbed.

"How unfortunate that both should be ill at the same time," she said. But the Senator exclaimed: "Bosh. They've quarreled. Leave 'em alone. Next week they'll be all right."

But neither Dolliver nor Miss Winston was in a mood ever to be "all right" again. They moped around, growing more angry toward each other till Marie, Miss Winston's maid, was almost driven out of her senses by her mistress's strange vagaries, and Alphonse. Dolliver's valet, grew frantic trying to please a man who was never hard to please before.

And it so happened that Alphonse and Marie had a feeling for each other, and they laughed much in their own stolen happiness over the quarrel of their superiors.

"Miss Winston is not going to the Senator's, sir," said Alphonse. "She has sent regrets."

"How do you know?" snapped Dolliver.

"Marie told me."

"Marie! What have you to do with Marie? You let that hussy alone or leave my employ. I won't have my business dragged into the Winston house. Pack my grip."

"Yes, sir. Are you going away?"

"I've changed my mind. I'm going to the Senator's."

And about the same time Marie remarked to Miss Winston:

"Too bad, ma'am. Mr. Dolliver has hurt his ankle and cannot go. So neither of you will be there. Ees it not too bad?"

"How do you know?"

"Alphonse told me."

"I hate that Alphonse. I don't wish you to be meeting him. I won't have you telling him my business. Pack my suitcase and put me up a good lunch."

"Ees *m'mselle* going away?"

"Yes. I feel better and the Senator's wife will be disappointed. I'll go."

"Shall I accompany *m'mselle*?"

"No. I'll go alone."

And that's the way it happened up to that point.

Now, the Senator's country house was reached by the Middleville and Hutchinson Railroad, a single-track, horrible affair that wound its way around hills and through woods, and ran trains when there wasn't anything in the way, and the station nearest to the Senator's big place was Whipple's.

Whipple was the Senator's name, and he had used his influence and power to have that station put there for his own convenience primarily, and secondarily to win the approbation of the few farmers who could share that convenience in going to and from the city and in shipping produce.

There was little shipping done with the snow so deep, and the station at Whipple's wasn't a very busy one.

The train was due to arrive about five o'clock in the afternoon. It snowed when the train started and every foot it went nearer to Whipple's the more snow it met and the colder the weather grew outside, and the more miserable Dolliver felt as he sat in his big fur ulster in the smoking-car, trying to forget that this was the most miserable attempt to enjoy himself he had made since he met Nellie Winston.

And Nellie, in the ordinary coach, for this train had no parlor-cars, tried to make herself think she liked it, but she was too angry at Dolliver to realize how miserable she was.

It was about six when the train arrived at Whipple's and two passengers alighted. This train did not take on passengers at this stop, so the station was dark and deserted.

When Dolliver stepped to the platform and saw Miss Winston standing up to her ankles in snow, with the biting wind blowing her fur coat almost to pieces, he felt something but scarcely knew what it was.

Anyway, he knew what a gentleman should do, and tried to do it.

"So we both came," he said. "I hope you are not cold."

"Not at all," replied Miss Winston sarcastically. "I am actually perspiring."

Dolliver went to the door of the station. It was locked. He peered in at the windows. There was no light, no sign of life within. He walked around the station. There was no one to be seen.

No vehicle had come to meet them from the Senator's. Why should any come when they had both sent regrets?

"I thought somebody else would be on the train," said Dolliver. "I guess we're up against it."

Miss Winston gave him a cold stare.

"You take advantage of the situation, sir."

"Oh, I forgot we were strangers," said Dolliver as he strode away along the platform in the snow.

But it was cold. The wind was increasing in violence, and as Dolliver stood freezing in the shelter of the lee of the station Miss Winston walked to the other side. She would not share even that comfort with him.

Dolliver muttered a word under his breath that is forbidden in print—some print—and again tried the station door. Then he went to the door of the baggage-room and found that also locked.

Then the rage that was fomenting in Dolliver's bosom burst into a flame, and he took his suit-case and smashed an entire window-sash.

There was not a dwelling to be seen from the station. The nearest was a farmhouse a mile away and nobody could walk it in the dark and snow.

Miss Winston heard the crash and was frightened. She found it convenient to look in a window and saw Dolliver examining the stove.

Of course there was no fire. Who ever heard of a railroad company keeping a fire in a station when there were no passengers for the trains. Passengers who alight from a train never need a fire.

Miss Winston found a malicious delight in watching Dolliver. He looked all around the bare, comfortless room, but there was nothing with which he could make a fire.

He supposed there must be wood somewhere. He went to the door between the waiting-room and the baggage-room. For some reason that was also locked. With a kick Dolliver sent it crashing in.

But in the baggage-room he was still unfortunate. He found no wood.

But, standing in a corner was one of those axes painted red that are to be seen in some railway cars to be used in case of wreck to chop one's way to liberty. He seized it.

The grim determination of the pirate, the highway robber, and the plunderer, came to him as with his great strength he lifted the door from its hinges, dragged it into the waiting-room, laid it from the floor to a seat, and with unholy glee began to chop it up for firewood.

He had the afternoon paper in his pocket, and of course plenty of matches. And he knew how to build a fire.

"He'd be a good husband if he was poor," said Miss Winston. "See how he can work."

Dolliver's exertions had made him warm, and his fur coat had been cast aside, but Miss Winston had grown colder than ever standing still watching him.

"Come on in, it's better now," said Dolliver, beckoning.

She turned proudly away and continued her tramp in the snow.

Her rage against Dolliver increased. If he had been a poor-spirited man who stood and shivered she might have forgiven him. But to think he was a great big husky thing, who broke windows that belonged to railroads, chopped up the company's doors, and made a fire in a railroad's stove as if the consequences were nothing! It was maddening to have such a man around.

"You'll freeze out there," he shouted.

But Miss Winston pretended not to hear.

"Well, I won't be selfish," said Dolliver to himself. "I'll give her a chance if she won't come in with me."

He managed to find one door with the key on the inside and opened it. He put on his fur coat and strode out in the storm.

Miss Winston watched him in amazement as his tall figure breasted the gale. Then she looked in the window again at the fire.

When she thought Dolliver wasn't coming back, she gulped down something, her pride with it, and went in by the fire.

Oh, but it was grateful! Dolliver had piled the old door in till the blaze was roaring merrily.

She was amazed to find what a difference there was between this and the bitter cold outside. And as she glanced up she saw Dolliver back again.

"You didn't play a trick on me," said Miss Winston. "I came in to put more wood on your old fire. There it is."

Dolliver stared in amazement as the haughty untamed beauty stalked majestically outside again.

Dolliver was hungry. He had not expected anything like this and was not accustomed to carrying a lunch while traveling.

Miss Winston had plenty of lunch outside and was also hungry; but was too cold to eat.

But under no circumstances would she let Tom Dolliver think he was doing her a favor by chopping up the company's door for a fire.

But one door does not last forever.

Dolliver got some chairs and some other furniture, a table for one thing, and the sound of his merry ax reached the freezing Nellie outside.

She was amazed to find that it was colder after her little thaw than it had been before. Her feet were almost numb with the cold. That fur coat that cost so much felt like tissue-paper. And there was that hulking Dolliver with a big fire and his coat off.

And it was dark. She wasn't afraid. Oh, no, not with that man in there. And, anyway, tramps wouldn't go round in such weather.

"Come on in," shouted Dolliver again. "Don't be a—don't be a chump."

Her answer was scornful silence.

Dolliver found a lamp and lit that.

The feeble glow looked hatefully cheerful to the suffering Miss Winston. She went to a window and peered in.

Dolliver wasn't there. Where could he have gone so quickly? And how dark it seemed outside.

A little sob of misery escaped her. She was not cut out for a heroine, this well-nurtured little heiress, and the cold was so intense, and she was so hungry.

Suddenly some one grabbed her. She screamed in terror.

She was being carried away and Dolliver did not come to help her. She thought of tramps and people who abducted heiresses for ransom, and of a lot of other horrors.

But to her astonishment her ruffianly assailant carried her round to the door and into the dimly lighted station.

"Now, look here," said Dolliver, as he dragged a seat to the stove, sat her down in it, and put his own coat around her, "we won't have any more of this nonsense. You'll stay here and get warm. I am not going outside to freeze just because we happen to be on the outs. We needn't make up. Keep on as we quit. But to-night is bitter cold, there is no hope of getting anywhere, and neither your dead body nor mine is going to be found in the snow to-morrow. That's right. Weep a little."

Oh, it was warm in there! Dolliver had found something that almost covered the broken window, and he kept chopping up stuff to burn till it seemed he was going to chop down the station itself.

"I suppose you are hungry," said Dolliver. "I'm sorry there is no possibility of getting you something to eat."

"I've got something," she said involuntarily, and showed her package.

"Oh, the deuce you have! I'm hungry. Give me that bundle."

He dragged another seat up to the fire, made a little table with the panel of a door he had chopped up, and soon had chicken sandwiches, pickles, a bottle of cold coffee, some cake, and a few other things spread out on a napkin.

"Listen. This may be the last meal we ever eat together. I'm going away after this. I'm going to Africa to shoot elephants. I won't bother you again. But if we've got to spend this night in this old barn we are going to do it in comfort. Now you eat some of this lunch. There is plenty for two."

With downcast eyes, but a fearful tugging at her heart, Miss Winston did eat.

"You'll be arrested for what you've done," she said.

"What? Kidnaping you out of the cold?"

"Chopping up the doors and breaking in the window."

"Will, eh? Whipple paid for this station, and if he won't pay for another I will. These are good sandwiches. Who made 'em?"

"I did."

"Good. You'd make a fine wife for a poor man if you were poor too. Splendid!"

She laughed a little to remember she had thought what a fine husband he would make if he was poor.

"Don't put your feet too near the stove," he cautioned her. "It may feel good, but when you go out in the cold you'll suffer. Chilblains and frostbite are not nice on little feet."

"Impudent," she said, but she drew away her feet.

He had never been so authoritative before. He had waited on her as if she were a queen and he her slave. This was different. She rather liked it.

"I don't see much chance for you to rest to-night," he remarked. "I suppose the cold makes you sleepy, and now the heat after it. I'll tell Whipple what a miserable place this is."

"Maybe they will send."

"Send what? For whom? Didn't you write you were not coming?"

"Yes."

"So did I."

The wind played weird and solemn tunes around the eaves and corners of the rude building. The blackness of night reigned outside. Only in the warmth of the stove and the feeble glow of the unwashed lamp was there a bit of comfort.

An hour passed, and then another, and the cold outside increased.

Warmed through and through now by the company's doors and furniture the sleep that could not be resisted fell upon her, and Dolliver saw her head droop. He quietly put his arm around her—it had been there before and fitted very well—and drew her pretty head toward him.

"We needn't make up," he said with a grin. "Just rest a little on my shoulder."

And she did. Nine o'clock came and Dolliver started as he heard a suffering, tortured locomotive trying to reach the station. He did not disturb the girl. She had fallen asleep. But he listened.

And then there came to his ears the cheerful, welcome sound of sleigh-bells, but he could not see through the windows.

There was shouting outside, and the sound of the many bells told of four horses that pranced in the snow. But in a minute it almost ceased and then the door was burst open and the burly form of the Senator, wrapped from head to feet in furs and carrying a great four-in-hand whip, strode in, like a Santa Claus in white.

"Well—I'll—be—" he began, as he looked at the two. "I thought you were not coming."

"We—are here," said Dolliver. "What brought you?"

"I expect some more on this train if it ever gets here. Great guns, you got over that quarrel quick."

"We are not over it yet," said Dolliver.

"Yes, we are," came a half-smothered voice, and a little fur-clad arm went up around Dolliver's neck.

"Well—I'll—be—" muttered the Senator. "I wonder were Jennie and I ever such idiots as that?"

And then the other train dragged in.

LEFT IN THE LURCH.

By GRANT L. CONRAD.

A hard-luck story, with an account of the desperate device resorted to by a man with money owing him which he couldn't collect.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN THE "RAINY DAY" CAME.

"OH, what a difference a few hours make," hummed Lockwood Winters significantly.

He was sitting on the side of his narrow cot-bed, gazing up toward the dingy square of skylight in the ceiling.

It was one of those narrow, inside rooms on the top floor of a New York boarding-house, a trifle more cheerless and uninviting than a cell in the penitentiary; and its dingy discomfort was accentuated to Winters's eye by the fact that he had just moved thither from the luxury of an elegantly furnished apartment, where he had enjoyed free range of ten spacious rooms and two baths.

These former sybaritic quarters he had shared with two companions—the trio calling themselves "The Three Guardsmen." There they had lived, their creature comforts looked after by a deft, silent Japanese servant, themselves heedless as butterflies in the sunshine, taking no thought of the morrow, blithely regardless of the inevitable "rainy day."

Why should they bother their heads about problematical rainy days was no doubt the way they would have put it to themselves, if they had ever given any thought to the subject at all. They were all three making good money in the service of the *Morning Dial*, and it was their firm conviction that the paper could not get along without them.

Hence, they lived up to the last penny of their incomes, secure in the knowledge that pay-day came regularly once a week.

But it is a peculiar fact in human affairs that whenever a person gets an idea into his brain that he is an indispensable factor in the business with which he is connected, that moment something comes along to give him a jolt and conclusively demonstrate his mistake.

Unexpectedly to everybody, a new chief was installed at the *Dial*, whose creed was "Reduce expenses"; and the next Saturday when the "Three Guardsmen" received their envelopes, each found within a polite notification that his services were no longer required.

Did they trim sail, then, and lighten ship for the purpose of weathering the storm? Not at all. So sure were they that the evil dispensation was only temporary, and that two weeks at the outside would see them back again at their desks, that they abated in no single particular their expensive manner of living.

It would be folly, they agreed, to give up their fine apartment, or to deny themselves any of the comforts to which they were accustomed. When a few days would see them back once more upon Easy Street. Probably before the first week was out the new autocrat down at the *Dial* would discover his error, and humbly beseech them to return.

But the week passed, and another, and still another; yet no word came from the office, and at last, their slender reserve fund exhausted, they had to look the situation in the face.

Their rent for the apartment was due on the following Monday, and their landlord was not one to allow a day's leeway; their stock of provisions was running low—bacon and potatoes had been their breakfast, dinner, and supper menu for three days now; finally, even after searching through all the vest-pockets in their respective wardrobes for stray or forgotten coins, they could not muster as much as ten dollars among them.

"Is there anything left to be pawned?" inquired McKay at the council which was hurriedly assembled to consider ways and means.

"Not a thing," responded Brewster, with a gloomy shake of the head, "except what is absolutely indispensable to

have when we get our jobs back. You remember we soaked everything down to the hair-brushes, in order to give the gang that spread when they dropped in on us Tuesday night.

"I'll tell you, though," with a sudden inspiration, "we might put up two of the dress-suits, and keep one as a sort of joint possession to be used by whichever one of us has the most need for it."

This happy suggestion met with small favor, however, at the hands of his companions. Evening dress is as much a part of a reporter's stock in trade as his nerve or his note-book, for he never knows into what circles of society a possible assignment may take him.

Besides, as Winters somewhat impatiently pointed out, McKay was tall and slender, Brewster short and fat, while he himself was of medium height with exceptionally broad shoulders.

"No matter whose suit we choose," he observed, "two of us would be bound to look like the funny page in a Sunday edition.

"No, fellows, we are up against the real thing, and we might as well recognize it. The day for makeshifts and stop-gaps is over; it is up to us to get on something like a permanent basis again.

"It is pretty plain to me, too," he went on, "that the *Dial* isn't going to be in any hurry about recalling us, while we know from our own inquiries that there are likely to be no vacancies on other papers which we could afford to take. Yet it seems ridiculous for men of our brains and abilities to sit down here with folded hands, and calmly let ourselves go to pot, when there must be hundreds of good positions simply waiting for chaps like us to come along and fill them.

"I propose, therefore, that we start out on a prospecting expedition, each man going in a different direction, and each having two objects definitely in view—first, to raise sufficient money for our immediate needs and to keep us going, for I suppose none of us wants to give up the apartment; and, second, to land some kind of a berth for himself which will bring in a steady and settled revenue.

"It is now just ten o'clock," glancing out of the window at the clock on the church tower across the way, which served them as their only timepiece

now since all their watches had been put "in soak." "Let us spend the entire day in skirmishing to the best of our ability, and meet here again at six this evening to report progress."

The plan met with approval, and accordingly, after making themselves as presentable as possible, the three sallied forth, separating on the door-step with a parting handshake for good luck, and each proceeding upon an individual tack.

In the evening Winters was the first to show up at the rendezvous. He had been unable to corral any regular job, or even to hear of a suitable opening, but by sheer accident had encountered on the street a fellow to whom he had once loaned one hundred and twenty-five dollars, but of whom he had completely lost track, long since charging up the debt to profit and loss.

His creditor, however, had not forgotten the obligation, and explained with profuse apologies that being once more upon his feet, he had for some time past been seeking Winters with the purpose of squaring up, but had been unable to find him at any of his former haunts.

"And as it happens," he added, with a touch of chagrin, "you have struck me at just the wrong time, after all. Yesterday I could have paid you easily; but I had an opportunity this morning to get in on a pretty good thing, and I have plunged to it with about all the ready cash I had.

"You needn't think I am trying to put you off, either," he averred earnestly. "I will be flush again toward the end of next month. Look—you can see for yourself," producing his pocketbook and showing, by indubitable proofs, that he would be amply in funds at the time he mentioned. "and nothing will give me greater pleasure than to settle the amount I owe you the moment I have it in hand."

"The trouble with that is," said Winters a bit ruefully, "that I probably sha'n't need it at all then, whereas now it would be a regular life-saver. Still," with a somewhat forced smile, "since you haven't got it I shall have to get along some other way, sustaining myself in the meantime with the knowledge that the money will eventually be forthcoming."

The other glanced sharply at him with a new comprehension, gathered more per-

haps from the disappointment in his tone than from either his words or appearance.

"Say," he queried bruskiy, "are you hard up, old man? Really and truly on the seamy side, I mean?"

For answer, Winters plunged his hand into his pocket, and held out upon his palm for the other's inspection the little hoard of silver and copper which constituted all his worldly wealth.

"There is exactly three dollars and sixty-two cents in that pile," he said slowly, "and unless I fasten on to a job of some kind mighty quick I'm blessed if I know where any more is going to come from."

"Why on earth didn't you say so before?" interjected his friend impatiently. "I'm strapped myself right now, as I just told you, but I can do something. Here," counting off a roll of bills and thrusting it into Winters's hand, "there's fifty on account, and if you'll step over yonder," pointing to a hotel across the street, "I'll draw you a check for the other seventy-five, good the last day of next month. Perhaps you can get somebody to cash it for you at a discount in the meantime, although I'm free to say I couldn't. It would be hard work for me to raise a dollar between now and then if I was to be hanged for want of it. But, if you can't, it will at least be paid on the date for which it is drawn."

It was not as satisfactory an arrangement as Winters might have wished, but half a loaf is certainly better than no bread, and even though he did have to wait a full thirty days for the seventy-five, there were no such restrictions upon the fifty nestling so comfortably in his waistcoat-pocket.

It would at least provide for his share of the joint housekeeping expenses, and if his two companions had been equally fortunate in their quest another month's tenure of their handsome apartment was assured.

CHAPTER II.

A SPEEDY DESCENT.

WINTERS was naturally all impatience to hear the experiences of his comrades, and to learn if their adventures had in

anywise paralleled his own; but he had rather a protracted wait.

Indeed, the hands on the church clock marked much nearer seven than six, and the Jap had poked his head in from the kitchen several times in manifest perturbation over his spoiling dinner, before either of them put in an appearance; and then it was McKay, who came alone.

The agreement had been that none of their stories were to be related until dinner was over and they were seated about the board with their post-prandial pipes in mouth; but Winters had little difficulty in discerning from McKay's self-satisfied manner, and from the gaiety which had displaced his habitual sullenness, that the latter likewise had good news to impart.

So eager, moreover, was he to tell what had befallen him, that he overruled Winters's objections, and insisted upon the meal being served without waiting for Brewster.

"Talk about the difficulty of landing a job, Lockwood," he declared vaingloriously, as he helped himself to the lion's share of the meager repast prepared for the three of them. "Why, it's no trick at all when the right sort of a man starts out to look for it. I hadn't been gone from the house half an hour this morning before I had clamped down a billet that it's worth while getting.

"I am now," leaning back in his chair and thrusting his thumbs into the arm-holes of his vest, "private secretary and confidential man to Mr. Isaac Ransom, the millionaire grain merchant. Something of an upward step in the world from being the penniless beggar that I started out this morning, eh?"

"Well, I should say so!" gasped Winters, fairly overwhelmed at the good fortune of his companion. "How in the world did you ever fall foul of such a snap as that?"

"Oh, it was very simple—very simple," smiling complacently. "When I left here I went directly to the office of Ezra Smith, the lawyer. I had done him some favors in various ways when I was on the paper, you know, and I thought he might be willing to stand for a modest 'touch' on the strength of them. But he did even better than I had hoped, for I had hardly got through explaining to

him that I was temporarily up against it before he jumped to his feet and told me he believed he had exactly what I wanted.

"Old Ransom, it seems, had been in not half an hour before, consulting him about some lawsuit, and in the course of their conversation chanced to remark that he wished he could get hold of a reliable secretary, capable of relieving him of the onerous details of correspondence and matters of that sort.

"Well, of course, this immediately occurred to Smith when I stated my case to him, and he lost no time in telephoning over to Ransom and asking if the proposition still stood.

"The upshot was that I was granted an immediate interview with his nibs, and since I was able, backed up by Smith's strong recommendation, to satisfy him very quickly that I was thoroughly competent, I was taken on at once.

"I really believe, though," he added, with a deprecating laugh, "that what decided the old boy in my favor more than anything else was the fact of my being in the National Guard.

"Ah!" he said, puffing out his chest when I told him, 'I am glad to hear it, for I, too, belong. I am colonel of the One Hundred and Twenty-First.'

"Yes, sir, I know it," I answered, giving him the salute. 'I have had the honor of serving under you four years, for I am first sergeant of Company H of the same regiment.'

"Well, he warmed right up to me after that, and do you know, Lockwood," excitedly, "he put me on to some regimental news this afternoon that I had not heard before."

"What is that?" queried Winters interestedly, for he, too, was a member of the regiment, having enlisted at the same time as McKay, and being assigned to the same company.

"Why," said the other impressively, "H is to be without a captain next week. Ransom is going to promote Midgely to a position on his staff, and he advises me to go in for the vacancy."

"For the vacant lieutenantcy, you mean?" suggested Winters.

"No, sir, for the captaincy itself. You know as well as I do that neither Forrest nor Hamgrove is popular with the men; so, with the backing which I can undoubt-

edly get from headquarters, what's to hinder me from sailing in over their heads?"

"But neither are you especially popular with the men," objected Winters significantly. "Still," hastily, as he saw a frown gathering on the other's face, "that can be straightened out, I suppose; and at any rate, we've got something better to do to-night than sit gassing over regimental politics. You've told your story of the day; now, no doubt, you want to hear how I fared in my search?"

"Oh, yes," returned McKay uninterestedly. "How did you make out? Have any luck?"

Then he listened superciliously to the other's account, until Winters produced the fifty dollars to show as the tangible result of his endeavors, when a quick gleam of interest replaced the rather bored, abstracted expression in his eye.

He was just about to break in with an interruption to the story, when there came a sharp ring at the door.

"Ah," said Winters, rising and starting out toward the hall, "that is Brewster at last, and, as usual, he has forgotten his latch-key."

But it was not the missing member of the trio; only a note from him delivered by a messenger-boy, and addressed to Winters.

The latter hurriedly tore it open, and started to scan its contents; but before he had perused half a dozen lines he gave an exclamation of dismayed astonishment, and, completely overwhelmed, sank into the nearest chair.

"What is it?" demanded McKay. "Has anything happened to him?"

"Anything happened to him?" repeated Lockwood. "Just listen."

And picking up once more the letter which in his agitation had fallen to the floor, he began to read:

"DEAR LOCKWOOD AND DICK:

"I had no idea, of course, when I left you this morning, of entering upon any such step as I have undertaken; but, although my action may seem selfish and inconsiderate to you two, I am satisfied that for myself it is the wisest thing I could have done.

"There is no use beating about the bush, so I will come out bluntly, and tell you that I am married.

"When we separated this morning, I dropped around to see Edith before going anywhere else, and getting confidential in my talk with her and her mother, told them just how desperate were the straits we had reached, and how it was merely a toss-up whether we might not all be out on the streets next Wednesday morning.

"Well, the old lady broke in at that. She likes me, you know, and she is a trümp, if one ever lived. 'Look here,' she said, 'what is the use of all this struggle and effort on your part? I have plenty; and what I spend now upon agents and attorneys to look after my property for me could a good deal better be devoted to a capable son-in-law whose interest in the estate would be as strong as my own.

"'Besides that, I never did believe in long engagements. You love Edith, and she loves you; but you might hang on for years before you would reach a time when you thought you were in a position to marry. Put your pride in your pocket, my boy,' she urged; 'go out with Edith this morning and get married. Then come back here and take over the management of our affairs for us. You are looking for a position, and here is one ready-made for you to which Providence distinctly points the way. Come, be sensible now, and do as I say.'

"Well, I held out for a while, and tried to show her that it didn't seem exactly a square deal for you chaps, seeing that we had all agreed to stand together; but she made it an issue of you on the one side and Edith's happiness on the other, and, of course, when she put it that way, there was nothing else for it but to give in.

"So, old chums, the triumvirate is busted. I am now a married man, tied up as hard as bell and book could do it at high noon to-day; and I realize, as you will, that henceforth our interests and our responsibilities lie apart.

"Still, I shall never forget the jolly times we have all had together, and both Edith and I hope to see you often, and wish that you may have all the luck in the world—even as good as that, although I scarcely believe it possible, which has befallen your deserting but blissfully happy comrade,

"BREWSTER."

"Well, what do you think of that?" ejaculated Winters at last, after he and his companion had sat gazing speechlessly across the table at each other for several

seconds. "I guess he's right, though, about one thing," he went on, a bit pensively. "This is a death-blow to the old triumvirate. You and I," with an interrogative glance at McKay, "could hardly manage to keep up the shebang here alone, and I don't know of any other fellow that I would care to take on in Brewster's place."

"Oh, no," said McKay hurriedly, "either course is out of the question. And—er—to tell the truth, Lockwood, I had about decided to draw out on my own hook. You see, Ransom wants me pretty constantly at his elbow, and has offered me a suite of rooms without charge in his own house. I should be a fool to refuse any such proposition; so, since Brewster has left us, the only thing for us to do is to give up the apartment next week, and each fellow strike out on his own hook.

"And, by the way, old chap," leaning eagerly forward, "could you let me have that fifty of yours for a few days? I would like to get settled over at Ransom's to-morrow, but I don't like to move in there without my clothes and things, and it will take fully that much to get them out of soak.

"You won't really need the money yourself before Wednesday, you know," he wheedled; "for you can stay on here in the apartment until that time, and Saki will make you comfortable all right. And I promise you faithfully that before you have to get out I will raise the amount in some way and pay you back."

Winters demurred somewhat, for fifty dollars looks mighty big when it is all that a man has; but McKay waxed so insistent, pointing out that although he could scarcely ask Ransom for an advance upon salary at present, five days thence it would be an easy matter, he finally yielded, and tossed his treasure-trove across the table.

If the worst came to the worst, he reasoned with himself, and McKay should for any reason fail him, there was still the seventy-five-dollar check in his pocket which somebody would certainly be willing to cash.

But his calculations, as he subsequently discovered, were a trifle erroneous; for when his time was up at the apartment not only did McKay profess him-

self unable to produce, but neither was any one willing to advance money upon the post-dated check even at the liberal discount which Winters offered.

Even Brewster, to whom he almost tearfully appealed, turned him down.

"Come around in the course of a month, Lockwood," he said, "when I have earned my salary as manager of the estate, and I will cash your check for you, or even loan you double the amount if you are in need of it; but, if I granted your request now, I should have to dip into the trust funds in my hands, and that I have firmly made up my mind never to do, no matter what the temptation."

To make a long story short, Winters, homeless and jobless, found himself suddenly in a position where he could not beg, borrow or raise a single cent. By some perverse concatenation of circumstances, every one to whom he could ordinarily have applied was either out of town, or financially embarrassed himself.

A man never learns how hard it is to raise money in New York until he is abjectly in need of it; then, all the avenues which in the days of his prosperity seemed widely open and accessible, suddenly close up and post the sign, "No Thoroughfare."

He had to have some place to sleep and eat, though, and finally, in his desperation, he bethought himself of a cheap boarding-house over on the West Side, where he had lodged on first coming to New York, and where his credit was good.

As he stood on the door-step of this place with all his belongings in a modest suit-case, waiting for an answer to his ring, he reflected dismally that if this last refuge failed him, there was nothing left except the station-house or one of the charitable associations.

But, fortunately, the same landlady was in charge, and more fortunate still, she remembered him.

"I don't think I have anything that would suit you, though, Mr. Winters," she deprecated, smoothing down her apron. "All I have vacant at the present time is a little inside room on the top floor."

"Oh, anything. Anything will do."

interposed Lockwood eagerly; then seeing her quick glance of surprise, and fearing lest he might arouse her suspicions by over-anxiety, he hastened to qualify his remark.

"That is, anything will do, until you can locate me more conveniently. You see, it is of your splendid table more than anything else that I was thinking. I have lived all over New York since I left you, but never have I found anything to compare with it"—and that is the Bible truth, he told himself, striving to conceal his disgusted expression, as a waft of rank cabbage swept out of the door, and smote him in the face. "There is nothing to compare with it."

"So," he finished with his most ingratiating smile, "like the prodigal son I have come back, and for the sake of the fatted calf, I am willing to put up with almost any other discomfort."

Even a disillusioned boarding-house keeper has her weak side, and Mrs. Sowerby fairly beamed under the flattery with which Winters continued to plaster her.

"The rate for room and board will be four dollars and fifty cents a week, Mr. Winters," she said as she started to withdraw after showing him to his cubby-hole, "and our rule," tentatively, "is cash in advance."

"Ah, so it is," said Winters. "I had forgotten that."

"But that don't need to apply to you," she proceeded, and Winters could not remember ever having heard more welcome words. "You suit your own convenience in regard to settlin', so long as you let me have it before the last day of each month. I need it then in order to meet my rent."

She went out, and Winters was left alone to reflect upon the vicissitudes which had brought him so swiftly from the grandeur of his ten-room apartment down—or rather, up—to this miserable top-floor kennel.

"Nevertheless," he murmured to himself, "it's a haven, an abiding place, and it's within my means."

"By George!" smiting his fist down resolutely upon his pillow. "I've had my lesson, and if I don't profit by it, may I never again live in any sort of decent comfort."

"Henceforth," he declared, "there is going to be some sort of provision for the 'rainy day.' Not a cent will I lend to any one, and I'll do no favors. I shall do without things unless I have the money to pay for them in my pocket, and half of my salary shall be religiously put aside for a reserve fund."

CHAPTER III.

AN HONEST CRIMINAL.

THERE is some sort of a little mocking imp whose especial business seems to be to eavesdrop around until he overhears one of us indulging in good resolutions, when with fiendish joy he hurries away to prepare a pitfall for our unwary feet.

So, Winters now was destined to be subjected to the test.

After having settled himself in his constricted quarters, and stowed away upon the shelves the few possessions in his dress suit-case, he decided, since it was too late to go hunting for a job any more that day, to stroll around to his former home, and leave his new address with the janitor in case any mail should come to be forwarded.

And, as it happened, he found there awaiting him a letter which had just arrived that afternoon.

Within the envelope lay a second one of thick cream-laid paper.

"Wedding cards, eh?" muttered Winters. "Well, they might have saved their postage. I'm not attending any festivities of that character just at present."

Then he gave a sharp whistle of dismay; for upon unfolding the inner sheet he discovered to his surprise that the groom upon this auspicious occasion was to be none other than his old college friend, Tom Blenkner.

Quickly Winters glanced again at the invitation, and with a groan crumpled it up and thrust it into his pocket, for the thing had somehow been delayed in reaching him, and the nuptials to which he was bidden were scheduled for the evening of the next day but one.

And with his realization of that fact, bang! Up in the air went Winters's good resolutions. For this was a case where

he felt that he should have to make an exception to the rule he had laid down.

With any one else than Blenkner, he would simply have shrugged his shoulders and let the matter slide; but Tom was one of those sensitive chaps to whom any action of the sort would seem nothing short of a direct insult.

Long ago, upon leaving college, he and Winters had entered into a compact that no matter what distance might divide them, or what difficulties stood in the way, each would attend the other's wedding and would send a handsome gift; and Winters knew that Tom would expect him to abide faithfully by the agreement.

Attend the wedding? He looked at the card again; it was to be at one of those stately, old-fashioned mansions on Gramercy Park. Yes, that might be managed; for he still had his dress suit, and could make a good enough appearance, while his sole expense would be the car fare across town and back.

But a present? Ah, there was the rub! How in the short space of forty-eight hours was he to raise money for a gift suitable to such an occasion—he who had just been thanking his lucky stars because he had found a woman willing to trust him to the extent of four dollars and fifty cents a week for his room and board?

No wonder, therefore, that his brow was fretted with thought, and his step slow and meditative as he paced back to his boarding-house, revolving one wild scheme for materializing that present after another, only to dismiss them each in turn.

All through his greasy and unpalatable dinner he sat silent and preoccupied, even failing in his absorption to notice how atrocious was the food he mechanically ate; but at the table a chance remark from one of the people around him offered a suggestion upon which he was prompt to act.

It recalled to his mind that this was Wednesday, the second drill night at the regiment. McKay, with the ambitious bee of a possible captaincy buzzing in his bonnet, was almost certain to be at the armory, and Winters determined to tackle him there, and simply insist upon a settlement.

He found it a little difficult, however, to secure an interview with his former associate; for McKay seemed to know what was coming, and patently avoided him all during the early part of the evening.

At last, though, after the drill was over and the men were putting away their guns, he managed to catch the other off his guard, and get him into a corner.

"Look here, McKay," he said peremptorily, "I want my fifty. You needn't tell me that you haven't got it, for I just now heard you inviting a lot of the boys out to supper, and you couldn't do that unless you had money in your pocket."

"Well, I've got to line 'em up for me some way, if I expect to get elected captain. Don't be unreasonable, Lockwood. I'd pay you back with pleasure; but I've only got twenty dollars, and it'll take every cent of that to settle for this little feed I am going to give. I'll tell you," eagerly, "you call around to-morrow and I'll have the fifty for you sure."

"No," rejoined Winters doggedly, "that won't do. I am afraid you might be conveniently 'out,' as you have been every time I've been there in the last two days. You must square up with me here and now."

"But I can't, I tell you. Every penny I have is this twenty that I've arranged to treat the boys with."

"All right, then. Give me that. It isn't what you promised by as much again more, but I am willing to take it on account."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, Lockwood," in shocked protest. "What would the boys think of me, after I've invited them all, and everything. Be sensible, old chap. I vow by everything I hold sacred that if you'll only wait until to-morrow, I'll—"

"No," broke in Winters sharply. "I'll not wait, and I'll not do anything else, and unless you hand over that twenty without any more words about it, I'll stand up here before the whole company and expose you as a sneaking cur who refuses to pay his honest debts, and is blowing them off to a feast on my money."

Winters really had no intention of doing anything of the sort; but he had

become so exasperated at the other's selfish attitude that the threat slipped out almost unconsciously.

And in making it, he overshot his mark, for McKay's demeanor changed immediately from appeal and dissuasion to one of spiteful defiance.

"You will, will you?" he demanded, thrusting out his jaw. "Well, you just try it on, and see how many of the company will believe you, when I tell them it is simply a blackmailing scheme you've been trying to work on me, and failed."

"Remember, you have no evidence of any kind that I am in your debt," he exclaimed triumphantly. "It's simply your word against mine; and I guess the word of the colonel's private secretary and right-hand man will go for more with them than that of an out-at-elbows, peniless roustabout like you!"

Winters staggered back before the brazenness of such cool audacity.

"You don't mean to say that you would repudiate the debt?" he gasped.

"Repudiate it?" jeered McKay. "Certainly, I repudiate it. I am tired of being dogged and hounded by you all the time for that miserable fifty dollars, and I warn you now that I will pay it back when I get good and ready, and not one second before."

"I could pay you this minute if I felt like it," jerking a big roll of bills out of his pocket, and thrusting them tantalizingly under the other's nose; "but I can use them to better advantage in my campaign for the captaincy, and, besides, it'll do you good to wait for a while. You may not be so fresh the next time I have occasion to speak with you."

Winters hesitated for just the fraction of a second. His right fist was doubled up, and was fairly itching to plant one smashing blow squarely in McKay's grinning face; but he restrained the impulse.

It would be a moment's satisfaction; but in the end he himself would get the worst of it. A liar such as the other had proved himself would twist the facts so as to make it appear that he was the aggrieved party, and since both of them were still in uniform, the only outcome to the altercation would be a court-martial and dismissal from the service in disgrace.

Winters took a deep breath, therefore, and stepped backward to avoid the temptation.

"You need not trouble to return the money," he said, letting the contempt he felt express itself in his tone. "Heaven knows I need it, probably as much as any man in New York to-night; but, poor as I am, I would rather do without than accept it from you. I should feel myself polluted by the touch of any dollar which had once passed through your hands!"

He turned shortly on his heel, and without another glance in the direction of his recreant former friend, but with shoulders thrown back and head proudly erect, marched from the hall.

He was so upset by the demonstration which had been vouchsafed him of his old chum's baseness, so tingling with indignation over the scurvy trick which had been played upon him that he could not think clearly that night, and presently, worn out by the stress of his emotions, he tumbled into bed, and dropped off into a dreamless slumber.

In the morning, however, when he could review the situation more calmly, he was obliged to confess that never before had his case appeared quite so hopeless and forlorn.

Hitherto, he had always been sustained by the belief that within a day or two McKay would settle up, and that he would then be in ample funds to keep going until things once more started his way; but now he was forced to realize that the loaned fifty was a gone gosling, and that all he could actually count upon was the little change he had in his pockets and a seventy-five-dollar check which no one would cash.

And all the time, like *Banquo's* ghost, which would not down, there kept recurring to his mind that wedding present which he had to obtain in some way for Tom Blenkner.

This might naturally seem to have been the least of his troubles, but in reality it was the thing which worried him the most. He had no fear, you see, of failing eventually to secure a job, and he knew that the check he carried would be good by the end of the month at any rate, while in the meantime Mrs. Sowerby could with comparative ease be jollied along on the board and lodging question;

but how to compass the purchase of a suitable wedding gift he could not conceive.

Indeed, he got to brooding so deeply on the subject that it became almost an obsession with him. All that morning, while he was racing about town, trying to get on the trail of a job, or to find some one who would discount his troublesome check, it remained omnipresent and uppermost in his thoughts.

He knew just how Blenkner would regard a default on his part, he told himself, as something never to be forgiven; and Blenkner was a fellow whose friendship might some day be worth a good deal. He simply must get that present for him in some way, even if he had to steal to do it.

While he was thus cogitating the matter, he was halted in his progress along the sidewalk by a crowd gathered in front of a store window and extending clear out to the curb.

Craning his neck above the assembled heads, Winters glanced curiously toward the window, and there beheld a young woman industriously manipulating a new make of typewriter, while above her hung an illuminated sign: "Typewriters of all kinds for sale or rent."

A sudden inspiration flashed upon him at the sight. How he ever came to think of such a mad project, or how he summoned up the nerve to carry it through, he cannot tell to this day.

It is certain that he took no heed of consequences; indeed, did not consider the ethical side of his action at all. He simply saw a method whereby he might procure the wedding gift he desired, and went after it.

Shouldering his way through the press about the doorway, he entered the office of the concern, and laid his card upon the desk of the manager.

"I see that you have typewriters to rent," he said. "I would like to hire the best one you have in stock."

The manager brought forth several machines for his inspection, and after testing them, Winters finally settled upon one which he said would do.

"Just have it sent up to my house," he directed, giving the number, "and please arrange it so as to get it there within the course of an hour."

"Yes, sir," assented the manager, "and will you pay the rent now, or shall the boy collect it at the house? Our terms are cash in advance, you know."

"Oh, just send it along, and I will drop in with the rent on my way back up-town this afternoon. They wouldn't know at the house whether to pay a C. O. D. charge or not, and I don't happen to have the amount with me. I am on my way to the bank now to get some money," carelessly displaying the seventy-five-dollar check, but managing to keep the date line concealed underneath his thumb.

His manner was so assured, and his appearance so prepossessing, that the manager, albeit a trifle unwillingly, consented, and true to his word, duly despatched the machine up to Mrs. Sowerby's within the hour.

It did not long remain there, however, for scarcely had it arrived before Winters bore it forth again, and swiftly re-pairing to an uncle's three-ball establishment in the neighboring block, pawned it for the sum of twenty dollars.

Then he raced back to the typewriter establishment, paid the three dollars rent upon it, which insured him full possession of the machine without interference for one month, and with the remaining seventeen dollars dropped in at a Japanese auction room where he purchased a very pretty large vase and taboret to go with it, and ordered them sent with his card to the home of Blenkner's fiancée.

His mind relieved of this duty, he finally returned to his fourth-floor chamber under the skylight, and at last took leisure to think over what he had done.

"I suppose, if one looks facts in the face," he muttered reflectively, "I have done nothing less than steal; and yet, strangely enough, nobody has been wronged. The typewriter people have got their rent, and their machine will be a good deal better looked after in 'Uncle's' care than it would be lying around here in my room. Then, before the month is out, I will have the money from my check, can redeem it, and return it back to them in as good order as I received it.

"Still," he admitted, "I don't suppose they would look at the transaction exactly in the same light, and they might

entertain very serious doubts as to the honesty of my intentions.

"I can only hope that they won't find out what has been done, and I shall guard this pawn-ticket as the apple of my eye until such time as I am able to turn it in and get the machine once more in my hands."

And therewith he carefully put the pawnbroker's red slip into his card-case, and tucked the receptacle safely away in his breast pocket.

"By George!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet and pacing agitatedly across the floor as a sudden thought obtruded itself upon his mind, "if anything does go wrong about this business it means that 'yours truly' will spend the next two years of his life at Sing Sing!"

CHAPTER IV.

FROM BLISS TO MISERY.

ANOTHER day passed in a fruitless search for work. What demon of ill luck was it dogging his footsteps, Winters wondered, which cut him off from all opportunity, when Brewster and McKay had each landed with such little difficulty?

He came home tired out, heart-sick, and blue as indigo over his prospects.

If he could have consulted his own inclinations, the last place he would ever have thought of going would be to a wedding. He would be like a shadow of gloom, he told himself, passing through those gay and festive scenes.

But when, togged out in evening dress and looking as irreproachably prosperous as any of the others, he really arrived at the house, he found for some inexplicable reason that his spirits took a decided upward lift.

The lights and the flowers and the music, the shifting rainbow groups of richly gowned and beautiful women, the careless laughter and the touch-and-go conversation, the entire atmosphere of wealth and indulgence—all this appealed to his luxury-loving soul.

After he had helped himself to some of the imported cigars and other good things which lay about in profusion, he forgot his troubles for the time being and joined with as much zest as any-

body in the throwing of rice and old shoes upon the departure of the newly married pair, and in all the rest of the merry-making incident to such occasions.

He had noticed that McKay was among those present, and had encountered him several times piloting a very striking-looking girl through the rooms; but neither had allowed the slightest quiver of recognition to appear upon his face.

Later on, though, when the bride and groom had left for the train and the assemblage had become somewhat more informal in character, he learned that the young lady with McKay was Miss Bernice Ransom, daughter of the millionaire, and led by a spirit of sardonic mischief, he maneuvered so as to secure an introduction to her.

Knowing the mental bias of his old comrade, it was not hard for Winters to figure out that McKay would be planning to feather his nest by an alliance with this heiress; and he had a vague idea that he might be able to puncture this ambitious design.

But, although his sole purpose in meeting her was to circumvent his enemy if possible, he had not been talking to Miss Ransom for five minutes before his feelings completely veered around, and he determined to rescue her from the threatening fate for her own sake.

Never, he told himself, had he met a woman so bright, so congenial, so thoroughly companionable in every way. It would be an eternal shame to have her sacrificed to such a scheming cad and rascal as McKay.

And if Winters was agreeably impressed with her, no less did she seem favorably taken with him. She declined invitation after invitation to dance in order to remain at his side while she listened with an eager interest to the tales of his newspaper "stunts" with which he entertained her.

Finally McKay came upon them as they sat chatting in an embowered alcove underneath the stairs to which they had drawn apart. A dark scowl overspread his face as he perceived the identity of her companion, and without taking any notice of Winters, he spoke rather shortly to Miss Ransom.

"Your cousin is obliged to leave

now," Miss Bernice," he said, "in order to catch her train. Will you go with us to the station, or shall I take her there and then return here to pick you up?"

Bernice had been accompanied to the wedding, it seemed, by a cousin from New Rochelle, who was obliged to return home that night, and McKay had acted as escort to both of them, owing to the disability of Mr. Ransom, who at the last moment had found himself seized with an attack of rheumatism and was unable to attend.

Before answering his question the girl, more mindful of the civilities than he, turned with a graceful gesture and presented her *vis-à-vis*.

"Mr. McKay," she said, "this is Mr. Winters, who has been making the evening a delight for me with a lot of the most amusing stories you ever heard."

Both men acknowledged the introduction with a distant bow. It was neither the time nor place in which to create a scene.

But Lockwood, spurred up to daring by the presence of his adversary and by the evident favor with which Bernice regarded him, resolved to make a bold cast.

"If there is any difficulty about your getting home, Miss Ransom," he interposed eagerly, "I shall be only too happy to relieve Mr. McKay of his duties as cavalier. He can take your cousin to the station, while if you will trust yourself to me, I think I can guarantee your being delivered 'right side up with care' upon the parental door-step."

McKay met the suggestion and the challenging glance which accompanied it with a quick frown, but before he could offer any objections the girl spoke up and accepted the proposal.

"Oh, that will be a much more satisfactory arrangement!" she exclaimed. "Yes, indeed. I shall be charmed to have you see me home, Mr. Winters; and that will leave Mr. McKay free to look after Ella's departure without having to bother his head about me at all."

McKay's look toward Winters as she made this decision was almost murderous in its hostility; but there was of course nothing else left him under the circumstances save to accede; so, baffled and sulky, he gave a curt nod of the head and withdrew.

"Well, that little victory alone was worth more than the fifty he swindled me out of," thought Winters elatedly, as he saw the other stalk, vanquished, from the field. "I guess before I get through collecting from him, he will find it would have been cheaper to pay up at the start, and be done with it."

He quite forgot that, as in all such evening up of scores, there is a new debt contracted—a debt of hatred, malice, and rage which McKay would be only too willing to repay.

Flushed with his present success, though, and absorbed in the charming girl at his side, he paid no heed to any warning premonitions which his guardian angel might have whispered in his ear; but dismissed McKay and all such unpleasant subjects from his thoughts, and permitted himself to bask unrestrained in the enjoyment of the moment.

Every second he spent in Bernice Ransom's company was a delight to him. The cares and anxieties which had been oppressing him for the past week now seemed a thousand miles away. And when at last parting from her at her door, he leaned back luxuriously in her father's automobile to be conveyed home, he felt as happy as a king.

Why should he not, he asked himself, when she had shown such signal evidence of her interest in him? She had not only devoted herself to him throughout the evening, but she had also invited him to call, and had asked him for his address in order that she might be able to send him cards for any social event taking place at her house.

His heart swelling high in triumph, he drew a cigar from his pocket and smoked it with a lordly air, as he rolled swiftly along through the midnight streets.

But just then something occurred to disturb his complacency, and recall him to the precarious condition of his affairs.

As the automobile turned a corner, he glanced out of the window to see what part of town they had reached, and there beheld the establishment at which he had rented the typewriter the day before, with its garish sign, "Typewriters of all kinds for sale or rent," still in the window.

With a quick exclamation he reached in his pocket to make sure the pawn-

ticket was still safe. Then he gave a gasp of consternation.

His card-case was gone!

CHAPTER V.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

WINTERS, as may be imagined, did not sleep much that night; and if upon occasion he did drift off, worn out by speculation and worry, into an uneasy slumber, almost instantly he would be awake again, starting up in a quivering tremor from some dream of having a policeman clutch him by the shoulder, or of seeing himself attired in stripes, lock-stepping it along in a file of marching prisoners.

As soon as he decently could, he hurried around to the house of the previous evening's festivities to inquire if his card-case had been dropped there; but the disappointing answer was returned that no article of its description had been found.

He had already, of course, searched and researched his pockets many times, and ere he had permitted the automobile to depart the night before, he had ransacked it from crank to number-plate without avail; yet, where else could he possibly have mislaid or lost it?

He knew that the card-case had been in his pocket when he went to the wedding; for not only had he been particularly circumspect about transferring it from his business suit to his evening clothes, but he also remembered having produced it while there in order to pencil his address for Miss Ransom upon one of his cards.

His chief terror, it should be explained, was lest some person should find the thing, and return it to McKay; for unfortunately the case had once belonged to the latter, having been given to Winters during their days of comradeship, and it still bore stamped in gilt letters upon the cover the name of its former owner, "R. D. McKay."

If it should come into his possession, Winters had no hope but that he would examine the contents; and with that accusing pawn-ticket for a clue, it would not take a crooked mind such as his long to figure out just what had been done.

In short, he recognized fully that if the card-case ever got to McKay, his goose was cooked good and brown; for he was not optimistic enough to believe that his enemy would hesitate to ruin him, if he had any such chance as this.

One hope, however, was still left. It might be that in some way the missing case had fallen into Miss Ransom's hands. She might have picked it up when he was writing his address upon the card, and either inadvertently or with a desire to tease him, have retained it in her keeping.

It was a doubtful enough possibility; yet it might have happened, and Winters determined to lose no time in ascertaining whether or not such were the fact.

Still, wrought up and anxious as he was, he did not rush immediately around to the Ransom house, but first repaired to his own domicile to don a more becoming tie and freshen up his linen before presenting himself to the eyes of the young lady. Even in the most perturbed moments of his life, that tricky little blind god will insist upon having his innings.

As Winters hurried up the steps of his boarding-house and entered the hall, he was halted by another thrill of trepidation, though; for there upon the table lay a letter addressed to him from the people who had rented him the typewriter.

His heart almost ceased to beat as he snatched it up and tore open the envelope; then he breathed a deep sigh of relief, and hastened on up the stairs. The communication was nothing more than a formal receipt for the rental money he had paid them.

Ten minutes later he came down again, spick and span, with hair carefully brushed, and nails closely inspected; so trim indeed that Mrs. Sowerby turned to give him an admiring glance as she passed him in the hall.

"Oh, by the way, Mr. Winters," she called after him with sudden recollection, "there was a gentleman came this morning to see you. Mr. McKay, he said his name was."

Again Lockwood's heart came up in his throat. For what other purpose could McKay have hunted him up save to gloat over him on account of that wretched pawn-ticket?

"Did he?"—Winters swallowed hard,

scarcely able to control his voice—"did he leave any message for me?"

"No; he said it was merely a personal matter that he wanted to see you about, and that he would drop in again. Nice spoken, pleasant young man he seemed to be," she added. "He asked me if you had a typewriter, and when I told him no, he seemed surprised."

Ah, that *did* settle it. For what reason would McKay be making such an inquiry as that, unless he were on to the whole story? He had probably called merely to make sure that the machine had not been redeemed, and that his victim was wholly at his mercy, before he proceeded to strike.

A blind, unreasoning panic swept over Winters. Already the inexorable coils of the law seemed to be tightening about him. He felt an irresistible impulse to flee, to run away, to hide.

But where could he run to, and where could he hide? Practically penniless, and without refuge in New York save this one boarding-house to which he had come, he was certain to be overhauled and dragged back, and flight would make it harder for him in the end.

No, there was but one course open to him—to meet the issue squarely face to face, and if the worst came to the worst, to take his medicine like a man.

He drew himself together with an effort; and hope, ever undying, raised a feeble head to whisper a suggestion of cheer.

Perhaps, after all, this visit of McKay's and the significant question he had asked did not mean what appeared on the surface. It seemed hardly credible that it could be otherwise, yet Winters knew that to a guilty conscience everything, no matter how irrelevant, seems to point with an accusing finger.

At any rate, he determined not to give way to despair before he had tested his last chance, and had definitely learned that the card-case was not at Miss Ransom's.

And for a moment, he believed that the stars were once more with him; for when Bernice came down into the drawing-room, and he accosted her with his breathless question, she smiled brightly and admitted that the card-case had come home with her.

"My maid found it this morning, caught in one of the pleats of my gown," she explained. "You laid it in my lap, you remember, when you took out your card, and it must have slipped down and got fastened in some way without either of us noticing it."

"And have you the case with you now?" eagerly demanded Winters.

"No," and his vaulting spirits came to earth again with a dull thud. "I supposed of course from the name upon it that it belonged to Mr. McKay, and sent it at once to him."

"McKay?" with a groan.

"Yes," unheeding his agitation; "but that will make no difference. He is in the house now, and I can get it for you from him in three minutes."

She touched a bell, and when the servant appeared directed him to ask McKay for the card-case; then she sat down and tried to engage her visitor in conversation, while Lockwood, palpitating between hope and fear, scarcely knew whether he was answering Greek or Choctaw to her queries.

There was just one chance for him; it might be that McKay, for some reason, had failed to inspect the contents of the case, and if so, all would yet be well.

Imagine, then, the anxiety with which he awaited the return of her emissary; but when the curtains at the drawing-room door at last parted, it was to admit not the servant, but McKay himself.

With an evil leer upon his face, he advanced toward Winters and held out the lost card-case.

"This is yours, I believe," he said. "I trust you will find that the contents are intact."

Winters gave a hurried glance through the compartments, then drew himself up, and although his face was white as death, he met the other's curious glance full and fair.

"Quite so," he answered dryly. "I have to thank you for your excellent stewardship."

But even while he spoke, his heart lay like a stone in his breast; for he had recognized that the pawnbroker's red slip was missing!

(To be continued.)

WHEN ANN HELD THE ENEMY.

By MABEL GERTRUDE DUNNING.

A case of "his old college chum," and the diamonds in the table-drawer.

BRRRRRR—! The buzzer in the hall sounded lustily, as though pressed from without by a vigorous hand.

Ann Gordon, startled a bit by the sudden intrusion of noise into her quiet little apartment, laid aside her sewing and moved quickly to the door.

"That must be Grace," she told herself, as she walked through the long hallway which connected the door of entrance with the living-room at the other end. "She said she would probably stop in this afternoon, on her way to the club."

She opened the door quickly with a smile of anticipation and saw before her, not her sister, but a man, young and with a frank, pleasant face, his hand just lifted to press the button a second time.

Ann's look of anticipation changed to

one of question as the stranger lifted his hat smilingly.

"Is this Mrs. Gordon, Mrs. Bert Gordon?" he inquired.

Ann nodded affirmatively.

"Well, I'm right glad to know you, Mrs. Gordon," the other went on. "I'm one of the '99 Harvard boys; in fact, Bert and I were special chums. I am Will Bettison," and with an engagingly ingenuous smile he extended a hand into which Ann, completely charmed by his wholesome, unaffected cordiality, placed her own.

"I don't recall your name, Mr. Bettison," she said, "but I am always glad to welcome any of the '99 boys for Bert's sake. Won't you come in? Bert is not at home yet, but surely I can entertain you until he comes."

She opened the door wider, and he followed her through the long hallway to the cheerful living-room.

Ann Gordon had been married about six months. Her husband, manager of a large business concern in lower New York, was a graduate of class '99, Harvard, and it was while visiting her brother, a member of class '05, that she had met Gordon, who had returned to spend a few days in revisiting the old haunts of his college days.

The romance began in the historic town of Cambridge had culminated in marriage, and since their return from their wedding journey abroad the two had been cozily settled in a conveniently located apartment in Brooklyn.

For many years Bert had been interested in the buying and selling of diamonds. The sparkling gems seemed to have a fascination for him impossible to be resisted. Even in his college days he had given evidence of his admiration for the stones, and had he been a wealthy man he would probably have been the owner of a famous collection. As it was, however, he had to be content with buying them, keeping them awhile, and then selling them, usually at a gain.

Thus, outside of his own business, he was becoming known as a diamond broker also.

To Ann, the sudden appearance of a college chum of her husband at her door did not seem a strange or unusual proceeding. She had heard much from Bert of his escapades and good times with the rest of the boys, and had listened to reminiscences of so many different members of his class that their names had become unknown quantities to her.

They were generally referred to as Tippy, Husky, or Block. Many of them she had met at her own wedding, where a large force had turned out; but in the excitement of that important event she had not noticed any one of them particularly.

"I don't remember having heard Bert speak your name, Mr. Bettison," she said, when they were comfortably seated, her guest having laid aside his hat and coat, "but if you should tell me whether you are Husky, Tippy, or Block, I should probably place you at once."

He laughed heartily.

"Oh, I'm 'Husky.' So Bert has told you all about our good times together. I met him first at the clubhouse where I was being initiated, and I remember distinctly being told by him to get down on the floor and scramble like an egg, and in my frantic endeavors to do so I sprained my wrist. Evidently, I scrambled well, for I was admitted to the club.

"I got 'hunk' with him, though, by making him polish the brass fire-shovels, tongs, and hod in my room for one month when we initiated him into our fraternity. Those were good times. Eight years ago, they happened, and I haven't seen Bert but once since then. I just couldn't resist the temptation of looking you up to-day on my way to Washington."

"I'm sure Bert will be delighted to see you. He's always glad to welcome 'the boys' to our modest home."

"When do you expect him in, Mrs. Gordon? He has kept right on with the electric company. I hear. By the by, is he still under the spell of diamonds? We used to call him 'Diamond Dick' at college. The stones seemed to be a perfect craze with him."

"Yes, he buys and sells quite extensively now, and has handled some very valuable specimens. It worries me sometimes to have them here, because they are so costly. You know, he always keeps them a short time before selling them," Ann explained.

With an air of surprise Bettison answered: "You don't mean he leaves valuable stones here in this apartment? I should say that was a very careless thing to do. Modern flats are so easily entered and stripped of valuables that one cannot be too cautious. However, I suppose old 'Diamond Dick' knows his own business best."

Ann shook her head. She had very often remonstrated with her husband about his carelessness in that respect, but he seemed to have no fear of any one entering the apartment, so she was beginning to lose her timidity.

"You have such a pretty little home here, Mrs. Gordon. If I were asked to describe it, I should call it heartsome. It seems to have absorbed some of the personality of its owners," and Bettison

glanced appreciatively around the cozy, artistic room, with its mission furniture and subdued coloring. "It makes me feel sort of—"

Ting-ling-ling-ling—

Ann jumped to her feet.

"That's my 'phone! Will you excuse me one moment? Just make yourself quite at home," and she hurried to the other end of the apartment to answer the imperative summons of the telephone-bell.

II.

"CENTRAL! Hello, Central! Can't you get that Brooklyn call? Hello, hello! Oh, is that you, Ann? What were you doing? I thought I should never get you.

"What! My college chum? What's his name?

"Bettison? I don't know anybody named Bettison.

"Says he's my old college chum? What? Why, girl, I don't know such a man.

"Now, don't be frightened, dear; has he asked any questions about diamonds? He has!

"Are you terribly afraid, or can you be a very brave little woman and help me?

"You'll try to be brave? All right, listen. Go back and entertain him until I get home. I'll be there in about twenty minutes. Don't let him see that you suspect anything. Tell him your sister called you up to say—oh, tell him anything.

"Yes, that's it. Just keep him from suspecting, and you'll be safe. His game is not to hurt you, dear. He's got some clever idea of taking those diamonds out of the drawer in the big table in the living-room without your knowing it. He's going to do it quietly and cleverly without hurting any one, and all you must do is to keep cool and make believe you don't know anything.

"Yes, I'll be there in twenty minutes. Be brave until I come. Don't talk any more; he might suspect. Just keep cool and don't be afraid; brave little woman, good-by."

Flinging the receiver on the hook, Bert Gordon seized his hat and coat and started for the elevator on a run. Ar-

riving at the ground floor of the building, he dashed into the street, across Park Row, up the stairs to the elevated-train at the bridge, and pushing past all who moved in his way, stood on the rear platform of the Brooklyn-bound car within five minutes after hanging up the telephone receiver.

He had called up his wife, intending to tell her to meet him that evening, have dinner with him at a restaurant, and from there go to the symphony concert at Carnegie Hall; but on hearing what he had his one thought was to get home as quickly as possible.

"Good Heavens," he reflected, "that poor little woman alone with a thief in that apartment! I wish to Heaven I had done as Ann wanted me to, and kept those diamonds in the safe at the office. What is she doing now?"

He moved impatiently from one foot to another, suppressing with an effort a wild desire to scream aloud that his wife was alone with a desperate thief, and that he must get there at once.

"Oh, for wings to fly with!" he groaned. "I could walk faster than this train is going.

"Two more stations and then I get off," he counted. "God knows whether I'll find her alive or dead; why didn't I tell her to call help? No, I'm glad I didn't. If she did that, he might suspect, and in his efforts to get away at all costs there's no telling what he might do.

"My station next," he sighed with relief. "I'll get the policeman at the corner to go up with me. Hurry up, you idiots," and he cursed inwardly as a group of women walked leisurely into the car.

At his own station he was out on the platform almost before the train had stopped, and, hurrying down the stairs, was sprinting up the street toward his home.

At the corner he stopped, breathless, expecting to find the usual policeman at his post outside the saloon; but there was no one there. Not waiting to look for him, Gordon again broke into a run toward the next street, where he could see the white globes of the electric lights outside his own apartment.

As he neared his cherished goal he

saw the missing bluecoat turn the corner and walk toward him. Waving his hand, Gordon signaled him to hasten, and they met just outside the apartment-house where Gordon lived.

"Come up with me, man!" he gasped. "There's a thief in my apartment, and my wife is holding him until help arrives. Hurry up, he may be killing her, for all I know," and Gordon, weak from his haste and excitement, waxed almost hysterical.

"Don't lose your nerve, sir; we'll get there in time. Where's your key?"

By the time they had climbed two flights of stairs Gordon had himself well in hand, and as he cautiously inserted the key in the lock, whispered to the officer: "Let me go in first. Remain here until I call for you."

Leaving the door open, he walked softly down the hall toward the living-room, fear and misgiving in his heart at the deathlike silence which seemed to smite him in the face.

III.

WHEN Ann replaced the receiver, after talking with her husband, she sank back in her chair for one moment, absolutely overcome with terror, a quivering, shaking coward. She looked behind her, half expecting to see her guest standing in the doorway, transformed from a frank, smiling man into a scowling, low-browed thief.

For a moment only she remained thus, and then straightening up, she rose, took from her dresser a small revolver, and hiding it in the pleats of her many-gored skirt, turned toward the front of the house. With her husband's instructions fresh in her mind, she entered the room, smiling and calm.

"A call from my sister," she explained; "she had expected to be here this afternoon, but has been detained so long at her dentist's that she will not be able to come around at all to-day. I am quite disappointed, as I should have liked her to meet you," she added, determined to play the game in her best style.

On entering the room, she noticed that "Bettison" had changed his position. He was now seated in front of the large

reading-table, fingering a magazine, his coat-pocket brushing against the very drawer where the diamonds were hidden.

Were hidden, did I say? Ann thought "had been hidden," for she felt convinced that they were there no longer.

"You told me to make myself at home," he remarked, "so I've been reading this magazine as though I quite belonged here."

"That's quite right. Do just as you would if you were in Bert's room at college," Ann answered.

She found herself watching him, wondering how he could be so frank and open, so pleasant in every way, and yet a thief. She asked herself how he had come to know so much about Bert and college. Perhaps he was a college man, in spite of what he was now; probably a sort of *Raffles*.

All thought of fear had quite vanished, until Bettison, his eyes raised to the clock, said suddenly: "I've been thinking, Mrs. Gordon; you say Bert won't be in before half past five. Well, I have a cousin living a short way from here whom I really ought to go to see. Suppose I go there now and stay for dinner, and come back here this evening when Bert is home."

Ann's fingers gripped her revolver. With a slight shiver of fear or excitement, she knew not which, she tried to speak cordially.

"Why not stay for dinner, now that you are here? You could see your cousin later. I'm not at all sure what Bert's plans are for the evening. I think that would be very nice, indeed. Stay for dinner."

"You're awfully kind, Mrs. Gordon; but the more I think of it, the more I think I ought to go there. I can come back again, and if Bert should have other plans, I can return to my hotel early. I really think I'll manage that way," and as he spoke he rose from his chair.

But Ann, steeling her nerves for the final effort, rose also and trained her small revolver full on him.

"Sit down, Mr. Bettison," she said, her voice firm and cool. "Don't move or I shall be unpleasant. I'm going to keep you here until Bert comes. Sit down, I say," she repeated, this time a tiny trace of hysteria in her voice.

Mechanically, Bettison dropped back in his chair, looking at her in astonishment.

With his eyes fixed on her flushed, strained face, he said:

"Why am I forced to remain, Mrs. Gordon? Will you—"

But with her pistol still leveled at him, Ann told him to be silent.

"Don't speak again until you receive permission. Do not say one word and do not move," she added wildly.

Bettison watched her silently, in complete bewilderment.

What was the matter with the woman? Was she insane? Yes, that must be it. Bert had unknowingly married a woman with a slight trace of insanity in her veins, and in her desire to please her husband and keep his old friend to dinner, she had excited herself into temporary lunacy.

He would certainly have to wait for Bert now.

Thus they sat opposite each other, Bettison leaning back in his chair, his face grave, watching Ann silently, while she sat, her small body stiff and straight, a revolver tightly grasped in her slender hands, watching his every move, and listening for her husband's step in the hall.

Suddenly the silence was broken by Gordon's voice. He appeared as though by magic in the door of the living-room. So quietly had he come in that the two occupants of the room had heard nothing.

"Ann, dear!" he exclaimed, turning directly to her, with hardly a glance at her prisoner. "Thank Heaven, you're safe!"

"Bert!" she cried, leaping from her chair, with a sob that seemed torn from her. Then she thrust the revolver helplessly toward him, her bravery completely gone, now that he had actually come.

"I held the enemy for you, Bert!" she exclaimed hysterically.

The enemy had risen from his chair and advanced toward them. As he came forward, Bert whirled around to cover him with the gun.

"Here, you, sit down!" he began, when, stopping abruptly, he looked closer at his man. Then, with a hearty smile

and hand outstretched, he exclaimed: "Carl Newton, by all that's holy! How did you get here?"

"Why, I came about an hour ago, intending to see you for a little while; but Mrs. Gordon evidently liked me pretty well, for she was determined I should spend the afternoon, as you see. What does it mean, old chap?"

"Did you tell Ann you were Mr. Bettison, my old college chum? But wait a minute," as he saw a light breaking on his friend's face.

Leaving the room, he hastened out to the entrance, where the policeman was still waiting.

"Say, my friend," he exclaimed, "never mind about coming in. It's all a mistake."

The officer, wondering at the foolishness of some people, left the house, grumbling, while Gordon hurried back to seek an explanation.

"For Heaven's sake, man, what made you tell Ann you were Mr. Bettison? I called up, and she told me that she was entertaining my old college chum, Mr. Bettison, and, of course, I said I didn't know such a person. We at once concluded that you were a thief trying to get my diamonds in that table, and Ann promised to keep you here until I arrived with help. What did you do it for?"

"Why, don't you know, Bert? Oh, I had forgotten that it's five years or more since I've seen you. A relation of mine, William Bettison, of Paterson, died recently, leaving his entire fortune to me on condition that I assume his name. It's so long since I've heard my own that I had almost forgotten I ever had any other, so you see it was quite natural for me to say Bettison to Mrs. Gordon. But I'm more than sorry to think of the fright I have given your wife, Bert. It certainly was stupid of me. I do hope you will forgive me, Mrs. Gordon," he added, turning to Ann, who had begun to recover her self-control.

"Yes, I'll forgive you this time, if you will compromise by staying to dinner," she said.

"Do, old man," added Gordon. "Stay to dinner, and we'll have a regular old-time talk-fest."

"I'll do anything to win Mrs. Gor-

don's pardon," said Bettison. "If staying here for dinner is my penance, I might add that it could not be inflicted too often."

"My pardon is already won, so please

think no more about it," was the reply. "You have, at least, taught Bert a lesson, and I don't think he will keep any more valuable jewels in the table after this scare."

THE BATTLE OF THE WEAK.*

By ELIZABETH YORK MILLER,

Author of "The Score Against Him," "Larry's Luck," "His Automobile or Theirs?" etc.

The story of what happened in one case after riches took to themselves wings.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ANNE GRAVESTOCK, the daughter of a wealthy banker, is engaged to a poor young society man named Dickson Calhoun. In a single day her father loses all his fortune, and dies, leaving Anne practically penniless. Calhoun starts suddenly for the West, sending back a very unsatisfactory letter of explanation.

Thrown absolutely upon her own resources, Anne moves to a cheap boarding-house, and takes a position with a real-estate firm in order to earn her scant living. Keating, her father's secretary, asks her to marry him, but is refused. He hints that some railroad stock, hitherto considered almost worthless, has a slight chance of rising in value.

A young reporter (Goodwin, of the *Comet*) who is interested in Anne warns her against Hardman, the senior member of the firm for which she is working. One day Hardman calls her into his office and speaks with a familiarity which terrifies her. As she starts to leave the room, he puts his hands on her shoulders to force her into a chair. At his touch, the fear in her heart turns to blind rage.

CHAPTER IX.

ONE WAY TO LAY A GHOST.

WHEN the mist finally cleared Anne was standing in the center of the little office alone. Hardman lay limp and half-insensible in a corner, his head wedged in between the leg of a chair and the sharp edge of the desk. A thin trickle of blood issued from a gash in his forehead where he had struck in falling.

This was playing the game in a new way with a vengeance. Anne watched him belligerently as he gathered himself slowly to a sitting posture. Some idea that he might attempt to touch her again mingled with her womanish fright that she had killed him.

"Oh!" she gasped painfully, "oh, why did you make me do it?"

Hardman slowly extricated a handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his wounded forehead. He was pale and badly frightened.

"You little—cat!" he said thickly.

His lips were swollen from the impact of her fist, and as yet he was too dazed to pick his words carefully.

"I'll fix you—for—this! I'll have—you 'rested! I'll—"

A contemptuous, snorting laugh from the doorway roused him from his torpor and caused Anne to wheel defiantly.

There stood the gambler-looking man of the day before.

Long-tailed, loose-fitting frock coat, wide-brimmed felt hat, pale, thin face, drooping mustaches and all, with an indescribable smile added.

His manner of being ill at ease was gone. The subjugation of the opulent real-estate man distinctly pleased him.

"You-all seemed powerful busy in here," he remarked with a slow, humorous drawl. "I guess you didn't hear me knock."

Hardman scrambled miserably to his feet and stood with trembling knees and glowering face, grasping at the table-edge for support.

And as he was not disposed to reply immediately, the other man went on, his voice losing its humorous quality as he proceeded.

"If I was you I wouldn't talk none about havin' this young lady arrested. I seen the whole thing, and it was a fair fight."

He turned to Anne politely.

"If anybody bothers you, sissy, refer 'em to me. I seen the whole thing, and it was a right fair fight."

"There is nothing left to do now but starve," said Anne glumly to herself as she climbed the two flights of stairs to the community bedroom that evening.

The two other girls were at supper, and so once more she had the place to herself.

She dropped disconsolately to the edge of her cot and buried her face in her hands.

"I believe—I almost believe I wish I were dead," she half whispered. "I'd as soon die as have to live in this place, anyway."

The idea frightened her, and with a great mental effort she shook herself free of it.

The position she was in, however, was really desperate.

There was Howard Keating, to be sure. Was it possible, she asked herself, that she preferred to die or starve rather than marry him? Was it dislike of him that made her refuse his offer?

Anne knew that it wasn't. It was just pure loyalty to Howard himself. She couldn't marry him when she didn't love him. It would be too dishonorable.

There were a week's wages due her from Hardman & Henry, but it was impossible to go back for them after what had happened. Nobody outside of Mr. Hardman and the Western stranger knew the truth, but everybody else guessed it.

Anne's embarrassed and silently excited manner was in itself suggestive. While she was hurriedly getting into her hat and jacket she noticed the look which flashed from Miss Jackson to the junior member of the firm and back again with swift understanding.

There was something else which curiously enough in the press of the moment

she noticed, too. This was a sparkling new ring on the third finger of Miss Jackson's left hand. It was so exactly like the ring that Dick had given her when they were betrothed that her heart throbbed painfully with sudden memory.

She had not long to speculate about her misfortunes, however, for shortly her two roommates came clattering up the stairs to dress for the evening. It was the first time Anne had had a look at them, and her main reason for determining to be friendly was to secure their permission to have the windows open at night.

They were both very young girls with tired, factory-ridden bodies and anemic complexions. Anne remembered the type well, for she had walked with it that first morning on her way to work.

They greeted her with good-natured indifference, which was a grateful change from the impertinent curiosity of the grizzled old ladies at breakfast.

"You'd better hurry down," the younger one said, noting Anne's drooping shoulders and wan face. "Mis' Bevis don't keep dinner waiting after seven for nobody."

"Thank you," replied Anne politely. "I'm not hungry. My head aches."

"You ought'a eat something. It'll do your head good," said the other girl.

She had slipped off her waist and skirt preparatory to washing, and Anne noticed that her worn undergarment, which was pinned together on one shoulder by a huge safety-pin to save the necessary stitch in time, was elaborately trimmed with lace and pink ribbon. There was a safety-pin at the waistband of her skirt, too.

Yet in spite of her numerous pins this young person had about her that same indefinable air that had characterized Miss Jackson, the self-assured young stenographer, and Tom Goodwin, of the *Comet*—the air of belonging to something and being able to take care of oneself. Anne could mend beautifully, but at that moment she would have exchanged her accomplishment for this other girl's calm self-assurance, safety-pins and all.

"Nettie, go down and get the young lady a cup of tea," the girl exclaimed, with some difficulty, to be sure, since her

mouth was engaged in holding back a rolled wisp of hair while her fingers performed some mystic evolutions with an article of commerce commonly designated as a "rat."

Before Anne could venture a protest Nettie had departed in swift obedience to the command of her roommate. It was plain that the girl of the safety-pins and the "rat" was the dominating feature of this dormitory.

When she had arranged her hair satisfactorily and could take her eyes from the cracked looking-glass, she turned them upon Anne.

"Where do you work?" she asked as a preface to conversation.

But in the question there was none of the impertinent curiosity of the old ladies. It was merely the password of her tribe; the usual verbal hand-clasp that binds together the Legion of Labor; the man-to-man exchange of fellowship as graciously expressive and familiar as the "Have you had tea?" commonplace of that set to which the other Anne had belonged.

"Where do you work?"

Anne started to reply, remembered suddenly, and flushed crimson.

"I don't work—anywhere," she faltered.

The other girl looked at her sharply through narrowed lids.

"Living on your money?" she inquired casually, turning to the task of setting her side-combs straight.

Anne saw through the half-veiled insinuation, and strangely enough did not resent it. Her lips trembled slightly as she held out her hand for the cup of strong tea which Nettie, who had just returned, handed to her.

"Thank you, so much. . . . No, I'm not living on my money," she replied, between sips of the bitter beverage. "I haven't any money to live on. And I'm not working, because I lost my—my job to-day."

Her eyes filled with tears, and she blinked them away angrily.

"To-morrow I will start out to hunt a new one."

The two girls exchanged glances.

"Did you work in a factory?" Nettie inquired, looking at Anne's slim hands, which gave the lie to manual labor.

"No. In an office," Anne replied.

"Stenographer?"

"No."

The older girl, whose name was Louise, developed a sudden friendliness.

"Have you had any experience in making paper-boxes? If you have, I can get you a place where I work. You can make as much as six or seven dollars a week if you're speedy."

Anne shook her head regretfully.

"No, I haven't had any experience—at doing anything," she said dolefully.

"But—you must have done *something*," Louise persisted. "You must have worked somewhere—or did you live at home?"

"Yes, I lived at home," Anne repeated mechanically.

How long ago it seemed since she had "lived at home"! How ineffably long!

"Then of course you've done housework!" cried Louise triumphantly. "I knew there was something. There had to be."

Before Anne could explain, even had she been of a mind to do so, that her experience at housework was quite as limited as her experience in other fields, the girl rushed on with breathless interest.

"You're just the person Mis' Bevis's been lookin' for. She runs an agency for high-class help besides the boardin'-house, and she's just had a big order. It's for a country house—all new help. Mis' Bevis's furnished 'em a cook and four maids, and the housekeeper's comin' again to-morrow to see if she can get a lady's-maid."

Louise sized up Anne Gravestock critically.

"Do you know," she concluded earnestly. "I'll bet you could get that job. She's refined-lookin', ain't she, Nettie?"

Anne's face flushed under the scrutiny.

"If it's such a good chance, why don't you two girls go?" she inquired with stiff politeness.

"Us?" laughed Louise. "Oh, we don't look the part like you do—and besides, we wouldn't 'work out'."

There was both flattery and sting in her explanation.

Anne contented herself with replying quietly.

"I'm ever so much obliged, but I don't

think I should care to 'work out,' either—notwithstanding that I 'look the part'."

"All right," answered Louise lightly as the two girls were leaving the room.

She ignored Anne's unspoken disdain.

"But if you change your mind any time this week," she continued, "let me know and I'll speak to Mis' Bevis for you. It's awful hard to get anything to do if you haven't got experience."

This last statement was the bitter truth, as Anne knew well enough. One thing, at least, she had had plenty of experience in, and that was job-hunting.

The next morning she bought a paper and started her quest anew.

The task was the more disheartening because she chanced to run across Dickson Calhoun's name in glancing hastily through the society column. He had returned from Palm Beach and was once more in New York.

Curiously, as it happened, side by side with Dick's name was recorded the arrival in New York from Palm Beach of Mrs. James Masters Derrick, James Masters Derrick, Jr., and Miss Rosamund Derrick. There was a terse comment that these comprised the family of that unique creature Jim Derrick, the Silver King and railroad financier, and that they were prepared to bombard New York's Smart Set, if not with gold, at least with silver, which, if you have enough of it, does quite as well as the costlier metal.

Baccaras Central, by the way, had fallen off in popularity since last she saw it quoted, and the headlines of the paper screamed with a newer and more thrilling sensation. It was the shocking suicide of some girl-creature who for good reasons of her own found life insupportable.

She had blown out her brains with a revolver. The coroner's jury would try to prove that the gun had been presented to her for the purpose by a well-known man-about-town.

Anne's soul sickened as she briefly glanced over the details. She wondered what it was like—to blow out your brains—and whether the girl really had been what the paper said she was.

Somehow, when a girl killed herself they always brought up some such story.

Might she not have been merely sick? Or discouraged, perhaps, to the verge of desperation?

Then she saw to her surprise that this girl who had killed herself lived but two doors from Mrs. Bevis's brownstone boarding-house. Only fifty feet away another girl whose misery was greater than hers, whose despair was hopeless, had chosen to blow out her brains rather than face the unequal struggle any longer.

Anne tramped the city over all through that long, wretched day, on her hunt for employment. Two things only did she think of—Dickson Calhoun, returning sun-browned and debonair from his Florida outing to make the smiling round of teas and dinners; and of the girl who in the very spring-time of things had lain down to die with a cruel revolver pressed to her temple.

On her way back to the boarding-house that night she stopped at the dingy little florist shop on the corner and bought a bunch of lilies-of-the-valley, paying for them with pennies and nickles and dimes raked up from the depths of her almost empty purse.

She thrust the purse back into her pocket with the sharp reflection that the small sum she had rifled it of was inconsequential, since all in all her finances were at the lowest possible ebb.

She passed the boarding-house and ventured to the front door of the house beyond. Crape was hanging from the bell and the window-shades were closely drawn.

Anne shrunk back from contact with the swaying strip of cloth and raised her hand to knock at the door, but before she could do so it was opened suddenly and a man came out.

To Anne's amazement he was a man she knew well, or rather had known in the old days. He was Dick's chum.

Anne shrank back against the side of the vestibule and the man stared at her. Then he went white to the nostrils, jerked his hat down over his eyes, and without any greeting save a muttered apology, fairly ran by her down the steps into the street.

A colored girl stood in the hall regarding Anne uncertainly, until the latter advanced and mutely presented her

offering. Then she took the flowers with a word of thanks.

"I live in the next house but this," Anne explained, "and I was terribly shocked to read about—about it."

"Yas'm," said the colored girl, apparently unmoved, waiting for Anne to finish.

"Will you put them—with her?" Anne continued softly.

"Yas'm," said the girl, whose vocabulary seemed limited, out of keeping with the intelligence of her big black eyes.

Some one had entered by the street-door. In the dim light Anne thought it was the man she had seen go out of the house but a moment before.

Then she realized with a start of surprise that the newcomer was none other than the newspaper reporter, Tom Goodwin.

"Well, of all that's—what are you doing here?" he exclaimed, grasping her wrist. "Miss Gravestock—what has called you into this house?"

He spoke with tense earnestness and Anne quailed under the fire of his eyes.

She pointed with her free hand to the bunch of flowers.

"I brought them," she said. "Was there anything so wrong in that?"

He dropped her hand.

"No, I suppose not," he muttered.

Then he turned to the colored maid, who was on the point of slipping down the hall.

"Wait a minute—you. Has Mr. Gordon been here to-day?"

The girl's eyes widened with a look of innocent wonder. She shook her head slowly.

"No, sah," she replied.

Anne's questioning gaze flew from Goodwin to the colored girl and back again. "You don't mean Craig Gordon, do you?" she asked breathlessly.

"Yes, I do," said the young reporter bluntly.

Anne's eyes flashed.

"That gentleman who left the house five minutes ago was Mr. Gordon," she said to the round-eyed fabricator.

The girl shook her head stubbornly.

"I didn't see no gen'leman go outa dis yere house," she said, suddenly awakened to vigorous speech. "I been attendin' to my work, I have."

With this parting sally she disappeared through a portière-hung door, leaving young Goodwin and Anne to make the best of the deserted hall.

"What has Craig Gordon got to do with this?" Anne demanded earnestly when they were alone. "It can't be possible that—it isn't true—"

He stopped her with a gesture.

"It's both possible and true," he said quietly. "Only I'm sorry that you of all persons had to find it out. However, I don't think he went so far as to tell her to kill herself."

Anne shuddered and pressed her handkerchief in her lips to conceal their trembling.

She was grateful for the touch of young Goodwin's hand. All unconsciously he had grasped her wrist again and was stroking her fingers softly.

The smell of flowers about the closed rooms was overpowering, and the uncanny knowledge that just beyond those clinging curtains lay the self-slain young creature who but yesterday was pulsating with vigorous life swept Anne with that same sickening sense of misery she had endured intermittently through the past twenty-four hours.

"You must come away from here," said Tom Goodwin, noting her pallor and agitation. "Tell me where you live. I'll walk home with you."

"Live? *Home?*" Anne echoed the words with a bitter little laugh that was more eloquently expressive of her feelings than tears.

"I don't live," she said simply. "At present I'm existing—it's two doors from here in a boarding-house for 'ladies only.' No man would endure it, I suppose. Oh, and I may as well tell you that I've left Hardman & Henry's—it might please you to know."

"Look here, Miss Gravestock," said the reporter sternly, "if I've interfered with you it's been for your own good and because—because—well, I want to tell you something. Do you know what you are? You're a ghost, and you're haunting me shamefully. I can't attend to my work properly for thinking of you and wondering what dreadful thing is going to happen to you next. You can't imagine the shock it gave me to find you here. I'm all unnerved."

He took both of her hands and looked straight into her eyes pleadingly.

"There's only one way I know of to lay the ghost properly—"

He paused again and Anne's eyes wavered and fell from his searching gaze.

"There's only one way," he repeated doggedly, "and you've got to do it."

"Do what?" she faltered.

"Marry me."

CHAPTER X.

A LAST RESORT.

AFTER Anne had refused Tom Goodwin's offer of marriage and was once more alone with her thoughts in the ugly bedroom which she shared with Louise and Nettie, she wondered why she had done it.

What was it that held her back? Some Quixotic allegiance to that other love who had forsaken her, possibly.

Tom Goodwin was not tall and elegant looking as was Dickson Calhoun, nor aristocratic like Howard Keating, whom blood as well as training had fitted for the services he rendered society. Every line of Tom's square, strong body proclaimed the fact that he was built for wear and not for ornament.

He was keen-eyed, his hair was sandy, and he wore a small mustache—something that Anne had thought she especially detested. Yet it was not out of keeping with young Goodwin's make-up, and added to his strength rather than detracted from it.

He never drawled nor dawdled, as did the men of that other world to which Anne once belonged. He was action personified, keen, clever, capable, and the soldier of his own fortune.

Anne knew without being told that he stood well with his paper. She remembered, too, seeing his name occasionally in the better magazines, and she thrilled with a little sense of pride that he had asked her to marry him.

"If Dick had been a man like that—" she said to herself, and then stopped short.

What if Dick had been a man like that? There was the difference of the Poles between Dickson Calhoun and Tom Goodwin; they hadn't a thing in

common. Would the old Anne have been capable of appreciating a man like Tom Goodwin? Would she have understood his point of view?

"I think I must be growing," she thought, and then suddenly: "I wonder if people ever grow when their hearts are dead?"

A little later on: "I shall always love Dick, even if he is unworthy. A girl who shifts about in her love affairs is unworthy herself. . . . Besides, Tom is too genuine. It wouldn't be fair to him to give him half a heart. . . . Nonsense, anyway. You can't fall in love with a person you've only seen four times in your life. . . . And I'm not in love with him. If he should die to-morrow—well, if he *should* die to-morrow, I dare say I would feel lonely. It's nice to know that he thinks of me." That night, indeed, she was almost overpowered by a terrific sense of loneliness because she had sent him away. It amounted nearly to panic.

She craved human nearness, the touch of her own kind. Even though she was tired to desperation, she went out after dinner and walked for an hour. But the streets in that neighborhood were unpleasantly crowded with the poorer class of foreigners.

They cluttered the sidewalks, chattering unintelligibly, and smelling unpleasantly of garlic. Misery, too, was abroad on that damp spring evening as, indeed, it always is in a great city. The crowding people, the dirt, the clatter of the late trucks, and the nervous clang of trolleys made the place unendurable.

Once a very young girl passed her, reeling unsteadily and humming the chorus of a topical song. She was pretty, with fair hair and pink cheeks. But her skirts were mud-draggled, and her breath was tainted strongly with the rank smell of cheap liquor.

Anne turned to look after the girl with helpless pity.

The whole thing was horrible. And yet, this was humanity—the coarsest, roughest strata, to be sure, but still humanity, to be fought for, reclaimed, and won from the depths of its own degradation.

She clasped her hands impotently, forgetting for the moment her own personal

distress in the wave of pity she felt for the helpless ignorance and misery all about her.

A man touched Anne on the arm and whispered a word in her ear. She drew away from him quickly with a sense of loathing, as one might draw away from an unclean but harmless reptile. She was not afraid of him as she had been afraid of Mr. Hardman.

The events of the past twenty-four hours had lifted her out of her girlhood into the calm assurance of maturity. Anne Gravestock had become a woman overnight with the pure, passionate altruism of the feminine seeker after knowledge. But as yet she was groping blindly.

The man who had accosted her slouched on ahead, overtaking the girl with the draggled skirts.

And then a significant thing happened. A huge motor-car, breathing fashion and wealth with every chug of its pistons, whirled by her and came to a stop on the corner. It was a half block from there to where Anne lived.

Two men got out, one of them spoke a hurried word to the chauffeur, and then they walked rapidly toward the row of brownstone houses. Anne saw them clearly under the white arc-light, and one of them was Craig Gordon. The other was Dickson Calhoun.

It was the first time Anne had laid eyes upon Dick since that afternoon he had given her the engagement-ring.

The violent pounding of her heart almost stifled her. Her one thought was that he had come to find her. Craig had told him about seeing her.

Then she saw Craig wait at the curb several houses farther down the street. Dick hurried on. He passed the boarding-house and the house next door, and then ascended the steps of the one where the young girl lay who had blown out her brains.

Anne walked slowly past Craig Gordon, but he was standing at the curb facing the street and he did not see her.

Suddenly the thing was plain to her. Craig was afraid to go himself to the house because the reporters, if not police, were watching him. Yet it devolved upon him to see that the girl was decently buried.

So he had got Dick to do this unpleasant work for him! That was the secret of their being in the neighborhood; that was why the motor-car stopped at the corner and why Dick was there.

Anne climbed the steps to the boarding-house, sought her room, and went straight to bed, scarcely daring to trust herself to think about the matter. It was too dreadful to contemplate and she was tired and broken in spirit.

She drifted off to sleep with Dick's image in her heart and a tender, tense longing to see him once more and find out for herself, for she had a deep and growing fear that the new Anne would be twice as critical of his defects as the old Anne had been.

At midnight she was awakened by a bright light burning in the room and the sound of whispered voices. She sat up in bed, blinking sleepily.

"Oh, did we wake you up?" exclaimed a familiar voice, and she realized that it was only Nettie and Louise disrobing for slumber.

The girls had been to a dance and in the flaring gaslight they looked pale and tired, yet their eyes still shone with some of the excitement of the evening and they were animatedly discussing its various events.

"What time is it?" asked Anne, feeling somehow as though it must be hours since she had gone to sleep.

"One o'clock," answered Louise. Then she added, "Did you have any luck—I mean about the job?"

Anne shook her head.

"No," she said, "and if I don't find something to do quickly I don't know what will happen to me, for my money is nearly gone."

"Wasn't it terrible about that girl up the street?" whispered Nettie, unbuttoning her shoes. "It made me sick when I heard about it."

Anne shivered in spite of herself. It was strange that this other, too, should suddenly think of that girl up the street.

It would seem that lack of money and dire tragedy were linked inseparably in everybody's mind.

"Have you thought any more about trying for this lady's-maid position?" Louise inquired.

"Yes, I have," replied Anne deter-

minedly. "If it's still open I'll take it—and be glad of the chance!"

Then she turned over, pulled the sheet up to keep the glare of the light from her eyes, and went to sleep again.

CHAPTER XI.

ANNE AS A SERVANT.

It would seem that all the greatest crises of life are developed unexpectedly.

Anne Gravestock, erstwhile daughter of a millionaire, present pauper, and future lady's-maid, pinched herself to be sure that it was really she who sat beside Mrs. Beeks in the railway train two mornings later.

They flew through the long, stuffy tunnel—which, somehow, under present conditions, seemed twice as noxious as ever before—past Harlem and High Bridge, around the corner at Spuyten Duyvil, and up the smooth stretch of glorious Hudson, to their ultimate destination at Scarborough.

Behind the housekeeper and the lady's-maid, who sat together by virtue of social precedence and because there were not seats enough for the housekeeper to sit alone, were the others.

There was the butler, fresh out of England with a coat of sunburn from the sea-voyage intensifying the natural ruddy hue of his complexion; two young footmen, who had deserted a Newport ménage for one nearer the Great White Way; six maids, two of them pretty and Swedish, two of them pretty and Irish, and two of them plain and English; the clever, fat "lady-cook" and her three assistants; and a man's man, who took himself so seriously that none but the housekeeper had sufficient courage to address him.

Anne leaned her head back against the cushioned seat with a perplexed sigh and closed her eyes to shut out the landscape.

The last time she had gone over this route was to attend a hop at West Point. She remembered they went to Fishkill and crossed over on the ferry. There had been a boy at the hop with nice eyes and a clever, kind mouth, who talked a lot about his sisters and what he expected to achieve in the world. He had wanted Anne to meet his sisters.

But she never did meet them, because shortly afterward came the crash, her father's death, and, finally, this.

It was all rather pitiful, and because she could not remember the name of the boy two little tears trickled from under Anne's closed eyelids and rolled unheeded down her cheeks.

The housekeeper did not see, for her face was turned toward the window.

It was plain, indeed, that as far as this new venture was concerned, Anne was a passive tool in the hands of circumstances.

She had been denied other employment at every turn of the wheel. There was no place for the unskilled or inexperienced worker in offices or factories. The position of servant in a rich man's house had been hers without the asking. She had been fairly pushed into it.

Only one thing did Mrs. Bevis and the new housekeeper ask her, and that was "Do you understand the duties of a lady's-maid?" She had replied mutely with a nod, and the wages of thirty dollars a month, with board, seemed munificent.

But it had come none too soon.

The purchase of flowers for the girl who had killed herself—small as the sum was—left Anne's pocketbook almost empty. Four days' board was due Mrs. Bevis, beside the intelligence-office commission.

And there was no money, plebeian as the situation was, to pay for what she owed!

It was Louise, watching her make ready to go, who divined her secret, and who, also, suggested a practical way out of the difficulty.

From the corner of her eye she saw Anne search her hand-bag over and over again to make sure that no stray bill lay hidden in some forgotten corner.

Finally Louise could bear no longer the white tragedy of Anne's face.

"Haven't you anything you can sell or pawn?" she asked, with irritation calculated to conceal her genuine anxiety for Anne's distress.

"Pawn?" Anne looked up from her hand-bag wonderingly. "Why—I—I'm sure I never thought of such a thing." Her face flushed warmly. "I shouldn't care to do it—"

Louise shrugged her shoulders expressively, and bent herself anew to the task of manicuring her nails with an inconveniently long pair of shears.

"Suit yourself," she replied laconically.

Anne did not relinquish the idea, however.

"What sort of people—pawn things?" she questioned shamefacedly.

Louise laid down the shears with a noisy clatter. She really was irritated now.

"Poor people," she replied brutally—"poor people, like you, and like me. When we're hard up and need money, if we're decent we get it in any decent way we can. That's one of the ways."

"I'm sorry if I've seemed snobbish to you," answered Anne quietly. "You see, I really didn't know—and I'm grateful to you for the suggestion. I need money badly. What sort of things would I—pawn?"

Louise glanced suggestively toward the two trunks in the corner.

"Anything you've got," she answered, passing over Anne's apology gracefully. "Clothes—jewelry—or anything."

"Oh, I wonder—" Anne rose quickly, crossed to one of the trunks, unlocked it, and threw up the lid.

It was the trunk in which she had packed away some of her old finery, and it had not been opened since she left her father's house.

The sweet fragrance of her favorite sachet greeted her when she opened the trunk, and a swift vision of her dainty boudoir, all pink and white and smelling of fresh roses, passed before Anne's eyes. For the moment the memory was almost too much for her. She caught at the trunk-lid, and her lips trembled.

Then the faintness passed, and she realized that she was still in the ugly brown bedroom, and that the pink, rose-smelling boudoir was a mirage that had faded away forever.

Louise was beside her, steadying her by one arm and looking into the crowded tray in open-mouthed amazement.

"I thought you were goin' to fall," she said, never shifting her eyes from the open trunk. They drank in greedily the details of a lace-covered ball-gown that was folded on top, and flew to the pair

of satin slippers and the gauze fan that were crowded in beside it.

"Gee!" she whispered. "Where did you get that dress?"

"It was mine," Anne replied briefly, "when I lived at home."

Somehow she did not feel as if it belonged in the least to her now.

A slight flicker of an eyelid betrayed Louise's incredulity, but Anne was too absorbed in contemplation of the gown to notice it.

She lifted out the lovely lace thing and smoothed its wrinkled folds. It looked crushed and forlorn from its long confinement.

This was the gown she had worn at the West Point hop. She had not had it on since.

"I suppose I could sell this," she said dubiously, looking to Louise for agreement. "I won't have any use for it again. Where—where shall I take it?"

The factory-girl reached out a covetous hand for the exquisite gown. She held up its sweeping length against her faded cloth skirt. Her face contracted for a brief instant with a spasm of desire.

"Do you mind if I try it on?" she asked.

"Certainly not," said Anne.

She sat on the edge of her cot, her chin propped in her hand, watching silently while the other girl slipped out of her dingy working-clothes and garbed herself in the costly lace robe.

It fitted her well, and the excitement of trying it on had brought a touch of color to her pale cheeks.

In a way her hard little face looked pretty. Anne could not help marveling to herself at the magic of clothes.

At Louise's request she took down the cracked mirror and held it so that the girl could see the skirt flounces.

A long, envious sigh burst from the lips of the wearer of the lace gown.

"How much are you plannin' to get for this?" she asked as nonchalantly as possible.

Anne made a rapid mental calculation. She read her roommate's mind, and she determined that, as she had to part with it anyway, Louise should have the lace dress.

"I need ten dollars," she said in an

swer to the other's question. "I'll ask for that much. What do you think?"

"It's worth it," sighed Louise hopelessly. "I suppose this dress cost yer as much as fifty dollars when it was new."

"Yes—it cost as much as that," replied Anne steadily. She did not add, as she might have done, "Fifty dollars and three hundred more."

"I suppose it's worth ten dollars." Then, after a short pause, she said quickly: "Look here, I got six dollars I can spare right now, and I'll send you the rest, one dollar every week. Don't you think you can manage?"

Again Anne made a rapid mental calculation, and then she said briskly: "I have to pay three dollars for board and two for commission, and fifty cents to get my trunks to the train. I've got sixty-five cents left of my own. If the housekeeper buys my railroad ticket I think I can manage—"

"Oh, sure! They always do that. If she doesn't—"

"All right," interrupted Anne, "I'll chance it, and you needn't bother about the other four dollars. You may have the slippers and the fan, too."

It hurt her to take the girl's hard-earned money. She would have preferred to give her the gown outright, but under the circumstances there was nothing else to do and Louise was more than satisfied with the bargain she had made.

The look on Louise's face and on Nettie's when she had made the younger girl a present of a silk blouse, came back to her in memory now, as she sat with closed eyes in the railway train. It was good to have done something to make two people happier.

She must have dozed a little, for it seemed that she had on the lace gown herself, and was dancing at the West Point hop with the boy who had such nice eyes and who wanted her to meet his sisters. And on one side of the room sat Dickson Calhoun watching her jealously, while on the other was Tom Goodwin taking notes of her dress for his paper.

It was all too ridiculous and she almost laughed in the housekeeper's face when that excellent person shook her by the arm.

"Come, wake up, we're almost there. You've slept all the way," she finished with more asperity than the occasion seemed to require.

"Have I?" asked Anne, still struggling to repress that hysterical laugh.

"What's so funny?" asked the housekeeper, as she straightened her bonnet severely.

"Oh, it's nothing. Only a dream I had. I thought I was dancing at a West Point hop—"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Beeks. "I don't wonder you laughed."

The housekeeper craned her neck to get a view of the station as the train came slowly to a halt.

"There's the Derrick station-wagon," she said, pointing to a new equipage drawn up beside the platform. "I hope it'll hold us all."

"The what—station-wagon?" gasped Anne, stumbling behind Mrs. Beeks as they made their way to the door.

"Mr. Derrick's," answered the older woman, turning back to look at her in surprise.

"But who is Mr. Derrick—I mean what Mr. Derrick—"

"Mr. James Derrick—the man you're going to work for, of course. You know who you're going to work for, don't you?"

"No, I didn't know," said Anne shortly, following fast on the housekeeper's heels down the steps. "I never thought about it until this minute. There wasn't much time to think of anything—it was all arranged so quickly."

Mrs. Beeks looked the lady's-maid over anxiously from head to heels.

"You're rather queer, aren't you?" she asked. Then a worried line appeared in her forehead. "I hope you'll suit—it was hard enough getting anybody—"

Her speech was cut short by an excited young man who appeared suddenly around a corner of the little station.

"They're here, mother—" he bawled. "The servants have come! . . . Hello, Mrs. Beeks. Bully for you! Corraled the whole bunch, didn't you? . . . Where's mother's maid? She's to go in the dog-cart with me—Rogers, take the others to the annex and let the grooms help you with the luggage."

His eye ran eagerly down the silent

line of waiting menials, and at a gesture from Mrs. Beeks lit upon Anne. Mrs. Beeks shoved her reluctant ward forward.

"Go with the young gentleman, Annie."

Anne's head lifted ever so slightly and her lips tightened to a fine, hard line. This was worse, even, than she had anticipated.

But young Mr. Derrick already was leading the way to where his dog-cart and groom stood waiting, and there was nothing to do but follow him, which she did, keeping some distance behind however.

Near the dog-cart was a red motor-car containing a stout, over-dressed woman with grizzled hair, and a younger woman who resembled her in a pert, pretty fashion.

Intuitively Anne knew that there were Mrs. James Masters Derrick and Miss Rosamund Derrick. They looked exactly as she thought they would from the brief newspaper comment.

With a quick sigh of relief she realized that with these people she stood in no great danger of meeting any of her old friends. That had been the thing she dreaded most.

"I say—the servants have come," repeated James, Jr., loudly, so that he might be heard above the purr of the motor. "This is your maid here. Shall I take her up?"

His mother surveyed her new possession with languid interest, but Miss Rosamund was as indifferent as though carved from stone.

"Yes, Jimmie, if you will be so kind," Mrs. Derrick said, after a brief scrutiny of Anne. "Or—let the groom take her and you come back to the lodge with us."

She gave a surpassing Western imitation of a New York accent.

"Naw! I ain't a going to let any groom touch this horse. Get in, will you?" he commanded Anne.

Anne climbed unassisted into the dog-cart. The line of her lips had tightened and there were little white dents on either side of her nostrils. The nostrils themselves quivered delicately.

"Come over in time for dinner, Jimmie," said his mother as the motor-car started up the hill ahead of them.

"Get over *before* dinner!" screamed

his sister, moved to sudden life. "Tell her to bring my dressing-case—it's in the north bedroom."

"You hear her? She wants her dressing-case," said the young man to Anne, as he accepted the reins which the groom handed him.

The groom jumped into the rumble and the cart followed the motor-car up the hill.

Anne sat silent, clutching her handbag, her head bent a trifle to hide the angry tears which would force themselves smarting hot through her closed eyelids.

"Whew! Dusty, ain't it?" exclaimed James, Jr. "We'll get out'a the track of that car in a minute. I'll drive by and you can get the bag . . . We're staying at the lodge, you know, until the house is in running order."

Presently he turned to her again and involuntarily Anne met his eyes with her own. A vague wonder as to where she had seen eyes like that before disturbed her, and for the moment made her forget her distaste of him.

"What's your name?" he asked abruptly.

When he spoke the distaste all came back, and she wondered how she would find the strength to answer him with proper humility.

"Anne Graves—" She stopped short and drew in a quick, sobbing breath. The line of her lips tightened once more and the little white dents on either side of her nostrils came back again.

She held her head with much the same pride of race as did the handsome, high-bred horse that was pulling the dog-cart.

"Annie Graves," she repeated coldly.

At least she could do that much for Anne Gravestock. She could decently bury her in the oblivion of the past.

James, Jr., looked straight into her eyes again, and his own kindled humorously. Anne decided that his mouth had mean corners. It had a trick, too, of turning down when he smiled.

"Ain't mad about it, are you?" he asked.

Anne was saved the necessity of replying to this bit of facetiousness, for just then the horse shied at a scrap of paper in the road, and the dog-cart was thrown violently to one side.

She grasped at the low seat to keep from being hurled out, while the young man quickly gathered in the reins with a dexterous hand.

"You——, you! I'll teach you!" he exclaimed from between clenched teeth.

The whip went singing over the horse's ears like a mad thing of fire, and the frightened animal plunged desperately. A dozen times the lash descended and left its cruel mark, and each time Anne stifled a desire to scream—not through fear of the dog-cart overturning, but because of the vicious blows that were being rained on the horse.

Gradually the creature resumed its normal pace, save for a restive tossing of the head, and Anne relaxed her hold on the side of the seat.

James, Jr., turned to her triumphantly.

"That's the way to treat 'em when they act up," he said with pardonable pride.

Anne did not answer, but sat stiffly looking ahead, not daring to trust herself to speak, lest she should commit the indiscretion of telling this brutal young man what she thought of him.

CHAPTER XII.

A DAWNING FEAR.

A WEEK had gone by since Anne Gravestock entered the employ of the Derricks.

Since her arrival at "Derricourt" she had been fully occupied with the difficulty of mastering her new rôle, and had no time to spend in fruitless repining. She had supposed that it was rather easy to be a lady's-maid and thought she was well acquainted with the duties attached to that office, but when it came actually to do her work she found she was wanting in many details.

In the matter of hair-dressing, for instance, it took every ounce of courage she possessed to look intelligent when Miss Rosamund explained the style in which she wore her hair. After that first job of hair-dressing—which included some hair-pulling and hair-scorching—she fully expected to be dismissed.

But Miss Rosamund had passed over her deficiencies with a scowl. Afterward Anne improved rapidly, gaining

courage with every fresh evidence of success.

She even derived a certain somber satisfaction from her work. At least, she was taking care of herself.

But at the end of the first week "Annie Graves" had an overwhelming desire to kick over the traces and become Anne Gravestock, if only for a day, or even an hour.

She wanted the association of her own people.

The servants' quarters were in the annex, a square building connecting with the main part of the house by a wide passageway over the *porte-cochère*, but Anne was not housed with them. Her duties kept her occupied at all hours, and even had she chosen to mingle with them socially, it would have been difficult to find the time.

Mrs. Beeks, too, slept in the main house. She had a sitting-room and bedroom on the top floor. Anne was in a little room across the hall from Miss Rosamund's suite.

In this great, luxurious house, filled to overflowing with various kinds of people, Anne was as completely isolated as though she had been in a prison.

It came Sunday afternoon and she found herself with the unwonted luxury of a few hours' freedom. It was then that she burst momentarily through the prison bars and poured out her soul in the longest letter she had ever written in her life.

It was directed to Tom Goodwin, and in it she said:

I have something to confess that ought to surprise you very much. I've landed a new "job." Please don't gasp when I tell you what it is—nor pity me, which I couldn't bear, just now, for I'm well occupied with pitying myself.

I'm a lady's-maid. Does it shock you? I know it doesn't, for you're not the sort of man one could shock in just that way. But you will pity me, and perhaps you will try to drag me out of my haven, through mistaken kindness. For I believe that it is a haven. I would be well content if it were not for being so dreadfully lonely. I am writing to you because of the loneliness.

Never mind how I happened upon the place. I'm here and you will be interested to know about it—but, of course,

this is in confidence and not for publication.

This is the house of the rich Jim Derrick—the Jim Derrick, understand—who has brought his family out of the West to let them spend a little of his money—no more than they need to spend, either, I am told. They say he is really quite close, especially in the matter of spending money for the wife and daughter.

Oh, yes, there is a daughter. She's about twenty years old, just out of boarding-school; pretty, I think you would say, with bright black eyes and a long rope of black hair as thick as your arm. The hair is my *bête noire*, for I have to dress it and it seems that I do not understand the Marcel wave. Fortunately, my young lady hears rumors of its going out of style, so I am breathing more freely. Miss Rosamund is pert, but not especially vulgar like her mother—neither is she kind, and the mother is kind, in an overbearing I-am-better-than-you sort of way.

The housekeeper here has a fund of information concerning our employers. She says Mrs. Derrick used to do her own washing back on the ranch, and that Miss Rosamund went barefoot when she was little. Doesn't it seem a little odd, after all?

I suppose when Miss Rosamund was running barefoot—if she ever did—I was being scrupulously tended by a governess, driving in stately elegance in the park, and thinking a great deal about the length of my new gowns and the importance of Paris labels.

That sort of thing makes one humble. I am developing a philosophy that is going to be beautiful. When I have it in perfect running order I'll write you about it.

At present, however, I am subject to wild fits of rage because I am not on a superior footing to everybody else about me, and that the reason I am not is merely a matter of dirty dollars. (Excuse that, please). There is much of the snob left in me yet.

It is good to feel that you are my friend. Please write to me and cheer me up. My name here is Annie Graves. (Another proof of the snob). But I couldn't bring Anne Gravestock to such a pass.

The master of this gorgeous establishment is away at present. Indeed, Mrs. Beeks tells me he seldom is with his family, for they say he is as devoted to the West—the real wild, woolly kind

of West—as the others are to the East. I hear rumors, however, that he is about to pay us a flying visit on his way from Mexico to Butte. Somewhat roundabout, but a mere nothing when you have a private car.

Funny, my father never thought it necessary to own a private car, but I suppose that was because he did not belong to the new school of rich men. From what I see here, I realize that we were hopelessly old-fashioned even when we thought ourselves so terribly smart.

Mrs. D. has reluctantly canceled a precious dinner engagement because of her lord's intended visit—I understand he never dines out—and James, Jr., is having spasms about a horse that belongs to his father and which happens not to be in fit condition for parental inspection. I suspect the young man himself is responsible for the horse's unfitness. He is as cruel to beasts as I imagine he could be to women, if he had the chance.

I forgot that I had not mentioned him before. He looks to be almost any age between twenty and forty—you know the type, a sort of old-young expression. I hate his mouth, and he has black beady eyes like his sister's, only hers are larger and snap more.

One good trait he has—he is fond of his mother. He even lends her money from his own liberal allowance, but he doesn't lend his sister any. There seems to be a sort of feud between them. Sometimes I think they even hate each other.

What do you think of my capacity for gossip? Isn't it shameless? But I've been bottled up for a week and if I don't talk to somebody about all these strange things I've seen and endured, I know I'll go shrieking mad.

I'm going to stop writing now. Let me hear from you if you are not too busy—and, Tom, please think of me sometimes, for I am very lonely and my heart will ache in spite of me.

It was the first time Anne ever had addressed young Goodwin by his Christian name, or thought of him in that way.

But suddenly his friendship seemed very precious. She wanted to hold fast to him. He was the one remaining link that bound her to her old life, the one human being on earth who knew both the old Anne and the new Anne—and understood them both.

It gave her fresh courage just to know that he was there, ready to be leaned upon for counsel and help, if only she chose to call upon him.

Anne walked to the station to post her letter, preferring not to give it to the young footman whose business it was to handle all the mail that went out from the house. She was aware that already the servants had commented upon her exclusiveness, and she knew that even to Mrs. Beeks herself she was more or less of a curiosity.

It was well not to give any cause for unjust suspicion, as a letter from her addressed to a reporter on the *Comet* might well do.

Yet, as luck would have it, in traversing the half-mile from Derricourt to the little station she lost it. She had thrust it into the front of her blouse with her handkerchief; she remembered pulling out the handkerchief, and it was then, probably, that the letter had slipped out.

Hurriedly Anne retraced her steps. It would never do to have the letter found and opened by any in that neighborhood.

The consequences to herself might result in her immediate dismissal from the Derrick household, and just at this time Anne did not want to lose her place.

The road wound sharply up the little hill, then ran smoothly ahead to the crossroad where one turned to go to Derricourt. As she reached the top of the hill and stopped to draw breath after her hurried ascent, Anne descried a cloud of dust coming toward her, which presently resolved itself into the dog-cart.

James, Jr., was on the box, with Henry, the groom, in the rumble and the spotted coach-dog trotting underneath. It was all very nice and smart, and even a little too elegant. James, Jr.'s, pale face, with its dull, black eyes and cruel mouth, appeared especially malevolent to Anne as she stepped hastily aside to avoid being showered with dust.

A sudden fright surged over her.

What if *he* had found the letter! Would he be base enough to open it; or, like any other decent person who had chanced upon a stamped and addressed letter that somebody else had lost, would he mail it?

She stood looking after him as though in a trance.

As for James, Jr., he had scarcely passed her before he, too, turned and looked back. He drew in the horse sharply and brought the cart to a standstill about thirty yards from where it had passed her.

Involuntarily Anne walked toward him.

"Did you find a letter?" she asked breathlessly. "I am looking for one I lost—I was going to the station to mail it."

He did not reply, but thrust his hand into his breast pocket and drew out the letter, holding it so that she could see it. "Are you sure this is yours?" he asked.

"Certainly," Anne replied with a trace of hauteur that under the circumstances ill became her. "I dropped it."

"Why didn't you give it to Thomas? Why walk such a distance when you might have saved yourself the trouble?"

There was a half-sneering smile on his face as he asked the question. Anne would have given all she possessed—which was not much—to be able to say "None of your business!" It was clearly the retort he deserved.

But she answered humbly, although the red surged into her face angrily.

"I thought the exercise would do me good. Will you give it to me, please?" she asked.

James, Jr., smiled again, this time more openly. Anne felt that she could not hate him enough, this self-satisfied young prig with the brutish manners and the horrid mouth!

"I'm going to the station," he said. "I'll mail it for you—save you the trouble. The walking's better back a ways. Too hilly here."

He touched the horse lightly with the whip, and before Anne could protest, had driven away, imperturbable groom, spotted coach-dog, and all.

A wild notion of rushing back to the house, packing her things and getting away from Derricourt as quickly as she could took possession of Anne. She felt morally certain that James, Jr., would find some way to inspect the contents of her letter.

But her penniless condition made her dismiss the idea of leaving. She did not have money enough to buy a ticket to New York, supposing even that she de-

cided to abandon her trunks; and there was no place for her to go, unless she asked charity of her old friend Mrs. Kidder.

She was without money, without friends—if one excepted Tom Goodwin—and absolutely dependent upon these strangers of whom she had chosen to make fun.

Anne walked slowly back toward Derri-court. She made up her mind to be quite frank and tell the truth in case any one ventured to question her. The name of Gravestock, shorn indeed as it was of moneyed virtues, should still carry some weight.

At the great stone gate the dog-cart

passed her again, coming back from the station.

Another man was beside James, Jr., on the driving seat, and his back as the dog-cart whirled by seemed strangely familiar.

Where, before, had she seen that peculiar cut of shabby black coat? What was there about the wide-brimmed soft hat that seemed like the reminiscence of an unpleasant dream?

Anne wondered. And as she wondered a great and dawning fear took possession of her, a fear that grew into certainty as she hurried through the arbored side-path which led to the servants' quarters.

(To be continued.)

THE E - Z MARK.

By HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY.

The cock-sure head of a jewelry firm, and an experience he will never forget.

JOSEPH E. WATSON, jeweler, had always prided himself on his business sagacity and ability to read the character and failings of his fellow man. His personal vanity and a penchant to brag about these traits was well known to his friends and clerks, for he never lost the opportunity to tell them how wise he was.

"I've been twenty-five years in the jewelry business and have never been swindled out of a dollar yet," he would boast. "There aren't many men in my line who can say that. The trouble with most of them is that they don't take time to read the character of their customers and guard against being buncoed.

"Now, I always take time to size up every stranger that comes into my store, and I want to tell you that I can spot a confidence man or shoplifter the minute he enters the door. There don't any of them get by *me*. I have to keep pretty sharp watch on my clerks, because they are not near so observing or careful as I am, and would get caught a dozen times a week if I were not there to warn them. Whenever a doubtful character comes in I always wait on him myself. I know he can't get the best of *me*."

"Oh, you'll get caught one of these days, Watson," Mr. Billings, the teller of the bank, would say. "You're not so foxy as you think you are."

"Don't you fool yourself," Mr. Watson would reply. "The man who can beat me out in my business isn't born yet."

His two clerks came in for their share of his conceit. Whenever the opportunity presented itself he would get them into a corner and admonish them.

"You boys ought to watch *me*. You just copy after me and you'll be wise. The trouble with you fellows is that you treat everybody alike. You never know when a crook might happen in, and you ought to train your instincts so you can detect them when they do come."

The clerks were both bright young men, whose ability as salesmen was unquestioned, and they tolerated their employer's boasting and conceit because, in spite of his egotism, he was generous with the pay-envelopes, and permitted them to take a day off whenever they asked for it.

One morning, while he was discoursing to them along the usual lines, a customer entered the store, and one of the

clerks hurried forward to wait on him, while Mr. Watson followed at a discreet distance to size up the man.

"I don't like the looks of that fellow," he soliloquized. "He very much resembles a crook."

The man certainly did. He was a big, flashily dressed, square-jawed fellow, with a heavy black mustache and a black-and-blue abrasion under one eye which showed that some hard obstacle had recently come in contact with that organ. He had his derby cocked over the eye with the evident purpose of shading it.

Mr. Watson pressed forward and whispered to the clerk:

"I'll take charge of this customer."

The clerk, used to such interruptions, promptly withdrew.

"What can we do for you, sir?" inquired Mr. Watson, looking the man sternly in the eye.

"I would like to look at some diamonds," answered the other quietly.

"Any particular size?"

"I want to buy a diamond ring for a lady friend."

Mr. Watson went to his safe and returned with a tray of rings, but instead of placing them on the showcase where his customer could examine them, he kept them on the back counter and brought forward one ring at a time.

After examining and pricing a number of them, during which time Mr. Watson never removed his eyes from the man's hands, he finally selected one valued at one hundred dollars.

"I believe this one will do," he said. "I would like to have my friend's initials engraved inside. Can you do that?"

"That is part of our business," replied Mr. Watson.

"Very good. How soon can I get the ring?"

"We can have it ready for you this afternoon."

"Very well, I'll call about one o'clock for it," and the man turned and started to leave.

"Hold on!" called Mr. Watson. "You'll have to pay for this ring before we engrave it. I don't know you, and we require strangers to pay in advance."

"Oh, certainly," answered the man, appearing somewhat surprised. "But

isn't it rather unusual to demand payment before one has received his goods?"

"You may think so, but that will be the requirement in this case. How do I know that you will ever return for the ring?"

"Perhaps you're right," answered the man quietly. "Well, then, I will pay for it now."

He drew a long bill-book from his coat-pocket, extracted a blank bank check, and filled it out in Mr. Watson's name for one hundred dollars. This he handed to the jeweler.

Mr. Watson looked it over suspiciously. The signature on it was "O. Gurez."

"How do I know this check is good?" he demanded. "It may not be worth the paper it is written on."

"Well, if it isn't you're nothing out, are you?" retorted Mr. Gurez, somewhat testily.

"No, nor I don't intend to be," snapped back the jeweler. "The man isn't born who can catch me on a skin game."

"You're altogether too suspicious for the good of your business," Mr. Gurez informed him. "If I wasn't in a hurry for that ring I would go elsewhere for it. However, you have your pay and I shall expect the ring to be ready when I call for it at one o'clock."

When he had gone Mr. Watson re-examined the check. Then he called his clerks.

"Look at the signature on that check," he told them. "It is undoubtedly a Spanish name, and that fellow is an Irishman, if I ever saw one. This proves very conclusively in my mind that this name is fictitious. The check is made out on Bird & Little's bank, and I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that they never heard of Gurez. Still, it might be possible that it is all right: I'll just indorse it, and one of you boys take it around to Bird & Little's bank and see if you can get it cashed. Only be sure you ask them if they know the man first."

Mr. Watson put his indorsement on the back of the check and one of the clerks started for the bank with it. He returned in a few minutes.

"It is just as you surmised, sir. They never heard of this fellow there," he reported.

"Didn't I tell you so?" exclaimed Mr. Watson exultantly. "That fellow was a shoplifter and was figuring on doing a little light-fingered work with that tray of diamonds, but I didn't give him a chance. Oh, I knew what he was up to, all right. They can't fool *me*. He gave me this check just for a bluff, because he saw that I was onto him and was afraid I might call an officer. He won't be back again."

However, at one o'clock that afternoon Mr. Gurez walked into the store.

"Is my ring ready for me?" he asked.

Mr. Watson gazed at him in amazement. To him the man's nerve was monumental.

"Well!" he exclaimed, "you're certainly a cool one to come back here after offering me that check."

"What's the matter with the check?" demanded Mr. Gurez in surprise.

"You know very well what the matter is. It is no good. I sent one of my clerks around to the bank with it, and they have never heard of you there."

"No good? What are you talking about? Let me see the check, please."

Mr. Watson produced it from his pocketbook, where he had placed it for the purpose of showing it to his friends at the club as Exhibit A of his prowess as a detective.

Mr. Gurez examined the check carefully, and then chuckled.

"Well, I don't blame you for being suspicious," he laughed. "I made a mistake. I haven't carried an account with that bank for a year, but I happened to have one of their checks in my bill-book and used it to-day by mistake. I am sorry if it has caused any trouble or misunderstanding. However, I happen to have enough money with me now and will pay you cash for the ring."

He produced a roll of bills from his pocket and counted out one hundred dollars, which he handed to Mr. Watson.

The confused but still suspicious jeweler took the money and counted it over, carefully examining each bill, to be sure it was not a counterfeit. The money was good.

"Well now, I am very sorry, but when we found that that check was worthless we decided—er—that is, we didn't engrave the ring."

"Didn't engrave it? Why, man, I've got to use that ring this afternoon."

"I am very sorry, sir," said Mr. Watson humbly. "We can engrave it so you can have it the first thing in the morning, if that will do."

"No, I can't wait. I must have it this afternoon."

"You might take it now, and then return it later and have it engraved," suggested the jeweler hopefully.

"Well, yes, I might do that—I suppose I will have to."

"We will be glad to engrave it any time you can conveniently bring it around."

"Very well, I will bring the ring back in the course of a week," answered Mr. Gurez.

Mr. Watson wrapped up the ring and handed it over to him and Mr. Gurez left the store, while the humiliated jeweler slunk into his private office to avoid the snickers of his amused clerks.

That night at the club, however, he had so far recovered his spirits that the old instinct to brag about his shrewdness caused him to relate the incident to his friends, with appropriate fabrications.

"That fellow was a crook, all right," he concluded. "I have an idea that after he gave me that check he got to worrying for fear I would have him arrested for forgery, and in order to get it back he returned to the store and bought the diamond. He must have known how shrewd I am and didn't dare leave the check in my hands."

"What did you say the fellow's name was?" inquired Mr. Billings, who was teller of the Brighton National Bank, which Mr. Watson patronized.

"Gurez. O. Gurez."

"I thought so," smiled Mr. Billings. "Watson, you've been buncoed. That man came into our bank about two o'clock this afternoon and cashed a check for one hundred dollars. We accepted it because it had your indorsement on the back."

"My—my—indorsement!" stammered Mr. Watson blankly.

"Yes, and you'll have to make good for the check in consequence," laughed Mr. Billings.

"And another thing," he added, "while I was checking over the paper

after business hours I happened to notice the name on that check again, and observed something rather peculiar about it."

"What did you notice?" inquired Mr. Watson innocently.

Mr. Billings took a sheet of paper,

wrote out the name "O. Gurez" on it and handed it to Mr. Watson for that gentleman's inspection.

"Now, spell that out and spell it slow," he instructed him.

"O Gee you are E-Z," spelled Mr. Watson.

THE TIME LIMIT.*

By BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "The Isle of Mysteries," "When a Man's Hungry," "King or Counterfeit?" etc.

A disappearance which seemed to have no explanation but one which was beyond belief.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

MAX CRARY is in love with Hildegard Crandall, but his father, old farmer Crary, forbids the match, as he wishes Max to marry Ruth Merriweather, the daughter of one of his friends. The two young people plan to be married secretly, and Max steals away from a party at the Merriweathers' to meet Hildegard.

He finds the aunt with whom she lives crazed with anxiety over her disappearance. Word comes that she has been seen that afternoon riding through the town with a young man in an automobile. Even her uncle and aunt are forced to the conclusion that she has eloped. Max, however, still believes that she is true to him, and announces his intention of going in search of her.

CHAPTER VI.

A STARTLING MESSAGE.

MAX did not go home that night. Instead, he slept at the Macomber farm.

He knew that as soon as he arrived home a stormy interview with his irate father would ensue; but it was not that fact which prompted him to accept the hospitality of the Macombers.

He stayed there in the hope that before morning Hildy would return, or that some news of her would arrive.

In his troubled state of mind he slept but little. He tossed restlessly on his bed, and a dozen different times he jumped up and looked eagerly out of the window, fancying he heard something stirring outside.

Morning dawned, but with it came no sign of the missing girl.

Max dressed hurriedly and, without waiting for the household to rise, took his leave.

He had mapped out a plan of campaign. He determined to go home first

and face his angry father. This unpleasant duty disposed of, he would go down to the village and make searching inquiries as to the mysterious red automobile.

Perhaps he could get a clue as to the route the motor-car had taken; and at all events he ought to be able to get a fuller description of the appearance of Hildy's unknown companion.

Max yearned to meet this fellow, and he promised himself that if he could succeed in tracking him down he would make it hot for him.

If the man were a kidnaper, he would hand him over to the authorities—after he had got through with him.

If, on the other hand, Hildy was indeed eloping (which the faithful fellow refused to believe), he would—well, the way Max clenched his big fists and smiled grimly was significant of what was in store for the other fellow when Max laid hands upon him.

And strange to say, despite the new developments in the case, he still clung to the belief that Si Merriweather was

*Began February ARGOSY. Single copies, 10 cents.

more or less responsible for the girl's disappearance.

"I'll bet that red-head is at the bottom of it," he muttered as he walked toward his father's farm. "I don't know why I should think so, but I just feel that way about it."

Old man Crary was at work in the apple-orchard, and the sight of Tom walking leisurely up the road agitated him so greatly that he almost fell from the top of the ladder on which he was perched.

"Come here, you!" he yelled. "Come here at once! I've got a few things to say to you!"

With a calmness which added to the rage of the angry farmer, Max walked through the orchard and faced his father as the latter stepped from the ladder.

"Where've you been all night, you young loafer?" yelled the elder Crary, as an opening shot.

"I slept at the Macomers'," replied Max, unabashed.

"You slept at the Macomers', did you? And what d'yer mean by sleeping anywhere except under my roof, eh? And what d'yer mean by your disgraceful carryings-on last night at Si Merriweather's? What do you mean by it?"

"Now, see here, dad," replied Max, "I know you're mad clean through, but please let's not have any row to-day. I'm feeling miserable enough as it is.

"I'm sorry for some of the things I said last night. I had no right to give the lie to May Hamlin and Gus Marlowe, for I've since learned that they were telling the truth. But I'm not a bit sorry for what I said to Si Merriweather, for I still think he's responsible for Hildegard's disappearance."

"You insolent cub!" roared the old man, not a bit mollified. "I suppose you'll next be accusing me of stealing the gal."

Max shook his head.

"I don't think that you'd be capable of such a dastardly trick, father," he said.

"Oh, you don't, eh? Well, that's very good of you," sneered the elder Crary. "I'm much obliged for your good opinion of me, my son. It's really most flattering to learn that you think so highly of me. It's too darned bad you ain't

got as good an opinion of your future father-in-law. And so you really think that Si stole the gal, eh?"

"Yes, I do. Of course. I don't think that he took her away himself, but I think he's responsible for the kidnapping."

"You're a great thinker," sneered the old man. "Some day you'll have an attack of brain fever if you keep on that way, my son. And supposing, just for the sake of argument, that Si has stolen the gal, what's it got to do with you?"

He had forced himself to speak calmly up to this point, but now he suddenly turned upon his son with flushed face and blazing eyes and repeated the question in a voice that sounded like the roar of an angry bull.

"What in thunder has it got to do with you?" he yelled. "Tell me that. What business is it of yours what's become of the gal? What is she to you, I should like to know?"

"I've told you what she is to me," replied Max quietly. "She's the girl I'm going to marry."

"Silence!" roared the old man. "Don't you dare to say such words to me. Ain't I told you that you're going to marry Si Merriweather's gal? Ain't I told you that you're not to have anything more to do with Hildy Crandall?"

"Yes, I know you've told me that, father," said Max, looking his father straight in the eyes. "But this is one of the cases where I can't do as you tell me. I've got to find Hildy before I do another thing. In fact, I want to ask you as a special favor that you excuse me from work on the farm until I do find her."

This request, propounded in a most matter-of-fact tone, so affected the old man that his eyes almost started out of his head and he appeared to be on the verge of a fit.

"What's that?" he roared. "Say that again. I just dare you to say that again."

"You might as well give me permission," the young man continued, quite oblivious of the other's rage, "because if you don't I shall go anyway. I can't be working here while Hildy may be facing all sorts of dangers. I've got to find her if it takes a year."

By a great effort old Crary managed

to suppress himself into a state of calmness; but it was a calmness which was even more terrible than his outbursts of wrath.

"Now, see here, my lad," he said quietly, "I've had quite enough of this nonsense. You take off your coat and put on your overalls this minute and get to work at the chores. You'll work hard all day, and to-night you'll stay in the house and not stir out of it. And as a punishment for your outrageous behavior at Si Merriweather's last night, you won't stir out of the house at night for the next six months to come. Do you understand that?"

"Yes. I understand you," replied Max calmly, "but I'm not going to consent to any such arrangement. As I told you the other day, I'm over twenty-one and you can't control my acts as if I was a kid. I'm not going to do chores to-day. I'm going to the village right now to start the search for Hildy, and if I can get a clue as to where she's gone I may be away for a few days."

"You'll stay here and do as you're told!" roared the old man, again losing all self-control.

"Not this time," was the defiant reply. "I'm going to the village right now to look for Hildy."

With clenched fists the enraged farmer advanced a step nearer his son, as though about to fell him to the ground.

But the threatened blow did not land, for just then the irate father thought of a more effective method of dealing with his rebellious offspring.

"Go if you want to," he shouted. "Ding-blast you! Go and look for this fickle jade who thinks so much of you that she's run off with another feller. Put your pride and your self-respect aside and run after her and try to win her back. But if you do go, by jiminy, you go for good. Understand me fully, my lad. If you move a step off this farm this day you can never return. I'll have nothing more to do with you while I live, and I'll disinherit you when I die. Now take your choice."

"Father," cried Max huskily, "don't say that! If you only knew how much I—"

"You heard what I said," the old man interrupted sternly. "It's no use making

any argument about it. You know I never go back on my word. You can take your choice."

"Very well," said Max quietly. "Since you put it up to me that way, I guess I'll say good-by."

"Think it over, my son," exclaimed old Crary almost pleadingly. "Don't be a rash young fool and give up your father and mother and the old farm for the sake of this faithless jade."

"Hildy is not a faithless jade," cried Max indignantly. "The fact that you and others think that she is makes me more determined to find her and prove that she is innocent. I don't want to leave the old farm forever, dad; but since you make that the only alternative, I've got to bid you good-by. Will you shake hands with me to show that we part without hard feelings?"

He held out his hand impulsively, but his father ignored it.

"There is hard feeling," he cried bitterly. "If you disobey me this time you ain't a son of mine any more—and you go away with my curse."

The young man sighed.

"Very well," he said huskily. "Let it be as you say. But I think some day you'll feel that you've treated me unjustly and then you'll send for me to come back."

His father shook his head.

"Put such an idea out of your mind, my lad. I'll never send for you; and if you come back here begging forgiveness I'll drive you away, no matter how hard you plead. I never go back on my word."

Max heaved another sigh, and turning on his heel, walked slowly toward the farmhouse.

Once he thought he heard his father's voice calling to him, and, hoping that the old man had changed his mind and relented, he looked back eagerly.

But apparently his ears had played him a trick, for he saw that old Crary had again climbed the ladder and was busily engaged in picking apples.

So Max continued on toward the farmhouse, with the intention of saying good-by to his mother.

He knew that this would be the most trying ordeal of all, and his apprehensions were realized. The poor old lady

clung to him despairingly, shed many tears, and begged him not to go.

"Wait until to-morrow, my dear boy," she pleaded. "Perhaps by then your father will have changed his mind and will consent to your going off to search for Hildy. I will plead with him for you."

But Max shook his head resolutely.

"No, mother. It's no use waiting. You've been married to father long enough to know that he never changes his mind. Besides, I can't afford to wait. Hildy may be in great danger and I must start in search of her at once. Don't worry about me. I'll be all right. It's time I was striking out for myself, anyway. I'll write to you often and let you know how I'm getting along."

And seeing that he was determined, the old lady finally ceased her pleadings; but she insisted upon his accepting fifty dollars in gold which the good woman had saved with the intention of some day presenting it to her son's bride.

The young man himself had managed to save twenty dollars from the small sum his father allowed him for pocket-money. He went up-stairs to his room and took this money, which he placed with his mother's gold pieces in a brown leather wallet. He also packed a few things in a grip.

"Why, I'm rich," he said to himself confidently, as he walked in the direction of the village. "I've seventy dollars, and even if I have to go to New York in search of poor Hildy, that money ought to pay my fare and keep me going for some time."

His original intention was to go to the village, but as he came to a point where the road forked with another road leading to the Macomber's farm he determined first to pay another visit to the latter, hoping that some news of the missing girl might have arrived.

When he reached the farmhouse he found Macomber and his wife looking even more dejected and sad than when he had seen them last.

"No news of Hildy, I suppose?" he said gloomily.

"Yes," replied the farmer with a frown. "We've had news—the worst kind of news. We got a telegram from her half an hour ago."

"A telegram!" cried Max excitedly. "What does it say?"

"Here it is," answered Macomber sadly. "You can read it for yourself. It'll be a blow to you, I reckon, but I told you last night what you might expect."

With trembling fingers Max unfolded the yellow sheet and read:

Don't worry about me. Married last night. Will return home later for your blessing.
HILDEGARDE.

The message was addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Macomber, and Max noted that it had been sent from New York City.

CHAPTER VII.

STILL LOYAL.

THE expression of misery on Max Crary's face as his mind absorbed this startling message so affected Mrs. Macomber that the good woman burst into tears.

"My poor boy," she cried, "I'm so sorry for you!"

Old Macomber shook his gray head sadly.

"Yes. This is rough on you, Max. My wife has told me about the secret marriage you and our little gal had planned. She's treated you very shabbily—even more shabbily than she treated us.

"If she'd have married you last night instead of this other fellow, we'd have been sore, of course, that she had taken the step without confiding in her aunt and myself; but we wouldn't have minded it nearly as much, for we at least know you and approve of you, while there's no telling what kind of a fellow this other chap is."

"He's some no-account, good-for-nothing vagabond, I'll wager," declared Mrs. Macomber angrily. "If he was any good at all, he wouldn't have come here in a red automobile like a thief and stolen our little gal while she was in the middle of baking apple-dumplings. If Hildy had only called me, I'd have come down-stairs in a jiffy and fixed her up a bit, so that she'd have looked something like a bride; instead of which, she

goes off in her housework clothes, without even a hat and jacket. I'm surprised at Hildy."

"We've always treated the pretty little gal as if she was our own daughter," added Macomber huskily. "There wasn't anything that we reckoned too good for her. She only had to ask for a thing once, and if it was within our means she came pretty near getting it. To think that, after all we've done for her, she should serve us like this!"

Max said nothing. He remained looking dazedly at the telegram in his hands, his face a picture of abject misery.

"I'll wager they weren't married by no minister," declared Mrs. Macomber angrily. "I suppose they got some judge or city official to tie the knot. I never did approve of such heathenish marriages."

"She says in that telegram that she'll return here soon to get our blessing," cried Macomber, clenching his fists. "I reckon she'll come back here in her red automobile and bring that sneaking loafer with her. I swear they won't get any blessing from me. I'll never give my blessing to a gal so ungrateful and deceitful."

Then Max found his voice.

"Please don't abuse her," he said brokenly. "I can't bear to hear a word said against her—even now."

"You poor fellow!" cried Mrs. Macomber, a world of sympathy in her voice. "If only she'd have married you instead of that deceiving wretch!"

"I can't believe that she's been false to me," cried Max passionately. "I can't believe it, even with this telegram in my hands. I tell you Hildy isn't the kind of a girl to break faith with a man. I'll not believe that she's done it until I hear her say so with her own lips."

"I like to see you so loyal, my boy," said Macomber. "It does my heart good to see it. But you're foolish if you keep on hoping against hope. My advice to you is to go back home and try to forget all about her."

Max laughed bitterly.

"I couldn't go back home, even if I wanted to. I've quarreled with my father, and I know he's cast me off forever."

Macomber and his wife looked at him in amazement.

"You don't really mean to say that old man Crary has turned you out?" cried the former.

Max nodded.

"Yes—we had a row this morning—about Hildy."

"Well, I'll be darned!" exclaimed Macomber. "I know that old Crary has a terrible temper; but I didn't think he'd cast off his only son. Well, don't you worry, my boy. You're welcome to make this your home as long as you like."

Max shook his head.

"That is very good of you and I appreciate it very much, but I'm going to New York. I can earn my own living there, some way or other, and—I want to look for Hildy."

"You'd better stay with us, my lad. New York is a hard city for a young country fellow to get along in, and as for searching for Hildy—what's the use? She's gone from you forever, and it's no use being foolish about it."

"Yes," chimed in Mrs. Macomber. "Whoever this sneaking chap may be, she's his wife now, and *you* can't have her. Stay here with us, my boy. We'll be lonely now that our little gal has gone and glad to have your company."

But again Max shook his head.

"No. I must go to New York; and I'm going to find Hildy. If she's married to this chap, I'll not raise a hand against him, although I feel as if I could kill him. But I still believe that there's been foul play. I still think that the poor girl has been kidnapped."

"That's foolish talk, my lad," said Macomber impatiently. "Ain't that infernal telegram ample proof to the contrary?"

"No, it isn't. She may have been forced to write that message. It may not be true at all."

"By gum! I never thought of that," cried Macomber excitedly. "I'm afraid that it ain't very likely; but it's just possible that you may be right, Max. Go to New York if you like; and, by jinks, I'll go with you."

"And leave me here, all alone!" Mrs. Macomber objected. "Besides, you'll probably be going on a fool's errand,

Hiram. I haven't any doubt that the gal has run away and got married, as the telegram says. You'd better stay here, and let Max go alone. He'll find her, if anybody can."

Max nodded.

"Yes, I can get along all right by myself. You stay here, Mr. Macomber. You can't afford to neglect the farm at this time of the year. Whichever way things turn out, I'll let you know at once."

To this the farmer finally yielded.

"Do you need any money, my boy?" he asked. "You'll let me finance this expedition, I hope."

"No, thanks. I've got seventy dollars."

"Seventy dollars! That ain't enough. It costs almost that much to buy a meal in New York. I've visited the thieving town, and I know what I'm talking about. Here's two hundred dollars. You've got to take it, my lad, and when it's gone, write to me for some more."

Max took the money. He did not intend to be handicapped in his search for Hildegard by lack of funds.

Macomber insisted on driving him down to the village, and Mrs. Macomber pressed upon him a substantial-looking package containing sandwiches and a bottle of home-made red-currant wine.

"Just a bite to eat on the train," the good woman informed him. "You'll be more than hungry by the time you reach New York."

On their way down to the village Macomber and Max met Si Merriweather driving up.

"Hello, Macomber!" the latter yelled, as the two vehicles passed each other. "Any news of your missing gal?"

Macomber whipped up his horse and drove on without deigning an answer to this question; for he disliked Si Merriweather; and, besides, there was a certain mocking ring in the latter's voice which nettled him.

As for Max, he turned around in his seat and glared at the red-haired farmer, who, happening to look back at the same time, answered the young man's glare by a taunting grin.

"I hate that man," growled Max to Macomber. "And, despite that telegram, despite all proofs to the contrary,

I still believe that he's more or less responsible for Hildy's disappearance."

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE TELEGRAPH-OFFICE.

LOOKING for a missing person in New York City is fully as difficult an undertaking as looking for that traditional needle in a haystack.

Nay, it is much more difficult, for if you keep persistently at the haystack, tearing it to pieces and examining every square inch of it, you are bound in the end to find the needle; whereas persons disappear in the great metropolis and are never found, despite the persistent efforts of the most skilled members of the police department.

As Max Crary stepped off the train and looked upon New York for the first time in his life, he began to realize the magnitude of the task he had undertaken.

He alighted at the Grand Central Station, and as he passed through the swinging doors of the big terminal and found himself on the sidewalks of crowded Forty-Second Street, dazed by the rush and confusion, he gasped in amazement.

"By jingo!" he exclaimed. "This must be the busiest street in the world. And it is in this city that I must search for Hildy! I don't see how I am ever going to find her in all these crowds."

Drifting with the tide of humanity, he walked west until he reached Broadway, and the noise and bustle he encountered at that busy corner caused him to realize still more the almost hopeless nature of his task.

Still, he was not the sort of fellow to be easily discouraged.

The Crarys could trace their ancestry away back to a famous Scottish warrior who knew not fear and had never acknowledged a conqueror. And, after all, blood will tell.

"If she's in New York, I'm going to find her, and that's all there is to it," Max told himself grimly. "That fellow in the middle of the road, there, must be a policeman, I guess. Reckon I'll ask him for some advice. He may be able to tell me the best way of starting the search."

Braving the danger of being knocked down by onrushing cabs, wagons, and trolley-cars, he made his way toward a tall patrolman who stood in the center of the crossing calmly regulating the tide of traffic by the raising and lowering of his hand.

"Pardon me, sir," said Max, as he reached the officer's side. "I'm looking for a girl named Hildegard Crandall. She's a pretty girl, has brown eyes and hair, red cheeks, and is about five feet six inches in height. Can you tell me how to go about finding her?"

"Go down to headquarters and send out an alarm for her, of course. Don't be standing here in the middle of the street or you'll be killed. Get on the sidewalk where you belong," was the gruff reply.

"And you think that headquarters will be able to find her for me?" asked Max eagerly.

"Sure they will. Get along with you now. Don't you see I'm busy?"

"Well, will you tell me how to get to headquarters? I'll go there at once."

"Here, jump aboard this car. It'll take you almost to the door. Ask the conductor to put you off at Bleecker. Three hundred Mulberry Street is the number. All right, motorman; go ahead."

And a second later Max found himself traveling down-town on a Broadway car.

He found police headquarters without much difficulty, but the reception he got there was not very encouraging.

"So the girl is lost, eh?" remarked the sergeant in charge of the Bureau of Information, after Max had explained the object of his visit. "Give us a description of her, and we'll send out an alarm. Do you imagine she's met with an accident?"

"Oh, no. My opinion is that she's been kidnaped."

"Kidnaped, eh? Well, if that's so, it's a case for the Detective Bureau. Go and see them. They're in that room across the corridor."

Max entered the designated room, where, after he had stated his case to the sergeant at the desk, he was turned over to a red-faced detective-sergeant, who listened to his story in a condescending sort of way.

"What makes you think the girl's been

kidnaped?" he inquired, making no effort to stifle a yawn.

"Because I feel sure she wouldn't have left home so suddenly of her own accord," replied Max earnestly.

"Bah! Lots of girls leave home sudden of their own accord. This city is full of them. That ain't no proof."

"You'd think it was proof if you knew Hildy as I do," declared Max stoutly. "She left with a fellow in a red automobile, and I'm pretty sure that he kidnaped her."

"It's more likely that she eloped with him," snapped the detective impatiently. "The girl is of age, and able-bodied, ain't she?"

Max nodded his head in assent.

"Very well, then. If she hadn't wanted to go with him, I'll bet he'd have had a hard time making her go. The trouble with all you people is that you make too much fuss about trifles. As soon as a girl or a young fellow decides to cut the home traces and beats it without saying good-by, folks come here and bother us with wild yarns about kidnaping. There ain't one such case in fifty turns out to be a genuine kidnaping case."

"Well, I really think this is a genuine case," said Max, keeping his temper, despite the policeman's contemptuous manner. "If you'll assist me to find Hildy, sir, I'll appreciate it very much. I'm a stranger in the city and I don't quite know how to start to look for her."

"Humph!" grunted the detective. "And what is the girl to you—your sister?"

The young man's face suddenly flushed crimson.

"No," he faltered. "We were engaged to be married."

The policeman burst into a loud, coarse laugh.

"Ha! I begin to understand," he said. "This other fellow has won your sweetheart away from you, and you're sore and want to have him arrested for a kidnaper, eh? I thought there was a nigger somewhere in the woodpile."

"That isn't true," cried Max angrily. "I didn't come here to be insulted. If you don't want to give me any help, say so, and I'll go away."

The detective-sergeant patted him soothingly on the shoulder.

"Now, don't get excited, young feller. Just take it easy. Of course, if the girl's really been kidnaped, we'll be glad to help you; but if she's seen fit to run off with a feller she liked better than you, we won't be able to do anything for you. This ain't any department of balm to wounded hearts we're running, you know. Tell me, now, have you heard anything from the girl since she went away?"

"Yes," replied Max somewhat sullenly. "Her folks received a telegram from her. I can show it to you."

Mr. Macomber had allowed Max to have the telegram, thinking that it might be of use to him in his search for Hildy.

The young man now produced it from his vest-pocket and handed it to the detective.

The latter having read it, regarded Max with a glare of indignation.

"So the girl sent her folks this telegram, eh? Why on earth didn't you say so at the start? You've got a nerve, young feller, coming here bothering me with a hot-air yarn about kidnaping when you knew all the time that there wasn't anything to it. Don't this telegram say as plain as can be that she's gone off and got married? What the devil do you expect us to do in the matter?"

"She may have been forced to send that telegram, or she may not have sent it at all," said Max, struck with a sudden idea. "The man who kidnaped her may have sent the message and signed her name to it just to fool us."

"Humph! Of course that's a possibility, but it ain't likely. However, to set your mind at rest, I'll call up the main office of the Western Union and find out what branch office this was sent from. We'll interview the despatcher who sent it over the wire, and see if he can remember who handed in the message. It really ain't worth while going to all the bother, but I'll do it just to accommodate you."

The detective went to a telephone and in a few minutes reappeared.

"I've learned that this message was sent from the branch office at Broadway and Fortieth Street," he said. "Come on. We'll go up there and see what we can learn."

They rode up-town on a Broadway car and got off at Fortieth Street, where they entered an office marked "Western Un-

ion." The despatcher in charge knew the detective-sergeant, and was willing to give all the information he could.

"Sure, I remember sending that message," he said. "What's the trouble with it, sarge?"

"Nothing. We want to know who handed it in?"

"A man and a woman. They came in here about seven in the morning. The woman wrote the message at this desk, and handed it to me. She told me to be sure to send it right away, as she was very anxious that it should reach the other end as soon as possible."

"You see," said the detective-sergeant, turning triumphantly to Max, "it's just as I told you. The girl ain't been kidnaped. She's thrown you down and gone off and married this other fellow. Cheer up, my lad, and take your medicine like a man."

CHAPTER IX.

ON A STREET-CAR.

FOR the first time since her disappearance Max lost faith in Hildegard Cran-dall.

Here, apparently, in the testimony of this telegraph operator was proof positive that Hildy had voluntarily accompanied the man in the red automobile.

It did not seem possible, even to the prejudiced mind of Max, that a girl could be forced against her will to write out a telegram in the presence of a disinterested telegraph-clerk and hand it to the latter with a request that it be sent without delay, when she easily could have appealed to him for help, had she been there under compulsion.

Sick at heart, he left the telegraph-office anxious to get as far away as possible from the jeering voice of the detective-sergeant.

The latter winked to the telegraph operator as Max staggered out of the place.

"There goes another young fool," he remarked. "There's a whole lot of them in this town. It's wonderful what a chump an otherwise sensible young man will make of himself over a woman."

"This guy is from the country," he

added. "He's stuck on that girl, and I couldn't make him believe that she's handed him a lemon until I brought him here. He was positive that the girl had been kidnaped, and that she didn't send that telegram. Now he's convinced of the truth. Seems to take it pretty hard, poor chap, doesn't he?"

"Yes," said the clerk with a sympathetic sigh (for he, too, chanced to be in love). "He looked desperate as he went out just now. I wonder if he'll commit suicide?"

"Not him. He ain't that kind. Judging by the look on his face, I should be more inclined to say that he'll commit murder—if he ever comes across that other fellow. And he may get beastly drunk before the day is over. I've seen men disappointed in love seek to drown their sorrows that way."

But Max did not adopt any such course. He walked moodily along Broadway for a few blocks, and his thoughts were very bitter.

It was a clear day, and the sun was shining brightly; but there was no sun for the wretched young man. For him the heavens were draped with funereal drapery, and all the world seemed dark.

But after he had walked several blocks, unaware of where he was going and caring still less, his faith in Hildegard began to return with a rush.

The farther he got away from that Western Union Telegraph-office and the cynical detective-sergeant, the more unreal they appeared to become and the more preposterous it seemed to doubt the fidelity of Hildegard.

He pulled himself together, like a man who has suddenly awakened from a bad dream.

"Gee whillikens!" he muttered, suddenly horror-stricken. "What am I doing? Losing faith in that little girl? What a fool and what a beast I am to doubt her, even for a single second! I don't care what proofs they bring, I won't believe that she is false."

"After all, how do I know that that telegraph-office clerk was not lying? He must take in hundreds of messages in the course of the day, and it isn't possible that he should remember who sends them all. He's probably forgotten who really did write this telegram, and when the

detective asked him he gave the first answer that occurred to his mind."

Having arrived at this happy solution of the problem, Max gave a sigh of relief and began to pay some attention to his surroundings.

In his period of abstraction he had unwittingly left Broadway, and now found himself on a side street flanked on either side by a row of brownstone private houses.

In the window of one of these houses he observed a sign reading "Table-Board and Furnished Rooms," and it suddenly occurred to him that if he intended to stay in the city it was advisable that he secure board and lodging.

This place appeared to him to be as good as any other, so he rang the bell and interviewed the landlady, with the result that ten minutes later he found himself in possession of a neat room on the third floor and the privilege of obtaining meals in the dining-room downstairs.

The terms were ten dollars per week, and, not having any trunks with him, he was asked to pay a week's board in advance.

Max had come to New York with a deep-laid suspicion of city folks and a determination to be on his guard in his financial dealings with them; and he at first demurred against this proposition.

But, the landlady being firm, he at length yielded and paid her a crisp ten-dollar bill, which he took from the brown leather wallet he carried in his inside coat-pocket.

Afterward he had good reason to congratulate himself that the landlady had seen fit to take this means of protecting herself against financial loss.

Having completed this transaction, Max went up to his room and began to map out his future plans.

Of course, he told himself, he must seek work of some kind, inasmuch as he had left his father's roof for good and all. Just what kind of work he was prepared to undertake he had no definite idea; but he felt confident that there must be plenty of employment in a great city for a young man of his strength, regularity of habits, and willingness to put his shoulder to the wheel.

"The trouble is," he mused, "if I get

a job right away, I sha'n't have any time to look for Hildy; and I must find her before I think of anything else. I reckon the money I have will keep me for a few weeks, and, while I hate to be spending it, I guess it's better, under the circumstances, not to tie myself up with a job just now."

But it was one thing to talk about finding Hildy and quite another to set about the accomplishment of this task.

He was quite at a loss as to how to continue the search for the missing girl. In this strange city he was forced to acknowledge he was as helpless as a baby.

The police having refused to give him any assistance, to whom should he next appeal for aid?

He could not go from street to street shouting the name of Hildy at the top of his voice, in the hope that she might hear and answer him.

Neither was it practicable for him to inquire of everybody he met whether any had chanced to see a pretty girl with brown hair and eyes and rosy cheeks who answered to the name of Hildegard Crandall.

In the country, when a cow or a horse strayed away in search of pastures new, such a course was perfectly logical; but he realized that if he attempted any such thing in New York he would soon be declared insane and locked up for safe-keeping.

He had at first thought it would be easy to trace the red automobile by its color; but, to his dismay, he had found upon his arrival in the city that red automobiles were quite plentiful in the New York streets.

Suddenly a brilliant idea occurred to him. Why not try the newspapers?

He had often heard of the wonderful enterprise of the great New York dailies. He had read of their finding missing people in cases where the police had absolutely failed. He had heard it said that the young men of the reporter-staffs of the big metropolitan newspapers were much smarter than the detectives of the police force.

"By jinks! It's a great idea!" he exclaimed delightedly. "I'll go see those editor fellows at once. Of course, they'll be glad to help me, for if they

find Hildy it will be a great feather in their caps.

"At all events, they'll be glad to publish an account of Hildy's disappearance as an item of news, and if she is in a position to see the newspapers she may manage to communicate with me when she reads that I am in the city searching for her."

Enthusiastic over this plan, Max went down-stairs and inquired of the landlady how the newspaper offices could be reached.

She gave him explicit directions how to get to Newspaper Row, and a few minutes later he was on a south-bound Broadway car.

The car was filled with passengers to the point of overflowing, and Max had to stand on the rear platform, where he found himself the center of a crowd of men who, like himself, could find no room inside.

Max had often heard of the disgraceful overcrowding of New York street-cars during the rush hours; but this actual experience amazed him.

It was the second time he had been on a south-bound Broadway car that day; but the first car had chanced to be almost empty, so this was his first opportunity to study the extraordinary conditions of metropolitan transit.

So closely herded together were the passengers that, to the young man from the country, it seemed scarcely possible that they could breathe.

And, despite these congested conditions, the conductor grimly elbowed his way, by sheer force, through the almost solid mass of perspiring humanity, grimly demanding fares and urging the people to "Step up closer, please."

"That fellow must be quite a humorist," reflected Max, with a grin, as he heard the conductor's command. "It's crowded enough out here on the platform, but I'm mightily glad that I'm not inside in that crush."

Suddenly it occurred to him that in a crowd such as this, there might be pick-pockets at work.

He remembered that his father had once had his pocket picked while on a New York street-car.

Now that he gave it a thought, the actions of a well-dressed man standing

close beside him were decidedly suspicious.

Every time the car stopped or started this man would, accidentally or purposely, lose his balance, and, to steady himself, he would clutch hold of Max.

He was a tall, clean-shaven, good-looking man, and certainly did not have the appearance of a thief.

Hurriedly Max put his hand to the inside pocket of his coat to assure himself that his precious wallet was safe. And then he uttered a sharp cry of dismay. The wallet was not there.

"Stop the car!" he shouted excitedly. "Stop the car! I've been robbed!"

There was a stir on the rear platform, occasioned by the well-dressed man at Max's side suddenly struggling to get off.

The conductor heard the young man's cry and pulled the bell-rope. The motorman applied the brakes; but the car dragged along for half a block before it came to a stop, and in the meantime the man had alighted and was mingling with the crowd on the sidewalk.

Max hastily jumped off in pursuit. He had temporarily lost sight of the fellow as he disappeared in the maze of pedestrians; but he again got a glimpse of him just as he was about to enter the doorway of a hotel. He darted after and grabbed him by the shoulder in a grip the captive could not shake off.

"Give me my wallet!" he gasped. "Give me my wallet and I'll let you go."

The man looked at him in well-feigned astonishment.

"I beg your pardon," he said haughtily. "I guess you have made a mistake. I don't know anything about your wallet. I have never seen you before."

"Oh, yes, you have!" cried Max indignantly. "You were on that car, and you stole my wallet from my coat-pocket. I felt you taking it. It con-

tains every dollar I have in the world. You'd better give it back to me."

The man breathed an ostentatious sigh of relief.

"Ha!" he exclaimed with a good-natured smile. "It is a case of mistaken identity, I perceive. At first, I took you for a crank, young man; but I see now that you have mistaken me for somebody else. Take a good look at me now, and doubtless you will realize your error. I don't think you have ever seen me before. I certainly was not on board that car. Kindly let go of me at once."

But Max did not let go. Instead, he tightened his hold.

He looked his captive over and felt sure that he had the right man.

"You can't fool me," he said fiercely. "If you don't give me my wallet I shall call the police."

"If you don't take your hands off me immediately, I will call the police!" cried the other angrily. "I am getting tired of this nonsense."

Attracted by their loud voices and Max's excited manner, a crowd had gathered.

A uniformed policeman shoved his way through the throng.

"What's the trouble here?" he demanded gruffly.

"Officer, arrest this man! He has just robbed me!" cried Max eagerly to that official.

"If you're going to arrest anybody, officer," said the other man coolly, "arrest this young fool. I'll make a charge of assault against him. I've tried to explain to him that he's made a mistake. I am a gentleman and can easily prove my respectability. My name is Pennington—Alfred Pennington. I am a reputable counselor-at-law, and my office is in the Victor Building. Here is my card. This young fellow is crazy."

(To be continued.)

THE BALLOT.

A WEAPON that comes down as still
As snowflakes fall upon the sod;
But executes a freeman's will,
As lightning does the will of God.

John Pierpont

Into the Jaws of Destruction.

By HOWARD R. GARIS.

The thrilling experience of a station-agent in warning the Kit-Kat Flier of peril in its path.

JIM MORTON, agent, telegraph-operator, and everything else at the Shawn River Water Tank station of the Kittany-Catawaba Railroad, familiarly known as the Kit-Kat Line, returned from his third inspection that day of the turbulent stream.

"If she keeps on rising," he muttered to himself, "there's going to be trouble, and it's going to come mighty sudden."

He went back to the lonely shack, where for the last six months he had been pounding the key and doing what little train-despatching was required, as well as attending to the water-tank, which was filled by a long flume that took the fluid from the river high up in the hills.

Few trains, save freights and an occasional accommodation-passenger, stopped at the tank station, except to replenish the tender of the thirsty engine.

Once in a while a ranchman would alight, for the station was the nearest railroad communication to the town of Horse Head, twenty miles across the plains, but in the whole time he had been on duty Jim had seen only three persons save railroad men.

It was choice, not necessity, that had sent him to the lonely spot. He was a young chap, with a hankering for railroading, but it was a slack season, and the roads were laying off men instead of taking them on. But Jim's predecessor had thrown up his job in a hurry, impelled by the terrible lonesomeness, and Jim had applied to the division superintendent at that psychological moment.

"All you've got to do," he was told, "is to report the trains, repeat the orders you get over the wire, and see that the tank is kept full. The last is easy. All you have to do is pull the lever that opens the flume gate, let the water in, and, when the tank fills, shut the gate. You'll find it rather an out-of-the-way place," the superintendent added.

"It's a start that I want," said Jim.

Never had a half year seemed to pass so slowly. At first the novelty of it kept his mind busy, but after a month, with the same monotony of repeating the few train orders he got, with the little telegraphing he had, and the weekly filling of the tank, he would have been glad to quit.

But Jim had grit, and he wanted to be a railroad man. So he stuck.

It had been raining for a week. Not in occasional showers, but in a steady downpour that soon began to tell on the Shawn River. Fed by half a dozen small brooks in the foot-hills, the stream had swollen as the muddy water coursed into it until it was a raging torrent.

Just beyond Jim's shack, where he lived, moved, and had what being there was, a big steel bridge spanned the river. It was newly built, of a special pattern, and rested on concrete piers.

Jim had come on the job just as the bridge was completed. He recalled, as he walked slowly back from his inspection of the river, the discussion among the engineers over the refusal of their chief to anchor the span to the piers in the manner always used.

"Radway's got some new idea of holding her down," Jim recalled one of the surveyors saying. "It may be all right now, but if that river ever rises—"

He shrugged his shoulders in a significant manner. Nevertheless, the talk against his system, which he could not help overhearing, did not change Radway's plans.

Jim went back to cook his single meal. As he entered the small office where the telegraph instruments were he heard his call—"M-U." He answered, and then listened to some orders about letting an extra freight through, to be held up at the next station, where the Kit-Kat Flier, the crack train of the road, was to pass it.

Jim repeated the message, entered the instructions on his pad and book, and got supper.

Before he went to bed that night Jim put on his oilskins and took another look at the river. In the dim gleam of his lantern the stream seemed to be rushing along at lightning speed, the smooth, oily water, with scarcely a ripple, showing what terrible force it possessed.

"I wonder if she's any higher," thought the agent.

He went to the edge of the river, where that afternoon he had set a small stake to mark the limit of the flood. He found the stick almost submerged.

"Must have gone up nearly a foot," mused Jim. "I wonder when it's going to stop."

A heavy dash of rain in his face seemed to answer that the storm was not yet ready to quit.

The agent walked a little way out on the bridge. The structure seemed as firm and solid as ever. The water swirled around the piers, but though its force was great the solid cement was calculated to stand five times the strain that the engineers computed would ever be brought to bear on it.

Jim stepped half way across the first span. The muddy water, in which floated parts of trees and much débris, was three feet below the ties.

There was a curious humming and vibration to the whole structure that told of the power tugging at the piers.

"If she goes down," mused Jim; and then, with a nameless fear in his heart, he hurried back to solid ground. "Well, if she carries away, I only hope I'm not on it," finished the agent.

Jim waited until the freight and the Flier had passed, and, as his duties ended then, he went to bed. It rained all that night, but in the morning it looked as if it might clear, for which happening Jim fervently hoped.

After breakfast he went down to the river. It was higher by six inches than when he had walked out on the bridge, and still rising, as he found when he placed a stake at nine o'clock and went to look at it at noon.

But the rain, for the time, had ceased, though big banks of black clouds did not promise clear weather. The river was being fed by the reservoirs of the hills.

Jim was just putting away his supper dishes that night, when the gloom, which

had fallen earlier than usual because of the darkness of the clouds, was shattered by a glaring flash.

Jim started, the burst of flame came so suddenly, and ran to the door of his shack. He had not reached it before a resounding crash made the little building tremble.

"A thunder-storm!" exclaimed the agent. "Well, if this ain't the limit. I thought we had enough rain to last a month."

The storm broke with sudden fury—high wind, a torrent of rain and lightning that cut the blackness like bursts of flame from thirteen-inch guns.

"Well, if this don't do the business for the Shawn River, nothing will," mused Jim, as he shut a window in the office to keep the rain out.

Suddenly, during a lull in the storm, there came a peculiar grinding sound.

"What's that?" asked Jim, speaking aloud in the terror of the moment.

He looked from a window that gave a view of the bridge. Just then there came a flash of lightning which seemed to illuminate the whole heavens. In the vivid flame Jim saw a sight which sent a cold chill down his back.

The big steel bridge was moving sideways on the piers. The terrific force of the swollen river had shifted the heavy structure. Jim dimly recalled what the engineers had said about the anchors. They were right, and Radway wrong.

The agent made a mad dash out into the storm. He raced down the track toward the river.

He needed no lantern to see what had happened, for the lightning, more vivid than ever, gave intermittent, search-light views of the work wrought by the stream. The bridge had shifted six feet out of line, and, but for the shoulder of masonry at the end of the concrete piers, might have slid all the way off.

The river was over the ties, and creeping slowly along the track, having overflowed the high banks on either side of the bridge.

Then, like a telegraph message clicking insistently on a giant sounder, there flashed to Jim the thought of the Flier.

"She's due in half an hour!" Jim fairly cried. "I must wire Dalton to hold her!"

Dalton was the next station east of the tank, twenty miles away. The agent looked at his watch.

"Great Heaven! She's almost due there!" he shouted. "I wonder if I can get the wire!"

He raced back to his office and fairly flung himself down on the key. He threw open the switch and feverishly rattled a succession of "D-A'S," the call for Dalton.

Over and over he clicked it out, until his fingers were numb and his wrist ached at the unaccustomed speed with which he was calling.

"Why don't they answer?" he cried aloud. "Two minutes gone. She's due in five, and it will take that to get the message and have 'em warn the engineer. My God! Why don't they answer?"

The clicking of the sounder was as loud as the thunder in his ears. Over and over he gave "D-A," waiting in a cold sweat of horror for the answering "I-I" that would mean the operator heard and was ready to take the despatch.

But no answer came. Three, four, five minutes passed, with Morton still pounding the key. Then, of a sudden, his instrument became silent, following a terrific clap of thunder.

He looked at the switchboard on the wall in front of him, and the next instant there flashed across from one plug to another a tiny spurt of blue flame.

"Burned out! The lightning's burned the wire out!" groaned the agent. "It's all up now!"

That had probably been the trouble at the Dalton end of the wire. The storm had affected the instruments, and had grounded the current. Now his own instrument was out of order.

There was no station, not so much as a flag shanty, between the tank and Dalton. There was no earthly way to warn the Flier by telegraph that the bridge had moved, and that to continue meant a plunge into the river.

The train was the swiftest on the road. It had always passed the tank at lightning speed. For Jim there was but one idea now; how to stop the Flier, stop her this side of the bridge, and save the scores of lives he knew were aboard.

"I'll have to flag her with a red light!" he thought. "But I've got to do

it a mile or more back, or she'll never stop in time, for it's down grade, and a level stretch for seven miles beyond here."

He lighted the lantern with the red globe. Then, buttoning his oilskin coat tightly about him, and pulling his cap well down on his head, he dashed out into the storm. Up the track he started on the dead run.

He had not gone twenty feet before the lantern was blown out. Then, for the first time, Jim noticed the terrific strength of the wind. It was almost a hurricane.

The thunder was still crashing overhead, the rumble and roar punctuated by the hissing lightning. The agent tried to rekindle the wick in the open. He might as well have expected to stop the oncoming Flier with his naked hands as to have the frail match-flame live in that gale.

In his tension of mind he struck a dozen of the fire-sticks, only to see each one blown out in an instant, before he realized the hopelessness of it.

"I'll have to go back inside the station," he told himself. "And it's losing time, when I need every second."

But there was no help for it. A red light he must show if he was to stop the train.

Back to the shack he raced, and, with hands that shook in the fever of fear, he lighted a match and set the wick aglow. Then out into the storm again he rushed.

This time he had not left the small platform in front of the shanty before there came a terrific gust that sent the lantern-flame down to a tiny blue point, and then out altogether.

"This will never do!" cried the agent. "I've got to think up something."

He stood still, trying to be calm in the midst of a turmoil of terror, and devise some plan.

"If I only had one of those wind-proof torches," he mused. "They ought to have left me some," he added fiercely.

"I'll have to protect the light in some way," he went on, as he turned back into the tiny office and set the danger signal going once more.

This time he placed it under his long oilskin coat, holding the lantern free of his legs. Buttoning the garment over it, he sallied out.

Through a crack in the coat he could

see that the wind, though eddying the flame on the wick, did not extinguish it.

"Now for some rapid foot-work!" exclaimed Jim as he pressed forward.

The wind was at his back, but, with gusts and eddies, it dashed the rain with stinging force into his eyes, so that he could hardly see five feet ahead. But he did not need to see. He had but to keep to the track, and hurry on to warn the train.

He wondered how much more time there was. Pulling out his watch he saw, by a lightning flash, that there was but fifteen minutes before the Flier was due at the bridge. Fifteen minutes, and he had to make at least a mile.

He ran on, panting, not so much from the exertion as from the terror that stirred him. It was awkward going, with the lantern under his coat hampering him. He slipped and stumbled on the ties.

Suddenly his foot struck a big piece of coal. He lost his balance, tried to recover himself, and then, with a crash, he came to the ground, stretching out both hands instinctively to save himself.

To do this he had to let go of the lantern, which he had been holding by putting his fingers through a space between two buttons on the flap of the coat.

As he fell Jim could hear the crash that told the red globe of the danger-signal had been smashed. The lantern rolled from under him, black out.

A groan escaped the agent. Everything seemed to be against him.

But Jim Morton was no quitter. He was going to save the Flier if mortal man could, and, scrambling to his feet, he dashed on in the darkness.

Suddenly there came a more brilliant flash than usual. In the glare of it Jim saw something that made his heart jump.

It was a hand-car, one of the type propelled by working a handle up and down. It stood to one side of the track, where it had been left by a construction gang.

"Why didn't I think of that before!" exclaimed the agent. "I wonder if I can get it on the track."

How he did it Jim never knew. His hands were bleeding from the struggles with the heavy car. His breath was coming in great gasps.

But at last the machine stood upon the rails that glistened in the rain as the

lightning shone on them. Jim half expected to hear them humming with the approach of the Flier. They would soon be, for it could not be more than five miles away now.

Jim climbed upon the platform. His hands reached for the lever that moved the car. He felt it going up and down; he felt the machine moving along slowly.

"I must speed her up!" he cried aloud. "I must make a mile at least, and then—"

Suddenly the thought came to him. How was he going to stop the train when he did get near enough?

His lantern was useless. To return to the shack for another globe, and signal the train in time, was impossible.

"My God! What a thing to be up against!" muttered Jim. "What am I going to do?"

He was but a quarter of a mile from his shack. Nothing he could do there, no signal he could give, would stop the train in season. It seemed as if the Flier was doomed to destruction, with all on board.

"I've got to do something! I've got to go ahead, anyhow. I've—I've got—I've got to let her wreck this hand-car!" cried Jim fiercely. "I've got to leave it on the track, and when the engine crashes into it the engineer may feel the shock and stop, though it's a chance he won't, for the car's but a feather compared to the Great Mogul that hauls the Flier. But I've got to do it. It's the only chance I have!"

Gritting his teeth, he began the pumping motion that sent him at increasing speed up the track toward the approaching train.

The storm was now worse than ever. The wind was fairly howling, and the rain was coming down in torrents. Even if he had his lantern, Jim reflected, it would be of no use, for it would not burn a second in that gale.

He was on the level stretch of track. He peered ahead, and, during a period when there was inky blackness following a brilliant flash, the agent saw a point of flame.

"That's her headlight!" he cried. "I've got to make better speed than this!"

But it was hard work on the up-grade.

The next instant came a burst of flame, as if the whole heavens had opened. It was accompanied by a roar, like unto that of a score of broadsides from battle-ships. At the same time a ball of pinkish fire struck the track just ahead of the hand-car.

Jim went down like an ox felled with the ax. It felt as if ten thousand needles were being thrust into his flesh.

"I'm struck!" thought the agent, as his senses left him.

He had not been—that is, directly, though, as afterward developed, the bolt had struck the track a short distance in front of him. The current traveled along the rail, up through the wheels of the hand-car, and, as the handle was wet from the rain, the agent got a terrible shock.

How long he lay unconscious Morton never knew. It could not have been more than a few seconds, for, when he opened his eyes, to find himself sprawled on the small platform of the car, he could see the headlight of the Flier. It was about two miles away now.

"I've got to—I've got to move ahead, and fall off, or—or—"

But, to his horror, Jim found that he was paralyzed. The current had temporarily made it impossible for him to move.

He tried to get to his feet, but even the slight motion he was capable of sent through every portion of his body that peculiar sensation which follows when one tries to move a foot or arm that has "gone to sleep."

With a mind particularly active at that moment, Jim was as helpless, as regarded his power to move, as a paralytic. He could only lie there and wait for death. Wait to be crushed down by the Flier, moving at top-speed.

There may be some things worse than dying, and as Morton was straining every muscle in a vain endeavor to roll off the car, he felt that he would rather be dead a thousand times than where he was.

The rain beat down on him. The lightning flashed all about him, and the thunder, like salvos of artillery, boomed all about him.

As a period of darkness succeeded a series of brilliant flashes, Jim heard the shrill screech of the Flier's whistle. He shuddered and closed his eyes.

Of a sudden he felt a slight jar to the machine on which he lay. There came a scraping sound, and then, to the agent's terror-stricken senses, the car, which had been stationary, began to move forward at a swift rate.

"Did the Flier strike me? Is it pushing me on?" thought the agent.

Then he knew this could not have happened, or he would not be alive and on the car. Besides, it was moving toward the Flier, not away from it. As he lay there he could see the headlight coming closer.

Swifter and swifter moved the hand-car. That some terrific, unseen force was pushing it along was evident, for the frail machine fairly flew over the rails. But what could it be?

Into the blackness ahead, lighted as it was by the glare of flashes, Jim could see nothing. He could move his head slightly, and, peering behind, nothing was visible there.

Yet the same unseen, terrific force was urging him onward, straight toward the oncoming Flier. He could hear the click-click as the car-wheels passed over the joints in the rails. Faster and faster came the sounds, until they were one continuous roar.

"My God! What can have happened?" thought the agent. "What is moving me?"

He felt a nameless horror, a terror of the unseen force that was propelling him straight toward death. He thought of a thousand things, but chief among them that now there was a chance to save the train. The terrible power that was urging him on would send the car crashing into the engine far enough away from the bridge to enable the engineer to stop in time. That was all Jim cared for.

On and on rushed the hand-car. The strength of a thousand men could not have sent it ahead at that speed.

"I *must* see what it is that is pulling or pushing me!" cried Jim.

He found he could move his head now. The numbness and paralysis caused by the electricity were leaving him. Cautiously, so as to avoid the swiftly up-and-down moving handles, Jim raised his head.

There was not a thing in sight ahead, save the ever-increasing glare of the

headlight. To the rear there was only the lightning-shattered blackness. Jim felt his hair rising on his scalp. It was like being in the grip of some terrible force, some gigantic unseen hand that was hurling him forward, up the grade.

The numbness had left his legs. He rose to his knees. In front of him, not a quarter of a mile away, loomed up the on-rushing Flier.

"I'm going to jump! It may kill me, but I've got to take the chance," thought Jim. "Let's see. I'm on the long embankment now, and it ought to be soft from the rain."

He stood up, and carefully avoiding the swaying handles, he moved to one side of the car, the side nearest the big embankment. Then he leaped out, holding his arms to his side, his feet stretched before him, every muscle in his tingling body braced for the shock.

He felt himself flying through space. By the glare of a brilliant flash he saw the embankment rushing to meet him. He gave one glance and saw the Flier speeding toward the hand-car, which was gliding over the slippery rails at terrific speed.

Then came a terrible shock as he hit the ground. Fortunately it was soft mud, made so by the heavy rain.

Jim slid along as though on the bamboo chute at Luna Park, and brought up suddenly against a gigantic boulder, his clothes half torn from him, and covered with mud from head to foot.

He gave one glance upward toward the railway line. As he did so there came a brilliant flash, and he dimly saw, hovering over the onrushing hand-car, a big black shape.

Then came a mighty crash, as the Flier hit the small machine. A splintering of wood, a grinding of iron and steel.

Above the roar of the elements sounded the shrill and sudden whistle of the Great Mogul. Then came the hissing and clap of the suddenly applied air-brakes, and Jim could see streaks of sparks as the shoes gripped the flanges of the wheels.

A moment later something soft and smothery settled down over Jim, who had started to crawl up the bank. Something which took away his breath from the choking fumes it belched out. Then the tank station agent lost his senses.

When he came to Jim found himself in a Pullman sleeper, surrounded by a crowd which included the uniformed conductor, the happy-faced porter, and an individual whom Jim recognized as the engineer of the Flier. Upon that individual he fixed his slowly opening eyes.

"Hold on—don't go any farther—Shawn River bridge has shifted—came to warn you—couldn't raise Dalton," he murmured.

"What's that?" cried engineer and conductor in a chorus.

Jim, slowly getting back his strength and senses, repeated his statement.

"Well, you didn't stop us any too soon," muttered the knight of the throttle. "We were going like Sam Hill, and I don't believe I could have checked her under a mile and a half. We were behind time, and trying to make it up."

"I hoped you'd stop when you hit the hand-car," said Jim, trying to get up.

"You bet I did," said the engineer. "I slapped her over to the emergency notch when I heard that smash before you could say 'Jack Robinson.'"

Jim gratefully accepted a flask which the porter held out to him.

"How long since the Kit-Kat has been furnishing balloons as motive power for hand-cars?" inquired the conductor.

"Balloon?" repeated Jim dazedly.

"That's it," spoke the ticket-puncher. "Just after we hit your machine a balloon, or what remained of it, floated down from the clouds, and the man in the car seemed real glad to get back to earth."

"I should say yes," chimed in a voice, and a man, whose clothing and general appearance showed he had recently put in a strenuous time, stepped forward. "I don't know where I would have brought up if it hadn't been for you and your hand-car."

"My hand-car?" queried Jim faintly.

"Sure," answered the balloonist. "Allow me to introduce myself. 'I am Elmer Fromhas. I make balloon ascensions for a living. If I ever make another just before a thunder-storm like this one I'll know it."

"You see," he went on, "I had engaged to make a trip for the Elkwood Fair Association. Elkwood is a place about fifty miles west of here, I judge. On account of the bad weather I've been

putting it off from day to day; but to-day, or yesterday, or a year ago—I've lost all sense of time—it looked like clearing, and I agreed to go up."

"Well?" asked Jim, dimly wondering what was coming next.

"Well, I went up all right," said the balloonist. "Then the storm came on, and I found I was being driven ahead by a terrific wind. When night came I wanted to descend, as I didn't know where I'd fetch up. But when I tried to let the gas out I found the valve had caught and I couldn't drop a foot.

"The sudden coolness caused by the thunder-storm condensed the vapor in the bag and let me down some, however, but too far above ground for me to jump. I dropped my anchor, which was fast to a thin, but strong, steel-wire rope, hoping I would catch on to something. I did, but not what I expected. The anchor caught in your hand-car, and, of course, as the wind was blowing in the right direction, I just pulled you along with me."

"I should say you did pull me!" exclaimed Jim. "I never rode so fast in my life. I couldn't see a thing back or front. I thought the car was bewitched."

"Don't blame you for not seeing the thin wire rope, which was the only thing you might have caught a glimpse of,"

said the balloonist. "I was a hundred feet above you. I saw you all right, when the lightning flashed, and I tried to cut the rope when I saw what you were running into, but I couldn't. Then came the crash, and it gave me such a yank that the valve sprang open and the balloon came down right on top of you."

"Oh," said Jim faintly. "So that's what it was. I thought maybe a bolt of lightning had hold of me and couldn't let go. But, all the same, I stopped the Flier."

It was a week later before the bridge was shifted back so that trains could pass. This time it was anchored in the good old-fashioned way.

When the first train, which happened to be the Flier, passed over it, Jim, as was the rule, wired to the chief despatcher the fact that the delayed crack combination of cars and the Great Mogul had gone by.

After acknowledging the message, the despatcher wired back:

Relief man being sent you. Report at terminal to-morrow to take job in general office. President's orders.

Thus Jim Morton, by the aid of the unseen force, won his promotion.

A MAN'S COUNTRY.*

By EDWARD P. CAMPBELL,

Author of "Through Circus Rings," "Floating the Free Lance," etc.

The terrific adventure of the tenderfoot on a visit that was meant to be purely one of pleasure and turned out dramatic to a degree.

CHAPTER IX.

SENTENCED TO DEATH.

THE charge was so supremely ridiculous that for a moment Dick thought some joke must be intended, but as he glanced about him into the little circle of frowning faces, he speedily saw that these men were in far from jesting humor.

"Abducting the colonel's daughter?"

he questioned quickly. "What do you mean? Why, you fools, I am hurrying now to get aid whereby to rescue her from that villain, Dunbar. He was the one who lured her away."

"Ho!" scoffed the sergeant. "That's a likely story, isn't it, when there's plenty of evidence to show that it was you and no one else that she left Paxatonia with last night. I ain't got no especial love for Captain Dunbar, but I know that

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he can't be guilty here, 'cause he's gone to Phoenix.

"Oh, what's the use of talking," he broke off sharply. "I was standing right beside the 'old man' when he phoned to town this morning to tell Miss Cecilia about the 'Paches, and they rung back with that cock-and-bull story with which you coaxed her off. I guess you didn't think the wires would be spliced so quick.

"Now," he concluded, "the best thing you can do is to tell where she is, and do it mighty quick, too."

A menacing growl from the assembled troopers backed up the sergeant's words, and plainly showed that they were in no mood to stand trifling.

Secure in his innocence, however, Dick did not quail.

"Have no fear about my telling where Miss Maynard is," he cried. "That is just what I am most anxious to do; for despite appearances, I still insist that Dunbar is the culprit. It is too long a story to tell now, how he impersonated me, and tricked her into coming off with him; but, if you would save her, and prove the truth of my story, ride to Sanchez's for all you are worth."

Perhaps his impassioned tone, and frank earnestness might have carried weight with them, had it not been for that unlucky allusion to the quartermaster's masquerade; for this induced an undeniable spirit of skepticism.

"What's that?" snorted the sergeant, casting his eye over Budget's slender, athletic figure. "Captain Dunbar played off for you? And to Miss Cecilia, who knows him as well as she does her own daddy? Oh, come off!" disgustedly. "Don't try to choke any such mess as that down our throats.

"I guess," he added ruminatively, cutting short the flood of explanation and appeal which Dick was trying to make, "there's only one thing to do with you, since you seem determined to stick to your lies; and that is to take you up to the fort, and hold you until the 'old man' gets back, and can question you for himself."

"But, how long will it be before he gets back?" Dick wanted to know.

"Oh, probably not before nightfall. He's gone off with a party scouting for

you in the other direction, and they've just started out."

"Not before nightfall? Oh, I say, that will never do. Good Heavens, men!" Budget broke out desperately, "Miss Maynard trusted me, and sent me to summon help for her; yet here I am delayed and hindered by the very people who claim to be her friends. Believe me or not as you choose, but at least take the chance that I might be telling the truth in this, and send some one to search the house at Sanchez's."

The very fervor of his entreaty seemed at last to strike an answering spark, and they began to question among themselves if it might not perhaps be wise to yield to his wishes, and at least make certain that his story was not true.

It was the sergeant who decided the question.

"Well, boys," he said at length, "we've got pretty good proof that it was this here scoundrel who stampeded the 'Paches last night, and who murdered Jack Farley and Corporal Hopkins. Leastways, we know that he took them off with him under false pretenses, telling them that such was Dunbar's orders when it wasn't nothing of the kind, and that they was both found with Winchester bullets in their skulls this morning, which was the kind of firearm he carried.

"Still, the law presumes every man to be innocent until he's proven guilty; and I suppose on the possibility that he might be telling the truth this time, we've got to give him the chance to make good. We'll go over to Sanchez's, as he says; but we'll take him along with us, and if he makes the least crooked move, the first man who sees it is authorized to bang away at him without asking for explanations."

Budget was so overjoyed at winning his desired concession, that he paid no heed to this rather rigorous proviso, nor, indeed, to the rather startling array of crimes with which he found himself charged.

"You must understand, though," he hurriedly informed the sergeant, "that it will be impossible for you to get across by the trail. It has been completely blocked up by a big landslide, and—"

"Ha!" was the sneering interruption

to this, "I thought you would begin to squirm as soon as you found that you were cornered. What do you expect us to do, then; go all the way around by Valley Forks?"

"Not at all," disclaimed Dick, with an angry flush. "If you had waited half a minute, I would have explained to you that I happen to know of a secret passage only a short distance down the stream, and to which I can guide you in a very few minutes."

The sergeant, however, it was evident, regarded this proposition with anything but a favorable eye. He hesitated and studied, seeming at times about to return an abrupt refusal, and then impelled by the fear that he might possibly be jeopardizing the rescue of Miss Maynard, reverting once more to its consideration.

"No," he said at last, slowly, "I ain't going to trust you in no strange place like that where you might easily give us the slip, or where, for aught that I know, you might have a gang of cutthroats like yourself a 'aitin' to massacre the whole bunch of us."

"But I'll tell you what I will do. If you'll direct us how to get to this hole in the ground that you tell about, I'll send a couple of my men to scout through it, and if they report that it's all right, and free from danger, I'll do as you say."

Since this was as much as he could gain, and further discussion would only increase the delay, Dick hastened to assent, and then waited on tenter-hooks while the men assigned to the investigation hurried off to perform their task.

During this absence, he learned that it was Sanchez who was responsible for all the charges brought against him. In order to clear his own skirts of any suspicion of complicity, the half-breed had appeared at the fort that morning and reported to the colonel that he had seen Budget fire off the signal which started the Indians from the reservation, also asserting that the stranger was not an Eastern tourist, as he claimed, but a notorious Mexican outlaw in disguise.

The Indians, all of whom had been rounded up, refused to affirm or deny the allegation, or indeed to answer any questions, being plunged into grief over the

death of an aged chief who had been slain in the outbreak; but strong color was given to the story, owing to the fact that some one, not an Indian, had been seen looting the burning storehouse just before the arrival of Farley and Hopkins on the scene.

This, although really Sanchez, was supposed to have been Dick, and it was pointed out that being mounted on El Diablo, the fastest horse in that whole country, he could easily have beaten the troopers to the fort, and then have treacherously slain them when they appeared.

In fact the young clubman, as he listened, was fairly dumfounded at the mass of circumstantial evidence which had piled itself up against him within the space of such a few short hours.

However, he comforted himself with the fact that very soon now he would be able, with Miss Maynard's testimony, to overthrow this mountain of false accusation, and demonstrate conclusively that it was Dunbar and not himself who had been the real evil spirit at work.

He therefore glanced up joyously as he saw the troopers returning from their quest, and began to prepare his mind for a speedy triumph; but his heart suddenly sank as they came near enough for him to see their faces.

There was no kindly reversal of sentiment in the glances they cast toward him, merely the utmost loathing and contempt.

"Sarge," said one of them wrathfully, as they rode up to their leader, "that varmint there is the most barefaced liar unhung. I don't know just what his game could have been; but he was sure trying to give you the hinky-dink in some way."

"How is that?" questioned the sergeant sharply. "Wasn't there no cave, as he said?"

"Oh, yes, the cave was there all right—a nice, easy hole to foller up after you once got inside; but as to its leading down to the water's edge, why, we hadn't gone more'n fifty feet before we came slap up against a solid wall of stone!"

Dick staggered back aghast. There was but one explanation he could offer.

"Perhaps, you didn't hit the right cave?" he interjected feebly.

The sergeant whirled about, his face a blaze of red wrath.

"That'll do for you," he snarled viciously. "We've listened to about all we care to from your quarter. Here, a couple of you fellows trice him up. We'll waste no more time in getting him over to the fort. I only hope the 'old man' will convene a drumhead court martial and give him his deserts in as short order."

So, once more a prisoner, and in a more pitiable plight than ever, Dick was soon marching back along the road down which he had hoped ere that to be leading a rescue party to Miss Maynard's deliverance.

His almost frantic protests and appeals had availed him nothing; for while he was being tied up, the ring she had given him the night before was found upon his person, and being recognized, was regarded as proof positive of his responsibility for her disappearance.

"Like as not, he's murdered her, too, same as he did Farley and Hopkins, and this ring is all we'll ever see of her again," suggested one of the scowling troopers, and the dark surmise met with ready acceptance among his fellows.

Yet, bitter as was his own predicament, Budget felt that he would willingly have endured it, if only he could have been of some service to Miss Maynard. That was the final drop of gall in his cup, that she should have relied upon him, and trusted to him in her hour of need, and that he should have failed.

He minded not the curses and abuse showered upon him by the soldiers as he trudged wearily between them under the burning sunshine. He was half-crazed by a picture which imagination persistently offered to him—that of this fair, young girl clasped in the arms of the brutal Dunbar.

Finally the little cavalcade, with him in their midst, reached the outskirts of the reservation whence could be heard the dolorous mourning of the returned Apaches, and came to a halt as a horseman rode toward them.

It was Sanchez, riding El Diablo.

The half-breed's eyes almost goggled from his head as he recognized the prisoner, for he of course supposed that Dick had met his end in the explosion at the top of the cliff; but his surprise was misinterpreted by the sergeant.

"Didn't think we'd ever bag him, did you, Sanchez?" he cried. "But we did all right, and what's more, we've got pretty good proof against him that he's murdered Miss Maynard in addition to all his other crimes. He lied like a blue streak to us, and tried to throw the blame on you and Captain Dunbar, and nearly everybody else he could think of; but it hasn't done him any good, and I'm thinking that it'll not be many days before he's swinging at the end of a piece of hemp."

Sanchez's eyes narrowed, as he cast a glance of evil omen in the direction of the captive; then he laughed significantly, and twirled his mustache.

"I'd like to make a bet with you, sergeant, that he never hangs."

"Not hang? A brute like him, caught almost red-handed? What do you mean?"

"Only that, before the sentence of a court martial can be carried into effect, it has to be approved at Washington, and, unless I am mistaken, representations will be made there which cannot fail to result in his reprieve. Thief and murderer though he is, this fellow, as I happen to know, is closely related to some of the most powerful men in the Mexican government, and they would move heaven and earth to save him from the fate he deserves."

The faces of the little group of cavalrymen dropped, and their glances grew rebellious as they saw a possibility of their being cheated of their anticipated vengeance.

"If I were you, I would take no chances," observed Sanchez reflectively. "I would give him just about as short shrift as he gave to Farley and Hopkins."

"But what can we do?" demanded the sergeant roughly. "We ain't got no right to try him?"

"No; but you have the right to shoot him, if he attempts to escape."

"Ah!" The sergeant drew a long breath of comprehension.

"Boys," he said, turning to his command, "'course I don't know; but I shouldn't be a mite surprised if this fellow was planning to make a get-away."

He swept the circle of faces with an interrogative glance; and each man, as

he met the question in his leader's eyes, nodded a grim assent.

Sanchez laughed softly to himself behind his hand. He was certain, now, that the fate of his enemy was sealed.

CHAPTER X.

"AS A RABBIT DIVES."

THE preparations were soon completed, and Budget, almost too dazed at the swift sequence of his misfortunes to attempt any protest or defense, was told that he might have three minutes to pray.

As he knelt, however, and tried to nerve himself to meet his doom, the sergeant interrupted by exclaiming gruffly: "Hold on! We'll have to postpone the proceedin's a bit. There's some one a-coming down the road. Besides, what are all these Indians doing, sneaking up on us in this way?"

No one seemed to pay much heed to the latter, but everybody turned to watch with curious eyes the approach of the horseman who came speeding down the road in a whirling haze of dust and sunlight.

He drew rein lightly as he came abreast of the little group. "Hello, sergeant," he hailed. "I heard a story as I came through town that Miss Maynard had been carried off by some strange man. Is there any sort of truth in it?"

The sergeant nodded.

"There he is," he said with a jerk of his head toward the prisoner, "as slippery a greaser as ever wriggled out of a pair of handcuffs. He's made three attempts to escape from us already. That's why we have him blindfolded."

"Greaser?" exclaimed the other. "That chap, for all his outlandish clothes, is surely never a greaser?"

Moved by curiosity, he got off his horse, and walking over, lifted the bandage from the prisoner's face.

The next moment he and the "Mexican outlaw" were locked in each other's arms, while two simultaneous shouts of "Smiler!" and "Dick!" fairly shivered the air.

The new arrival was Jim Caldwell returning home to the Circle J ranch.

While every one was absorbed in this unexpected meeting, and while the two

chums were trying excitedly to explain things to each other, there came a sudden shriek from behind which drew attention quickly in that direction.

Sanchez, seeing that his game was lost, had tried to slip silently away; but ere he could turn his horse about, one of the lurking Indians who had been stealthily drawing nearer and nearer, had leaped up like a panther behind him, and driven a knife deep into his back.

It was the half-breed's death cry which had rung out so shrilly; and now as the little company faced about, spellbound with horror at the spectacle, they saw his slayer spring down upon his lifeless body where it had tumbled into the dust, and circling the head with his dripping blade, bring away the scalp.

"Wah-wah-tush-ka is avenged!" he cried, waving his dripping trophy. "The old War Eagle who came to his death because of the lies told us by this fork-tongued half-breed, will have company to the spirit land!"

Then he stood quietly while a couple of the soldiers took him into custody, and others lifting the body of his victim to the side of the road, covered it over with a coat until arrangements could be made for its conveyance to a more suitable resting place.

Yet, thrilling as was this tragic interlude, it affected at least one of the spectators no more than might the death of a mad dog put out of the way by a shot from a policeman's pistol.

Budget had been so closely associated with horrors during the past twenty-four hours that one more or less seemed hardly to count. Then, too, he could scarcely have been expected to feel any deep regret for Sanchez; or, indeed, to regard the man's violent end as other than the just and due reward for his many crimes.

But above all, he was so throbbingly alive to the possibility of still rescuing Miss Maynard, now that Caldwell had arrived, that he had room for no other sentiment.

He wasted scarcely more than a glance at his fallen enemy; then turning to Caldwell resumed his eager importunities, beseeching the ranchman to lose no time, but ride at once to the relief of the imperiled girl.

"How are we going to do it, though,

Dick?" questioned the other perplexedly, for by this time he had managed to gather from his friend's excited discourse the chief points of the situation. "You say the trail is cut off by a landslide, while this secret passage which you heard Dunbar describe has, as I understand, been explored by the boys here, and found not to pan out. I hate to say so, but I'll swear it looks to me like a hopeless case."

"But Dunbar's passage must be open," insisted Budget obstinately. "It must simply be, as I said before, that these dunderheads examined the wrong cave."

"No; I have questioned them carefully, and they say there could have been no mistake. The aperture started just as you told them; but, at about fifty feet from the entrance, came to an end abruptly against a solid wall of stone."

For a moment Dick gave way before this seemingly irrefutable testimony, and dropped his head dejectedly into his hands.

Then he straightened up suddenly with the gleam from a new inspiration in his eye.

"Sergeant," he cried, turning sharply to the leader of the cavalry squad, "are you sufficiently satisfied concerning me to trust me with a horse and let me try to get across that cañon?"

"Satisfied? Jim Caldwell's word about a man is good enough for anybody in this part of Arizona. Not only that, but if there's any chance of helping Miss Maynard, every sucker here'll follow you to the gates of Hades. As for a horse, there's that little El Diablo of Sanchez's, and you know what he can do. But he ain't got wings, and without 'em, I don't see how you can ever make it. As Mr. Caldwell was just telling you, the thing's impossible."

Budget sprang toward the little black horse, and threw himself into the saddle.

"Impossible?" he jerked out impatiently. "I'll show you a way which man and horse can both travel, and it's right through that passage of which I have been telling you!"

"But how?" chorused the others, spurring after him. "How can you ever get past that wall of stone?"

"Why, as a rabbit dives into its bur-

row!" he shouted back. "'Under the rock, and to the right!' Oh, what a fool I have been! What a fool I have been!"

CHAPTER XI.

"LET HIM NOW SPEAK."

WHAT of Miss Maynard meanwhile, watching and waiting with straining heart for the arrival of the party which was to rescue her?

She had never met Budget until the previous evening at the ball, and then only for a few brief moments; yet, somehow, she felt an unquestioning reliance not only in his willingness but also in his ability to help her.

She therefore undertook the journey to the inn with her sinister companion, if not exactly buoyantly, still with a calmness and tranquillity which served completely to blind him as to the true state of her feelings.

With an assumed jauntiness of demeanor, she allowed him to lead her down into the cavern of which he had told her, and only once by any show of emotion did she give evidence of the anxious fear which in reality was clutching at her heart-strings.

This was when they came to that solid wall of stone which had deceived and turned back the searching troopers; and she saw how cunningly the entrance to the cave's further recesses had been masked.

True, from an inkling given her by Dunbar, she had sent back that cryptic message to her deliverer; but how could she know that he had understood; or, even understanding, might he not be easily baffled by the impenetrable aspect of the place?

As she came up to it, the spot seemed to her an absolute *cul-de-sac*; but her guide, with a chuckle of amusement at her wide-eyed astonishment, stooped down and thrusting his hand into a fissure of the rock, pushed back a whole section of the seemingly solid floor upon the right, disclosing the further orifice which led directly to the bed of the stream.

Possessed then with a sudden apprehension lest Budget might fail to solve so ingenious a combination, and be

thwarted in his effort, she shrank back from the opening with a low cry.

Happily, however, Dunbar ascribed her agitation merely to a womanish terror of the dark pit yawning ahead, and quickly recovering her self-control, she was able without attracting his notice to drop one of her gloves beside the fissure from which the mechanism was operated.

The remainder of the distance to the inn was covered rapidly and without incident. Cecilia being occupied most of the way in revolving schemes whereby she could delay matters until her champion could gather his forces and reach her side.

Realizing his weakened condition, she did not count on his arriving at the inn until about three-quarters of an hour after herself, reckoning that it would take about that long for him to reach the fort, and organize his party; and she consequently had to trust to the resources of her own finesse and strategy to stave off the ceremony during this interval.

One unhelped-for bit of luck awaited her, however, as she found. The Mexican servants at the tavern with a true *mañana* spirit had put off starting for the officiating priest, as ordered by Sanchez; and her task of deferring the proceedings was for the time being a practical sinecure.

Nevertheless, as the slow moments dragged by, and still there came no promise of deliverance, while she was constantly put to increasing shifts to restrain Dunbar's lover-like ardor, the lines of fret and worry began to show upon her face. Her eyes grew wan and haggard, as she stole from time to time an eager glance toward the river.

She had no doubts of Budget, her faith was unshaken that he would do all that lay in man's power; but why, oh, why did he not come?

A hundred possible contingencies arose to torture her.

Perhaps he had met with some injury; perhaps in his exhausted condition he had fallen swooning on the trail, and been unable to make the fort; but more than all, did the dread overcome her that the clever artifice in the tunnel had proved his undoing.

More and more certain of this did she become, as the sun rose higher in the

heavens, and hope slowly ebbed with each passing moment.

She still kept up her fiction of nonchalance with the captain, was capricious, mocking, seemingly indifferent, played her game to the limit; but all the time grim despair was whispering in her ear, "You have lost!"

And so at last the time came when she could no longer dissemble. The belated priest had arrived, and was impatiently waiting below; she had used the last arrow in her quiver of feminine tricks and wiles; Dunbar, waxing suspicious at last, refused to be put off on any further pretext.

"Come," he said, seizing her roughly by the arm, "this folly has lasted long enough. Will you go with me quietly, or shall I have to drag you?"

She saw that he was capable of doing what he said, and for a moment as he laid his hand upon her, she almost swooned in her sickening sense of terror and repulsion.

Then she remembered that she was a soldier's daughter, and she rallied the forces of her wavering courage.

Cold and pale as a marble statue, but showing no other traces of the storm within, she rose up and signified her readiness.

"Just a moment and I will come," she said, stepping over to a glass and removing her hat.

But as she did so, she quickly drew one of the long pins from the straw and concealed it in her dress. In default of anything better, it would serve as a weapon, and she was determined that before she would permit this man to kiss her, or even to lay a finger on her, she would drive it to his heart.

Then she quietly followed him down the stairs and took her stand before the waiting clergyman.

This renegade priest suspecting the reason for his having been called in, and accustomed to officiate in unions of the kind, wondered a little at the calmness of her bearing; but fearing that it might change at any moment to an hysterical storm, lost no time getting to business.

Whipping out his little prayer-book he began to gabble off the words of the stately ceremony at about the rate of five hundred to the minute.

In the absorption of the occasion neither he nor the others noticed a sudden clatter of hoofs in the courtyard, nor heard the quick opening of the outer door.

"Does any man know of any just cause or legal impediment why these two should not be lawfully joined together?" raced the priest, never stopping for breath. "If so, let him now speak, or forever after hold his peace."

"Yes, *I* do!" rang out a stern voice at the doorway, and Dick Budget with a brace of leveled revolvers in his hands, leaped into the room.

Dunbar reeled back with an oath, and started for a rear door; but as he reached it, it opened to disclose the uniformed figures of a couple of sturdy troopers, and his flight most abruptly ended then and there.

The rascally priest visibly staggered, and with eyes like saucers, nevertheless made some attempt to preserve the dignity of his cloth.

"By what right, young man, do you interrupt this solemn ceremony?" he demanded of Dick, who had stepped over to Cecilia's side, and was supporting her with one arm around her waist.

"By the best right in the world. I am going to marry the lady myself!"

He bent quickly to the fair head nestling against his shoulder.

"You scarcely know me, Cecilia," he murmured; "but I mean it, every word of it. Will you not overlook the short acquaintanceship and take me upon trust?"

She raised her eyes then with a shy sparkle of mirth in their clear depths.

"But you are mistaken," she said. "I have known you a long, long time."

"Where and how?"

"Well, I have never met Mr. Caldwell that he did not go into rhapsodies over you, and I have often and often seen your picture over at the Circle J ranch. That is how I was able to identify you at the Paxatonia ball. I once told Mr. Caldwell, too—of course it was only a jest," blushing and looking down—"that if you were half the man you looked to be in your photograph, I didn't see how any woman could resist you."

"And do I shape up to specifications?" he asked.

For answer she slipped her hand into his.

THE END.

THE MEN IN LINE.

By RALPH ENGLAND.

What happened to a parsimonious individual who reached
the cross-roads between duty and his own miserly instincts.

OLD Obadiah Collins was a very stingy man. To part with money was, to him, fully as painful an ordeal as sitting in a dentist's chair and having a stubborn molar extracted without gas.

Indeed, it is extremely probable that if he had been compelled to make his choice between parting with a ten-dollar bill and sacrificing one of his teeth, he would have decided to give up the tooth.

Although he was rich enough to have "lived like a lord" if he had been so disposed, he wore the cheapest clothing he could purchase and never spent more than ten cents for his luncheon, which

invariably consisted of a piece of pie and a glass of milk.

He wore a beard to save himself the expense of a daily shave, and he derived much delight from the fact that he was bald and therefore did not have to pay out his good money to a barber.

He wore celluloid collars and cuffs which could be washed with a damp rag, and thereby did away with the expense of laundry bills; but one day a stray spark from a visitor's cigarette set fire to Obadiah's highly inflammable collar and burnt his neck so severely that it cost him twenty dollars for a physician's services.

After this sad experience, he came to the conclusion that the wearing of imitation linen was a piece of false economy and abandoned the practise.

If Obadiah had been mean only to himself, nobody would have complained; but of course he was just as stingy, or even more so, in his relations with others, and therefore he was universally disliked.

His creditors had to dun him assiduously, and often had to threaten to bring suit before they could get their money.

His clerk—he only hired one and made him do the work of three men—was the most wretchedly underpaid clerk in all New York. But the person who suffered most by his parsimoniousness was his unfortunate wife.

For Obadiah was married. He had not always been of this stingy disposition, or it is doubtful whether any woman would have had him, even if he had been willing to burden himself with the expense of supporting a life partner.

In his youth there was no more dashing, generous, open-hearted fellow than this same Obadiah, and when he fell in love with pretty Kitty Murry and had proposed marriage to her, the latter had eagerly accepted him and had regarded the flashing two-carat solitaire ring as an evidence of the generous treatment she might expect from him for the rest of her life.

And, for a time after their marriage, her expectations were fully realized. Obadiah lavished all sorts of gifts upon his bride and they lived very happily.

But this was some thirty years ago. Obadiah changed greatly with the passing of time. Each year he grew wealthier, and each year he became more and more stingy.

At length he insisted upon giving up their comfortable brick dwelling in the city and moving to a cheap frame house in the suburbs which he had bought at a great bargain.

He cut down his wife's housekeeping allowance to such a ridiculously small amount that her friends sympathetically wondered how she managed to make both ends meet.

Some of these friends endeavored to stir her to rebellion against her hus-

band's unreasonable and unnecessary policy of parsimony.

"Insist upon your rights," they advised her. "You're a fool to let him treat you so disgracefully. If he won't give you a proper allowance, make him go without his meals and he'll soon come to terms. We'd like to see our husbands stint us in that fashion. We'd show 'em."

But Mrs. Collins was a woman of meek spirit and she did not follow this advice.

When her husband first began to grow close she had made a few gentle protests, but seeing that they did no good, she soon learned to adapt herself to his altered character, and now that he was sixty and she nearly fifty, she continued patiently to endure the privations he imposed upon her, although she well knew that he had enough money in the bank to enable both of them to live in luxury for the rest of their lives.

Obadiah's wife was not the only person who bore his stinginess with meekness. His gray-haired clerk, a little shriveled-up old man, with a very red nose and watery eyes, stood in so much awe of his employer that when the poor fellow, rendered desperate by sheer necessity, determined to ask for a raise of salary, he trembled fearfully as he approached Obadiah's desk.

"If you please, Mr. Collins," he stammered, by way of a beginning, nervously rubbing together the palms of his bony hands, "I would like to call your attention to the fact that I've been in your employ for nearly ten years."

"Ten years, eh?" old Obadiah interrupted him, before he could go any further. "Goodness me, is it as long as that? How time does fly, to be sure."

"Yes, sir," went on the clerk, rendered more hopeful by his employer's remark. "And during all that time, sir, you've been paying me eight dollars a week—"

"Eight dollars a week!" commented Obadiah. "That's four hundred and sixteen dollars a year, and four thousand one hundred and sixty dollars in ten years. Goodness gracious! What an awful lot of money! If it hadn't been for you, Perkins, I might have saved four thousand one hundred and sixty dollars in the past ten years, to say

nothing of the interest. What a reckless spendthrift I've been! And yet folks call me stingy!"

"But what I wanted to say, sir," went on the clerk, his heart sinking into his shoes, "was that during all the time I've been with you, you've never given me an increase of salary. These are hard times, Mr. Collins. Living expenses have gone up terribly during the last few years. Eight dollars a week won't go nearly as far to-day as it would ten years ago. I wanted to ask you, sir, if you wouldn't be kind enough to give me a little more money."

"Four thousand eight hundred and sixty dollars!" muttered old Collins, apparently talking to himself and ignoring the clerk's last remark. "What a fool I've been to spend all that good money. If I had managed to do without clerical help I might have saved that stupendous sum. Shocking extravagance on my part. Really shocking! Thank goodness, however, it isn't too late to reform."

"I'm much obliged to you, Perkins, for calling the matter to my attention. In future I must try to get along without your help. Eight dollars a week for ten years, eh? Perkins, you can leave next Saturday."

"Oh, no, sir," cried the wretched fellow, bursting into tears. "Please don't say that. Please let me stay. I'm too old to get another job. Don't turn me out to starve."

"Well, if I let you continue in my employ I must cut your salary a dollar a week, at least," declared Obadiah firmly. "I really can't afford to pay more than seven dollars. Even that is three thousand six hundred and forty dollars in ten years—an awful sum of money to pay out for clerical help."

And as the unfortunate clerk eagerly agreed to this dollar reduction, in lieu of the increase of salary he had sought, and walked out of his employer's private office with a heart as heavy as lead, the old skinflint chuckled in admiration of his own cunning.

Half an hour later Obadiah received a visit from a man named Jones who owned the suburban frame house next door to his.

"Mr. Collins," said this neighbor, "I've called to ask you to contribute

your share toward a fund we're collecting to have all the houses on our block painted yellow. All the rest of the neighbors have consented to the plan. Of course it will greatly improve the appearance of the block to have all the houses newly painted and uniform in color. Can I put you down on my list for your share of the expense?"

"Certainly not," declared Obadiah emphatically. "The outside of my house suits me just as it is."

"But if you will pardon me for saying so," protested Mr. Jones, "your house is the worst looking of all and badly needs a coat of paint. If you refuse to come in on this plan, your house will spoil the appearance of the entire block."

"Well, in that case," declared the other, with a crafty grin, "you fellows ought to get together and pay my share of the expense between you. Personally I don't intend to spend a cent to have my house painted; but if you fellows care to pay for it in order to preserve the uniform appearance of the block, I've no objection."

And as his neighbor retired from his office indignant and discomfited, Obadiah chuckled once more at his own slyness.

When he reached home that evening and sat down to supper, his wife said to him, timidly: "Obadiah, dear, I want to ask you a great favor."

"What is it?" he grunted apprehensively. "If it's money—"

"It *is* money," replied his wife, still more timidly. "But not very much, Obadiah—only ten dollars. I want to buy a new hat—"

"A new hat!" roared her husband, angrily pounding the dinner-table with his fist. "You're always buying new hats. I never saw such an extravagant woman. What have you done with the new hat I bought you only two years ago?"

"I'm still wearing it, dear," replied his wife meekly. "But, you see, the styles have greatly changed this year and—"

"Styles be hanged!" shouted Obadiah. "What does style matter to an old woman like you? I wear my hats till they've got holes in them, and you ought to do the same."

"But I'm not an old woman," protested Mrs. Collins. "I'm only fifty and I do care about styles. I want a new hat to go to the church sociable. If I wear the hat I've got now all the women will laugh at me."

"Let 'em laugh," snorted her husband. "Their laughter won't do you any harm. Their husbands will be paupers when I'm a multi-millionaire. Then you will be able to laugh at them."

"But all I require is ten dollars," the poor woman persisted. "I'll promise you to make the new hat last for a long time, dear, and you must admit that you haven't given me any money for clothes for a long time. Please grant me this favor, Obadiah."

"You talk of ten dollars as if it was a mere trifle," growled old Collins. "If you get a pencil and paper and figure what ten dollars deposited in a savings bank will amount to at four per cent at the end of five years, the result will surprise you."

"These are hard times and I haven't got any ten dollars to throw away. Perhaps, if you are very economical in your housekeeping, and business improves, I will buy you a new hat, next year; but certainly not before then."

His wife sighed and gave up the struggle in despair, realizing that further argument would be futile.

About nine o'clock that night Mrs. Collins's cousin, Martha, paid them a visit.

"Say, Obadiah," she remarked suddenly, "haven't you got an account with the Freedom National Bank of New York?"

"Er—yes. I have a few dollars deposited there—a very few dollars," replied the old man cautiously.

He was always afraid that his wife's relatives were going to make a "touch."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that it's only a few dollars," replied Cousin Martha. "For whatever you've got there, you stand a good chance of losing. My husband believes that the bank is going under. He says that the run has already started."

"Good Heavens! Is he sure of that?" gasped Obadiah, turning pale; for as a matter of fact he had a large part of his fortune invested in the Freedom Bank,

which he had always believed to be as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar.

"Oh, yes. He's quite sure," replied Cousin Martha calmly. "He told me that when he passed there this evening, he saw a crowd of men waiting in line for the bank to open in the morning. Poor fellows, they're willing to stand there in the cold all night in order to draw out their savings before the bank suspends. Just think of it!"

"Mrs. Collins," cried Obadiah, trembling in every limb, "bring me my hat and coat at once. I must go to town immediately. Hurry. There's no time to lose. Every minute counts. I must take my place in that line before it gets any longer."

"But surely, dear, you don't intend to stand outside that bank in the cold all night long?" his wife protested solicitously. "It looks as if it's going to rain and you'll catch your death of cold. Your health is more important to you and to me than all your money."

"Don't stand there arguing," screamed the old man in a frenzy of impatience and terror. "Hurry up and bring me my hat and coat, I tell you. Confound you, you're the slowest woman that ever was born."

Seeing that he was determined to go, his wife meekly hurried to carry out his bidding.

She helped him into his overcoat and begged him to be careful of himself, for her sake, as he rushed out of the door and ran all the way to the railway station, arriving there just in time to catch the express train to New York.

When Obadiah reached the Freedom National Bank he saw that Cousin Martha's husband had not been guilty of exaggeration.

Twenty anxious looking men were waiting in single-file outside the bank building, which, of course, was closed for the night.

"Good Heavens!" gasped Obadiah, as he gazed despairingly at the long line. "What chance do I stand with all these fellows ahead of me? The bank will probably suspend before all these men are paid off."

Fair play not being one of his virtues, the old man presumptuously endeavored to squeeze himself in near the head of the

line; but a storm of angry protests immediately arose and he was forcibly ejected.

"Get out of here, you bewhiskered old mutt," growled a broad-shouldered fellow, in front of whom Obadiah had endeavored to plant himself. "I've been waiting here for hours and if you think you're going to get ahead of me, you've got another guess coming. Take your place at the tail end of the line, where you belong."

"You've got an awful nerve, you have, you old lemon," declared another. "Must think we're a bunch of easy marks, I guess. Go 'way back and sit down."

A uniformed policeman passed just then, and Obadiah turned to him appealingly.

"Can't you put me in at the head of this line, officer?" he whispered. "I must get inside the bank as soon as it opens. My name is Collins and—"

"I don't care what your name is," snapped the patrolman. "You've got to take your place in line and wait your turn same as the rest of them. All these fellers are just as eager to get inside that bank as you are, and they were all here before you. Some of them have been waiting here for hours. You'd better hurry up and take your proper place, for there's new fellers arriving every minute and you'll be further back 'han ever if you don't step lively."

With a sigh, old Collins took his place at the end of the file of waiting men.

He realized that the policeman's advice was good, for newcomers were constantly arriving and he had not been there long before there were at least twenty men behind him.

The night was quite cold and the wretched old man soon began to shiver as the chill wind attacked his lean frame. Pretty soon it began to rain, as his wife had predicted, and he was drenched to the skin.

But Obadiah was glad when the rain-drops began to fall, for he was in hopes that some of the waiting throng ahead of him would grow faint-hearted and give up the long vigil in disgust, thereby increasing his chance of getting to the paying teller's window sooner.

Greatly to his disappointment, how-

ever, they proved to be a plucky and determined set of men. Despite the unpleasantness of the weather and the discomfort of standing up all night, without a chance to sleep, there was not one of them who weakened to the extent of deserting.

They turned up their coat collars, plunged their hands in their pockets, shivered and growled as the rain soaked through their clothes; but, alas, they all stayed.

Of course, it was by no means a cheerful group. Every man became more savage in demeanor as the night advanced.

Not a word was spoken. Each man glared at the man ahead of him and looked ready to commit murder at the slightest provocation.

Obadiah caught a heavy cold and felt the twinges of rheumatism in every joint.

It was only the harrowing thought that a good part of his fortune was in that bank and that he stood a big chance of losing it all unless he was on hand in the morning, which kept him from deserting his post and seeking shelter in some warm place.

He must get that money out, even if it cost him his life, he told himself repeatedly. So when morning dawned he was still standing in line, shivering piteously and at intervals emitting deep groans, as the rheumatic twinges assailed his limbs; but as resolute not to quit as the youngest man there.

He would not have minded the discomforts of the long wait so much, if he had felt confident that he would surely get his money when the bank opened in the morning.

But his heart was heavy with terrible doubts and fears on this point. He was Number 20 in line, and he realized that it might take all day to pay off the first dozen men.

Still he had cause to congratulate himself that he was no worse off, for by three in the morning there were sixty-three men in line, and as he glanced at the forty-three unfortunates behind him, he thought what a small chance of getting their money most of them stood.

Obadiah was very regular in his habits and was not accustomed to going without sleep, and at length the strain told on

him to such an extent that he fell into a kind of standing doze, from which he was suddenly awakened by hearing his name called.

He opened his eyes with a start to find a Western Union messenger boy standing beside him, a yellow envelope in his hand.

"Mr. Collins! Mr. Collins! Is there anybody here named Obadiah Collins?" shouted the boy.

"I'm Collins," declared the old man. "What is it you want, my lad?"

"Telegram for you, sir. Sign here, please," said the messenger, handing Obadiah the yellow missive.

The latter eagerly, and somewhat apprehensively, tore open the envelope and uttered a cry of surprise and horror as he read the contents.

The telegram was from his wife's cousin, Martha, who evidently was stopping at their house overnight. It read:

Your wife is dying. Taken ill suddenly. Please hurry home at once or you will be too late.

"Good Heavens!" gasped Obadiah, turning white to the lips. "This is awful news—really awful. My poor wife dying! If only I could go to her. But I don't see how I can leave here, unless—"

He turned anxiously to the man standing immediately behind him.

"My friend," he said pleadingly, "I've just received some bad news from home. Would you mind saving my place for me if I go away for a while?"

The man he addressed was a fellow of sour disposition.

"Nothing doing," he growled. "If you want to keep your place you've got to stay here same as the rest of us."

"But, man, I've just got word that my wife is dying," protested Obadiah.

"Well, if that's the case I should think you'd hurry home to her without worrying whether or not you'll lose your place here. You must be a fine sort of husband to even think of coming back here, under such circumstances."

But this reproof was lost upon the wretched Obadiah. The policeman on post happened to pass just then and the old man appealed to him.

"I've just got a telegram stating that my wife is dying," he said. "I must go to her at once. Can't you compel these men to save my place in line for me, officer, until I return?"

"No, I can't compel them to do it," the policeman replied. "It's entirely up to them. If they don't wish to extend you the courtesy they've got the right to refuse, of course."

"And you can bet your boots we're going to refuse," cried one of the group. "I believe the bewhiskered old codger is faking. Probably he arranged with a friend to send him that telegram so that he could sneak away and get some sleep while the rest of us wait out here in the cold and rain. Let him stay on the job or lose his place."

The policeman shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it ain't any of my affair," he remarked. "Seems to me though, if my wife was dying, I wouldn't stop here to argue whether or not I'd lose my place in line. I'd be so anxious to get to her bedside that I wouldn't have a thought for anything else."

But again this reproach was lost upon Obadiah. He sighed, regretfully, but did not budge from where he stood. Even though the telegram warned him that if he did not hurry home at once he would be too late, he could not tear himself away.

Painful as was the prospect of being absent from his wife's death-bed, the prospect of losing the greater part of his savings was still more dreadful to him.

It was a case of sentiment and duty *versus* cupidity, and cupidity won the struggle.

"After all," he argued to himself, "if the poor woman is really dying, my presence there can do her no real good, while my absence from here would probably do me a whole lot of harm. I will wait here until the bank opens in the morning and I get my turn at the paying teller's window. Then, after I have drawn out all my money, I will hurry to my poor wife's bedside."

"Perhaps I shall be lucky enough to arrive home before she passes away. If not, it will be too bad; but it cannot be helped. I shall not be to blame. These scoundrels here will be morally responsible for refusing to save me my place."

Having eased his conscience by this specious argument, he thrust the telegram into his pocket and stayed where he was, unheeding the contemptuous expression on the policeman's face and the sneering remarks of the men in line.

But pretty soon visions of his poor wife's face began to haunt him. In whatever direction he gazed he could see her big brown eyes looking at him with a world of pleading and reproach in their depths.

He could hear her soft voice calling for him—beseeching him to come to her before she died.

Again there arose within him a fierce struggle between sentiment and cupidity; but alas, once more cupidity prevailed.

"If she is dead when I get home," he told himself, "I will give her a fine funeral and buy her an expensive tombstone. She has been a good wife and she shall be buried regardless of cost—that is, of course, provided I manage to get my money out of this bank."

With this secretly registered vow he once more managed to still his troubled conscience—in fact, he persuaded himself that by carrying out these generous intentions he would be more than doing his duty and amply making amends for his failure to be at the bedside of his dying helpmate.

"She wouldn't wish me to go to her at the risk of losing all this money," he muttered. "She was always a woman of sense and she won't mind if I stay away under the circumstances. Besides, most people are unconscious for hours before death comes to them, and the chances are that even if I did go to her, she wouldn't be able to recognize me and I should lose all my money for nothing."

But after he had held his ground for an hour, he began to grow very uneasy again. Memories of days that were gone haunted him.

Almost against his will his thoughts went back to the days of their courtship—those days long, long ago, when she was a sweet, pretty, blushing girl and he was a fine, generous, impulsive young fellow with never a thought of the value of money, except as a means of making her happy.

He remembered how, when he had been stricken with a fever, she had

nursed him night and day, refusing to leave his bedside for a single minute until he was pronounced out of danger.

A hundred different instances of her love and devotion, dating from the day of their marriage to the present time, arose in his mind, and he suddenly realized what a treasure of a wife she had always been and what a great deal he owed to her.

The rain poured down and the wind wailed, and in the latter he fancied he could hear her gentle voice calling to him, beseeching him to come to her that she might die in his arms.

And this time love and duty prevailed. His better nature, aroused by these memories of the past, conquered his avariciousness and, with a groan, he suddenly stepped out of the line and hurried off to the railway depot.

An hour and a half later he arrived at his home and rushed into the house.

"Am I too late?" he gasped, as Cousin Martha came out into the hall to meet him. "Speak quick. Am I too late?"

He was a pitiable-looking object. The rain was dripping from the rim of his derby hat, his overcoat was soaking wet, his features were distorted with anxiety and the agony of his rheumatic pains. He had caught such a bad cold that he could not speak above a hoarse whisper.

"No," cried Cousin Martha. "Thank God, you are not too late. I have good news for you, Obadiah, glorious news. When I sent you that telegram your poor wife was feeling so bad that I thought for sure she was dying; but the doctor has been here since then, and he says she isn't seriously ill at all—that she only has a mild attack of indigestion. Aren't you glad to—"

She stopped short, frightened by the look of fury on the old man's countenance.

His face was purple, his eyes blazed fire, his fists were clenched and he moved forward as though about to strike her.

"Only a mild attack of indigestion!" he spluttered. "And you brought me back for that! Confound you, you blithering idiot of a woman—you brought me back for that!"

"But I surely thought that poor Kitty was going to die," the startled woman protested.

"To Hades with you and your thoughts!" groaned Obadiah, half crazy with rage and despair. "You've ruined me. Do you understand that, you addlepated female? You've ruined me. That bank will suspend to-day and I shall lose every cent of my account. You ought to be sent to prison for your atrocious meddling. You ought to be horse-whipped! You ought to be hanged."

Having delivered himself of this ungallant tirade he rushed out of the house, without even going in to see his wife, and hurried to the railway station, determined to get back to the Freedom Bank as soon as possible, groaning with despair as he realized that now he would be the sixty-third man in line instead of the twentieth.

To add to his troubles he arrived at the depot just in time to see the train to New York steaming out, and the station agent informed him that there would not be another for an hour.

And as if that was not bad enough, when the train finally did arrive and he had climbed hastily aboard, the train got stalled in a tunnel half way to the city and it was two hours before it moved.

It was nearly eight o'clock when the unfortunate Obadiah, almost foaming at the mouth with rage and despair, arrived outside the Freedom National Bank.

To his horror he saw that the waiting line of men had disappeared. The doors of the bank were closed and a uniformed policeman stood outside.

The latter was the same officer who had been there all night and he recognized Obadiah immediately.

"You're too late," he cried.

"Too late!" gasped Obadiah, suddenly becoming so faint and dizzy that he almost fell to the sidewalk. "Has the bank suspended?"

"No, of course the bank hasn't suspended," replied the policeman, looking at the old man in surprise. "But the job has been filled."

"The job—what job?" gasped Obadiah.

"The job you fellows were waiting all night in line to get, of course. The job of night-watchman of the bank. Wasn't you an applicant for the position?"

"Applicant for a position—of course I wasn't," replied Obadiah in amazement. "I've got a good business of my own. I don't need a job as night-watchman."

"Then, what the dickens were you waiting in line for?" demanded the surprised policeman.

"I thought there was a run on the bank. I thought those fellows were waiting to draw out their money when the bank opened. Do you mean to say—"

"I mean to say that those poor fellows were here because they saw an advertisement in the paper stating that the bank needed a night-watchman," said the policeman. "The advertisement stated that applicants should call personally at the bank at 9.30 this morning; but each of those fellows thought he'd steal a march on the rest by coming early and getting first chance to apply."

"That's why those men were in line all night, and if you were here for any other purpose you went to a whole lot of trouble and caught a cold for nothing."

Just then the doors of the bank were pushed open and a little shriveled old man came out.

"By the way," remarked the policeman, "there goes the lucky feller who got the job. He didn't arrive here until after you'd gone away and he was Number 65 in line; but none of the others was satisfactory, so the bank people gave the position to him."

And old Obadiah gave another gasp of astonishment.

For the successful applicant for the job of night-watchman of the Freedom Bank was Perkins, his seven-dollar-a-week clerk.

THE MIRACLE.

CLOSE-HUNG with silence was the darkened room;

Through starlit distances there came to earth

A thread from off God's never-ceasing loom;

To mortals known—the miracle of birth!

Edwin Carlile Litsey.

A CONFLICT WITH CÆSAR.*

By F. K. SCRIBNER,

Author of "The Eagle of Empire," "The Ravens of the Rhine," "The Eleventh Rider," etc.

A story of the Roman conquest of Gaul, in which one of the barbarians is pitted against another under a vow before witnesses.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FIGHT TO THE FINISH.

"WHO goes there?"

This was the peremptory challenge from the guard.

Then Decius leaped forward and struck downward with his knife. The man, wounded deeply in the breast, screamed horribly and fell backward upon the snow.

In another moment he was alone, for his assailant, seizing the dangling cloak, climbed upward, grasped the top of the wall, threw himself over, and dropped upon the other side.

Alaric of Trevera was waiting, and Decius led him swiftly across the open ground and into the border of the forest. Even then he did not pause, but continued to go forward rapidly until the trees swallowed them up completely.

Then Decius halted and, throwing himself upon the snow, rested for a time; and the young lord, looking down upon him in the semidarkness, endeavored to discover what manner of man was his companion. For, having witnessed what Decius had accomplished, he was filled with amazement.

And he began to question him, asking how it was possible he had entered the Roman camp.

Decius, arising, answered him briefly, adding:

"We must not remain here, for, although it is night, there is no safety near these Romans. I have hidden my own sword and another in a place a little way off; we will get them, and then push forward rapidly, for by daybreak we must be some miles from this place."

"And you came alone? Even from

our camp beyond the Loire?" demanded his companion wonderingly.

"Even from there, and we will return quickly, for Harling is grieving for you terribly," replied Decius.

For a time after that no words passed between them, and, having found the swords, which he had hidden under a log, Decius led the way through the forest.

They had proceeded in this manner for perhaps three miles, and because his guide went swiftly the breath was whining in the youth's body, when Decius stopped abruptly.

Harling's brother saw that they had come into more open ground and were ascending a little elevation. And by the light of the stars the youth could distinguish objects on the summit of the hill. These were great stones, set upright like huge columns arranged in rows.

Decius raised his hand and leaned forward, listening.

"There is something up there; horses," said he, in a low voice.

Alaric listened, and could distinguish faintly a noise which came from beyond the pillars of stone. This sound resembled a restless tramping, as though some large animal moved its feet uneasily.

"We will go up," said Decius shortly, and began to ascend the remainder of the elevation.

When they reached the outer edge of the row of columns, he crouched down and crept cautiously forward a little way. The stones were arranged in a great circle. Near the center of the space arose the shapeless outline of a huge stone altar. Close to this, on the white carpet of snow, other shapes, dark-colored and smaller, were lying.

Beyond, near the inner edge of the row

*Began December ARGOSY. Single copies, 10 cents.

of columns, a third dark mass was visible; and this the watchers knew to be a group of horses.

For several minutes Decius studied these things in silence, then, motioning his companion to follow, began to circle the columns on the outside; and at every third or fourth pillar he stopped and studied the objects within carefully.

After a time he completed half of the circle, and so came to the spot opposite his starting-point. And now he stood within a few feet of the little group of horses.

These were four in number and were tied to stakes driven in the ground, and across the back of each was thrown a fur covering.

Moving cautiously, Decius crept around the base of a column and approached the animals, who, becoming aware of his presence, moved uneasily, but made no other sound.

After a time he returned to Alaric and whispered:

"There are four in there, and they have evidently encamped for the night; moreover, one must be a prisoner, for upon the back of a horse are a number of ropes which have been used to bind some one."

"Then," answered the young noble, "the others must be Romans, for who else would bring a prisoner so near the camp of Cæsar?"

Decius nodded.

"I have thought of that, but yet it seems strange to me that, being so near, they should have tarried here. And you see even there is no fire."

He remained silent for several moments, thinking, then continued:

"I do not understand exactly, but we shall see presently. Give me the Roman helmet you are wearing. I have an idea."

Placing the helmet upon his head, he went once more to the horses.

Noiselessly pulling up one of the stakes, he struck the animal fastened to it a sharp blow on the flank. The horse straightway began to prance and bolted toward the center of the circle. Decius crouched behind one of the others and waited.

As the freed horse galloped across the snow a man who had been standing in the shadow of the stone altar ran for-

ward. Seizing the animal by the bridle, he turned it about and, muttering, led it back to its fellows, and with the hilt of his sword drove the stake firmly into the ground.

Then, even as the fellow was in the act of rising, Decius sprang quickly upon him—so suddenly that the man could not open his mouth to cry out before he felt his windpipe encircled by a grip of iron.

Holding his prisoner firmly, Decius dragged him backward across the snow and threw him upon the ground at the base of one of the columns. Drawing his sword with his free hand, he pressed the point against the fellow's breast.

"Do not cry out," said he sternly, "or I will pin you to the ground."

Then he relaxed his grip upon the other's throat.

The man, lying on his back and looking up, saw the gleam of the Roman helmet above him. Twice he opened his mouth, but only a faint gasp came from it; at the third attempt he spoke hoarsely:

"Do not slay me, for we are even upon the way to the camp of Cæsar."

And Decius, who had been studying the fellow and saw he was not a Roman but a Biturige, demanded sternly:

"As an envoy, bearing a message to Cæsar?"

"It is even so, but we bear more than a message," the other answered.

"And who sent you? How do I know you are not spies?"

It was evident the man was terrified, for he moistened his lips several times.

"Even a great noble among our people has sent us to Cæsar," he replied.

"And who is that noble?" asked Decius.

"It is Ataulf of Elmet, and he has given into our hands a prisoner we are to deliver over to Cæsar; therefore, remove the sword-point," the man answered hoarsely.

But Decius did not remove it, for a terrible suspicion flashed into his head.

He remembered how Ataulf of Elmet had ridden away from Trevera vowing vengeance against Harling, and he thought it might be even he who was to be delivered over to the Romans, the Lord of Elmet having taken him prisoner in some fashion. But of the real truth he as yet suspected nothing.

"And you have that prisoner with you?" he demanded sharply. "And in the morning you will deliver him over to Cæsar? What is his name? Answer quickly or I will press down the point."

Then the man began to whine, and replied, as well as he was able:

"It is not a man, but a woman; but she is of a noble family, and, holding her, Cæsar may treat advantageously with the chieftain Harling. For she is no other than that one's sister."

For a moment a mist swam before the eyes of Decius, and he caught his breath sharply. Then ungovernable rage surged up in his breast, and when he spoke, the words sounded like drops of water poured upon red-hot metal.

"You bring to Cæsar a woman—and the sister of the chieftain Harling?"

"Even such a one, from the Lord of Elmet," the man answered.

Then, for the second time, the mist swam before Decius's eyes, but this time it was red like blood, and terrible fury took possession of him. With all his strength he pressed the sword downward, and as he did so he covered the man's face so no cry could escape him.

After a few moments he arose and turned to the young Lord of Trevera, who was standing a little way off and had not heard everything.

"It is the Lady Alesia, whom they have brought here bound. Come, we have something to do!" said he hoarsely.

Then the young noble, pale as death, went and looked down upon the face of the dead man. And turning to Decius, he said quickly:

"It is Hadrien, son of Visbur, who served Ataulf of Elmet in everything; let us slay the others quickly, or perhaps take them prisoners and torture them afterward."

But Decius, who even when in anger retained something of coolness, replied:

"Softly, for we must move with caution. It might even be possible that, awakening suddenly and desperate, one of them would raise his hand against the Lady Alesia. That must be avoided above everything."

This he advised for two reasons. First, because he desired the sleeping men to know that they must forfeit their lives for what they had done; and, secondly,

he feared for the youth at his side and that impetuosity might lead him to rashness.

But Alaric had already drawn his sword, and held himself back with difficulty, for the thought that his sister had been treated in such manner, and even at that moment lay in the shadow of the stone altar, perhaps bound, filled his heart with bitterness.

And in a moment the rage within him burst out so fiercely he could restrain himself no longer, and, darting past Decius, he rushed into the circle and ran toward the center.

Then Decius knew further caution was useless, for, looking toward the altar, he saw that one of the men had already risen and that the second was about to follow his example. And each had time to draw his sword before the youth, Decius close behind him, reached them.

Now, it seemed as if the gods, weighing the merits of each side, befriended that which was most worthy. For it was impossible to choose an adversary, and if it had chanced that the young noble went against the Suevi he must have been quickly worsted. But he took the other, who was at heart a coward, and left the more skilled fighter to Decius.

The combat between the first two was decided quickly, for Ataulf's companion, stupid from sleep and not an excellent swordsman, sought only to defend himself. But Alaric of Trevera, reckless of exposing his own person, and desirous only of killing as quickly as possible, rushed in with terrible ferocity. And at the second blow he wounded his adversary so the man dropped the point of his sword; then with a downward sweep of his own weapon the youth cut him terribly in the neck and stretched him lifeless upon the snow.

Having accomplished so much, he ran to where his sister sat upon a bear-skin, and threw his arms about her, bidding her take courage because she was no longer a prisoner.

Meanwhile, Decius and the Suevi had exchanged a dozen blows without great harm to either, and for an instant stood apart as though to measure what strength and skill the other possessed. And the latter understood he was fighting for his life against an unknown enemy; but

Decius thought only of vengeance and that the man before him had insulted Harling's sister.

And, as was the custom of the period, each began to taunt the other, bidding him to prepare to meet destruction. But Decius also revealed who he was, and told the Suevi the reason he would kill him.

After each had consumed some moments in this manner, they fell to in earnest and the clash of their weapons filled the air.

Gradually Decius, being lighter upon his feet and more skilled in every way, drove the other back farther and farther, though he was unable to reach his body. And Alesia, watching the combat, could not tell with whom lay advantage, and began to fear greatly.

But her brother, hovering now on this side and now on that, his bloody sword in his hand, waited. For did Decius fall he would have sprung upon the other in that moment.

Whether the Suevi understood this, or because the presence of another enemy, moving restlessly around him, tried his courage, he began to give back more frequently. And, unmindful of what lay behind him, he presently drew near the great stone, with his back to it.

Then Decius began to fight more fiercely, and his blows fell with the weight of a mighty hammer. Before them the Suevi gave back a little farther, and his body touched the altar.

Decius saw instantly the unexpected advantage which fortune had given him, for the shock of coming in contact with an unyielding substance threw the other off his guard. Before the Suevi could recover himself a quick blow descended upon his sword-arm near the elbow.

Dropping his weapon, he uttered a sharp cry and leaned back yet farther. Then Decius, even while the man's back was bent across the top of the altar, struck with all his might, and his sword, cutting through bone and sinew, grated upon the stone beneath.

Panting terribly, the young man moved away, and his gaze rested upon the girl who, standing a few yards off, lifted her eyes to his.

"In Trevera, even at the request of the Lord Harling, and of Getorix, the priest, I would not go down to say you farewell

upon your journey," she said. "But now, even at such a moment, I welcome you—not as my deliverer from a fate worse than death, but as a noble of my own people and a warrior dear to Hesus."

Then Decius, who would have rushed upon leveled lance-points unflinchingly, looked down upon the snow and touched only lightly the hand she held out to him. And what he answered he did not know then, nor until long afterward, but he knew that Alaric laughed and whispered something to his sister.

For a little time longer they remained there, and then, because the girl herself urged it, and it seemed wise to Decius also, they took three of the horses and rode from that place northward toward the river Loire.

Thrice during the journey they rested, and Decius built a fire, and when they halted at the beginning of the second night he told them they must come to the camp of the Bituriges about noon on the day following.

Now, during this journey, Alaric of Trevera related to his sister all that he knew about Decius and what he had accomplished in the Roman camp and later at the stone altar. And because he was quick-witted and had watched Decius carefully, he spoke of another matter which he thought he had discovered. But to the last Alesia made no reply.

On the last night, therefore, when the two sat beside the fire and Decius was sleeping a little way off, near the horses, the youth began once more to sing his praises and to declare that in all Gaul there was no one who possessed so great strength and courage.

"But that this courage, when *you* speak to him, vanishes like snow in spring-time, you have seen clearly," he added. "I do not know what is in your mind, but his I can read plainly, and as you tell me he comes of noble blood it would not be harmful to think seriously upon what I am telling you. If this war spares him he will be among the first in Gaul."

Then the girl looked at him without answering, and even shook her head a little. And her brother, because he was young and filled with enthusiasm, continued:

"I know you are hard to please and

have sent many nobles about their business; but even if you do not care for this man, treat him with friendliness."

After a time, when he had fallen asleep also, and, as she had insisted, Harling's sister kept watch for an hour, she arose from beside the fire and crossed noiselessly over to where Decius lay sleeping. For a little time she looked down upon him; then, bending quickly, kissed him lightly upon the forehead.

And Decius, turning uneasily in his sleep, raised his arm and brushed his hand across his face.

CHAPTER XV.

A VITAL DECISION.

WHEN, the second day after his mistress had been taken from Trevera, the crippled forester, Badon, rode into the camp of the Bituriges and related what had taken place, Harling was for going at once to Elmet that he might take terrible vengeance upon its master. But when his rage had cooled somewhat, and it was pointed out to him that there was no certainty Ataulf was really at the bottom of the abduction, he restrained himself.

This was the more necessary because the coming of Vercingetorix, the Arvernian noble who had been chosen as supreme commander of all the Gauls, was hourly expected. Therefore it was imperative that the Lord of Trevera, as leader of the Bituriges, should be the first to receive him when he entered the camp.

But because it was not really known whether Alesia had been taken to Elmet, or whether it was a party of Romans who had seized her, Harling selected a hundred picked warriors, and, dividing these into two parties, placed a tried officer over them. One of these parties started at once for Elmet, while the other rode southward in the direction of the Roman camp.

And when they were gone no one even dared approach the Lord of Trevera, for his rage broke out so furiously that he walked back and forth with a drawn sword in his hand and gnawed his mustache continually. This state of things continued until it was announced that Vercingetorix was approaching.

Then the Arvernian noble, who, though a young man, had come forward as the savior of his country, having heard what had happened, advised Harling to possess himself in patience a little longer and to permit the searchers to look thoroughly before anything more was done in the matter. For there were many matters to be decided, and he considered the welfare of Gaul of more importance than the loss of a woman and a young noble.

Therefore Harling was forced to remain in the camp, and to wait with what patience he could command for the return of the searching parties. And this patience was rewarded unexpectedly.

On the fourth day, even while a council was being held among the chieftains, a great shout arose suddenly throughout the camp. Then Harling and some others, who had rushed out to learn the meaning of the tumult, saw a great body of warriors advancing.

And in the midst rode three horsemen—on the left Decius, on the right the young Lord of Trevera, and between them the maid, Alesia.

Then Harling, forgetting even the presence of Vercingetorix, who stood beside him, ran quickly forward, and rushing in among the soldiers, lifted his sister from the saddle. Others did likewise to the youth, Alaric, and for the second time the soldiers began to shout loudly and to wave their weapons.

Decius, looking down on all this, remained silent on the back of his horse; but Harling, leaving the girl, came forward and laid his hand upon his knee.

"As yet I have heard nothing, but you have returned, not with one only, but with two who are dear to me. As Hesus lives, it shall not be forgotten, and whatsoever you desire of me that will I give you. Come down, that I may honor you before all these present."

And when Decius dismounted he led him straightway before Vercingetorix and said earnestly:

"This, my Lord of Arvernian, is the young man of whom I have spoken, and it was he who delivered to us a Roman camp and all the soldiers in it. Now, having gone to Cæsar himself, he has taken from him the youth, my brother, and has returned him to serve Gaul further; and, as you see, he has brought the

girl also, though from whence I know not."

Then Alaric, who was standing near by, cried out so all could hear him:

"Her he rescued, even at the border of the Roman camp, to which the followers of Ataulf of Elmet were taking her."

For the third time a great shout went up, and with it were mingled words of fierce anger and cries that Ataulf might be killed in torture. But Vercingetorix raised his hand and quieted the tumult immediately.

"Tell me," said he to the young noble, "just what this man has accomplished. Is it, then, true that he entered the Roman camp and took you from the hand of Cæsar?"

"It is true, and more," answered Alaric, "for, entering that place alone, he struck off my chains and even those of three others, who were taken with me and awaited death. Such courage as he has displayed, counting his own life as nothing, has not been equaled throughout the whole of Gaul."

Then Vercingetorix turned to Decius and bade him come nearer.

"I have heard much concerning you, first from the Lord of Trevera, and now from this young man, his brother; and what I have heard pleases me beyond measure, for I admire courage above all things. And as it has come to pass that I am invested with supreme authority over the warriors of all the tribes, I am invested also with other powers.

"It is true that you are noble born, but until now you possess no nobility among the Bituriges with whom you have cast your lot, and such honor I now confer upon you. And because the name you bear is a Roman name I give you from this hour another, more befitting one who is numbered among Gaulish nobles.

"And you shall be called Wolf the Bold—because you came among us covered by a wolf-skin. And what I now do shall be confirmed by the assembly of holy priests gathered in Avaricum."

Then, as for the fourth time a shout went up from the assembled warriors, the Lord of Arvernia, who held the power of life and death among them, took from his neck the golden chain he wore and placed it upon the neck of Decius. And

such honor Harling even had not received, in the presence of a whole army.

Later in the day, when everything had quieted somewhat and Vercingetorix and the chieftains had heard everything from the lips of the mistress of Trevera and the young lord, Harling arose and they saw that fresh anger was surging up within him. And looking from one to the other he said in a fierce voice:

"Now shall I go to this Ataulf of Elmet, for there no longer remains an uncertainty, and I shall kill him as one would a slave who insults his master."

Even Vercingetorix did not this time oppose him, for he understood what terrible indignity the man had put upon the house of Trevera, as also upon Gaul itself. But the youth Alaric looked into his sister's face and seeing something written thereon, slipped out of the hut and went to find Decius.

Having found him he related what Harling proposed to do, and that he would start for Elmet early in the morning. And having told this, he added:

"Now I have heard you say you desired above all things to meet yourself this fellow and to finish what you began in the courtyard of Trevera. But what will remain for you if my brother goes first to Elmet?"

Then he returned to the hut where the others were still assembled.

A little while afterward Decius also appeared at the door and requested speech with the master of Trevera. And when he was bidden to enter he turned to Harling and said quietly:

"Already, lord, have I rested here for some hours, and now so great a desire is consuming me that it burns even as fire. Permit me, therefore, to take a horse and ride quickly to Elmet, for until I slay the man who dwells there I can neither eat nor sleep in peace."

Then Harling glanced around the circle and began to frown darkly, but answered with calmness:

"Had it been anything else I would not hesitate to grant it, but Ataulf is reserved for me; even now I am preparing to ride to Elmet."

"Such a one is not worthy of death at your hands, and then there is an account unsettled between us," replied Decius.

"That is so, for he once challenged you and the combat remained unfinished," spoke up Alaric boldly.

Harling glanced sharply at his brother.

"What are you saying?" he demanded. "Is it a time to think of unfinished combats when this man must die for another reason? When Ataulf of Elmet gasps out his life he must know death has come to him because he took our sister from Trevera. Old challenges and unfinished combats are nothing; even it might be said we permitted this noble to slay the man when above all things we should have avenged the wrong he has done us."

Then Decius raised his head and said earnestly:

"It is true I desire to meet this man because he struck me with a whip-lash at Trevera, but the wish to slay him is greater because of what he has lately done. That even would I tell him gladly."

Upon hearing such words Harling looked quickly into the eyes of his sister, but she met the look steadily and did not show displeasure. Then, turning to Decius, he answered:

"Because you are not very familiar with our customs you do not understand fully just what you are saying. A kinsman may avenge a woman of his house, or her husband may do so, but unless a man is one of these it is not proper; unless, indeed, the maid accepts him as her champion, and that can mean but one thing."

Decius, because he really had not known this, looked at the floor in confusion, but Alaric with the reckless impetuosity of youth leaned over and whispered a few words into the ear of Vercingetorix. A faint smile crossed the chieftain's face and he broke the silence which had followed Harling's words.

"It appears, my Lord of Trevera," he said, "that the decision in this matter is a simple one, it being in the mind of both to kill this Ataulf of Elmet for the same reason. Therefore, that being so, let the maid decide who shall go against the man."

For a moment Harling hesitated how to answer, for the Arvernian had brought the matter to such an issue that, if his

advice was followed, the mistress of Trevera must either openly lay aside friendliness toward the man who had saved her; or, by accepting him as her champion against Ataulf of Elmet, proclaim before witnesses that he was more to her than any of the many nobles who had come to Trevera.

And grateful beyond measure to Decius for the double service he had rendered him he desired to spare him pain and mortification, for he believed the maid cared for no one in that manner.

But Alaric, because he fancied he understood matters better, and had not really been asleep, but had watched his sister when she approached Decius in the forest, saw an opportunity to end all uncertainty and force the maid to reveal what was in her mind. So for the second time he raised his voice and said soberly:

"What could be better? And as my Lord Harling has promised to grant anything, yet desires greatly to kill Ataulf, ill feeling may arise unless the decision is left to another. Therefore, Alesia, you must choose."

Through these words the girl saw there was no means of avoiding it unless she arose quickly and left the hut. And because this would cause much comment, and one would construe the thing one way and another another, so that both she and Decius would suffer mortification without any good resulting from it, she came to a decision even while Harling was seeking for words to reply.

Looking only at Vercingetorix she answered steadily, though with heightened color:

"If I must choose, my Lord of Arvernian, who shall ride to Elmet upon this errand, let it be the noble whom you have lately honored."

Then Harling, because he was filled with amazement, stood speechless; and Decius, scarcely believing his senses because he had thought his desire was hopeless, imagined he was dreaming. But Alaric cried joyously:

"She has chosen! and I also will ride to Elmet, for it is a delight to see him in combat."

At first Harling was greatly troubled, remembering how the young man had come, a stranger, out of the forest. But when he recollected what the priest had

said concerning him, and that now, having been honored by Vercingetorix, he was henceforth a noble among the Biturige, he saw that a worse thing might have happened.

That night he spoke with Decius and it was arranged between them that as the way to Elmet lay past Trevera, and the camp was no place for a woman of gentle blood, the maid should ride northward in the morning. And the chieftain selected two score men who should go also, and these were to remain at Trevera until Decius returned from Elmet.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CASE OF VENGEANCE.

DECIOUS and the young Lord Alaric, accompanied by two of the Biturige warriors, rode out from Trevera early in the morning, for it was desirable to reach Elmet several hours before darkness. The youth talked joyously and addressed pleasantly many whom they met on the way, but the face of Decius was stern, and such words as he uttered had almost to be forced from him.

Toward the middle of the afternoon he turned to his companion and asked shortly:

"Tell me, are we not yet near this Elmet?"

"It is scarcely two miles further," answered Alaric.

Then, as Decius said nothing more, he cried impatiently:

"What ails you? Above all things you desired to go there, and now you are as one riding to a funeral. Is it possible you have left your courage at Trevera?"

Decius smiled faintly.

"Yet a little remains, and I was thinking of something. I fear I cannot do justice to the errand upon which I have come; perhaps it would have been better had Harling done so."

Alaric gazed at him in astonishment.

"And do you fear this Ataulf will kill you? If that is so, leave him to me," said he.

"It is not that, but what I fear is the anger which will consume me when I meet this man. One of us will surely die quickly, and to meet death by a

sword thrust, such as many experience in battle, should not be for the noble of Elmet. But it cannot be otherwise, if I slay him."

Then Alaric began to frown, even as Harling might have done, and answered harshly:

"Even slow fire would not be too bad for that one, but a noble cannot employ such methods in honorable combat. But when you have obtained an advantage it will not be necessary to kill him at once."

But Decius shook his head.

"It will have to be one of us, and quickly," said he shortly.

At the end of half an hour more they came in sight of the roofs of several dwellings, which Alaric said covered the main house and the several outbuildings of Elmet. Then his companion loosened his sword a little and rode grimly forward, even through the gate of the courtyard, which was open.

Thinking that guests had arrived, several attendants rushed out and stood ready to take the horses, and of one of these Decius inquired in a stern voice:

"Is your master within?"

The man looking at the horsemen carefully and noting that he who addressed him wore a gold chain about his neck, thought immediately that some great noble had come to the house; therefore he replied humbly:

"My Lord of Elmet is absent, lord, but will return by nightfall; in the meanwhile will you not enter?"

"As I desired nothing more than to meet your master, I will do so," Decius answered, and dismounted.

When he and Alaric went toward the door of the house and the two Biturige soldiers would have followed, one of the attendants touched the latter on the arm, saying:

"Not that way, but by another door, for there is a place for you by the servants' fire. There you may warm yourself and await the departure of your lord."

But Decius turned and said sharply:

"Rather I desire that they enter as I do; there are seats in the outer hall, they can remain *there*."

So the two soldiers followed him and the young lord into the house, and while they passed on into the main assembly

chamber the Bituriges remained in the hall close by, on wooden benches.

While some of the attendants hastened to put fresh logs on the fire, others hurried out and returned with heated wine, which they set before the nobles. But it remained untasted, at which the servants marveled, and began to talk among themselves. And one said to another:

"Surely they are of importance, but especially the big one, who sits motionless and gazes into the fire. It may even be that Vercingetorix, who has come to ask our lord to accompany him to some assembly."

Then, when shadows lay black in the room and servants brought lights and set them on the table, heavy footsteps sounded outside the door. In another moment it opened and Ataulf stepped across the threshold.

Coming in from the frost-laden air and gathering gloom the master of the house went quickly toward the fire, but when he was even half way across the room he perceived for the first time that the seats before the fireplace were already occupied. Therefore, he stood still and looked at those who were sitting there, for their faces were not plain in the uncertain light.

"I came directly from the stables by a side entrance, therefore no one has told me that guests were waiting," said he suddenly. Then, throwing open his great fur coat he added: "That you are nobles must be so beyond doubt, being seated in this place."

Then Decius arose quietly and turned his face toward the Lord of Elmet; and because he had changed somewhat, being no longer shaven, and because Ataulf had seen him only once and under different circumstances, he did not recognize who it was. While he was wondering, Decius spoke coldly:

"We are indeed nobles, Lord of Elmet, and though we are under your roof and have warmed ourselves at your fire, we have refused to accept further hospitality, nor will we do so."

Upon hearing so unusual a statement, for he thought certainly the strangers would ask shelter for the night, Elmet being some distance from any other house of consequence, Ataulf began to frown and answered:

"Then why are you here? Do you think this is an inn and I a common landlord that I can be insulted with impunity? It is plain you are not nobles, but ill-bred fellows who have posed as somebody before the servants."

Decius smiled grimly.

"Whatever we may be, we are not abductors and traitors to our country, nor is death hovering over us this minute," said he sternly.

Then Ataulf sprang back and his face flushed hotly, and seeing plainly for the first time the young Lord of Trevera, he recognized him.

"So you have come for *that*?" he cried harshly. "Have I not been troubled about such foolishness enough already? Because it pleases a maid to leave her kinsmen, must I be questioned concerning it? Begone, before I call upon the servants to throw you into the courtyard."

Before Decius could reply, Alaric sprang up and snatched out his sword.

"It will be your dead body which shall be thrown into the courtyard, and we will even drag it behind our horses through the streets of Avaricum, that all may see the disgrace of Elmet!" cried he fiercely.

Decius caught him by the arm and thrust him back almost roughly, and as Ataulf's sword was out he drew his own also. Looking the man straight in the face, he began to speak with sternness.

"Because of what you have done I have come here to kill you, Ataulf of Elmet, and all the lies in the world will profit you nothing, for everything is understood perfectly. Therefore stand back and guard yourself."

"And who are you that speaks so boastingly? Shall a Biturige noble meet in combat a common churl who forces his way into an honorable house? Rather will I have my servants drag you outside and there slay you, but if this offshoot of Trevera desires to enter into the matter I will meet him, for he has insulted me in my own house," replied Ataulf harshly.

Then Decius, who knew that in another moment he could not be able to restrain the youth from rushing upon the other struck the master of Elmet across the cheek with the flat of his sword.

"In return for the sting of the whip-lash I give you that, and in order you may gain some courage, this also," said he, and delivered a second blow, harder than the first.

Then Ataulf understood who confronted him and his face paled, for he remembered how easily this man had conquered him in the courtyard at Trevera, even when armed only with a short sword. Backing against the wall he glared fiercely into the stern faces of his unwelcome guests and answered hoarsely:

"Though I fought with you before, being carried away by passion, it shall not happen again, for I am a noble and you are nothing. But because I know it is in your minds to attack me both at once, I will guard against such treachery. But afterward I shall kill this cub of Trevera and throw his body into the highway."

Then he clapped his hands together and called loudly for assistance; and because some of the servants were waiting outside, half a dozen rushed into the room with drawn weapons.

But Decius, who had thought of this very thing and therefore left the Biturige warriors in the hall beyond the door, called to them to enter quickly, and they obeyed in an instant. Seeing four such likely fighters opposed to them, the servants hesitated and crowded together, all desire to enter too sternly into such a matter leaving from their minds.

Decius nodded toward the soldiers and commanded sharply:

"Drive out these fellows and do not permit them again to enter until I call you."

This the Bituriges did with great zeal, even so far as the courtyard, so Ataulf remained alone with his back against the wall.

Now, he was really not so great a coward, and understanding perfectly that some one must die in that room presently, he resolved first to learn just what the others knew, and then to fight boldly. For indeed he was greatly troubled because he had heard nothing from those who had gone to Cæsar with the girl; and sufficient time was elapsed for them to return to Elmet. He therefore said harshly:

"I understand what has brought you here, but you should know that some proof is required, even in matters of small moment. And I think if there was any proof that I know of that woman, Harling himself would have sought me out and not you. To enter the house of a noble and attempt to kill him is a thing with which the law will deal sternly, for unless you have proof that I am what you have declared, you will be treated as assassins and robbers."

"Do not let such things trouble you," replied Decius, "for proof of what you have done has been furnished, even to the whole army. Even at the border of the Roman camp those whom you sent were slain and Alesia of Trevera taken from them. And before all died, one who was your companion confessed everything."

"In that case," demanded Ataulf, "why has not Harling come here to fight with me, or why does not this youth do so, being the girl's brothers, while you are nothing to her?"

Even as the words passed his lips he sprang forward and delivered a fierce blow at Decius's head, for it was in his mind that if he could kill this man quickly he might conquer the other easily, and only Harling would be left to challenge him.

Now Decius, who understood every kind of fighting, and besides had watched the man's eyes carefully, for he suspected treachery, avoided the other's blow by the breadth of a finger. And as it had been when these two fought on trampled snow in the courtyard at Trevera, the Lord of Elmet, missing the stroke, overbalanced himself and staggered forward.

Only this time what followed was different.

Decius, in avoiding the blow, stumbled against one of the heavy seats which stood before the great fireplace, and that, sliding along the floor became entangled between the legs of its owner. Ataulf, feeling himself falling, and wishing to retain a footing at any cost, threw out his hands so the blade of his sword came in violent contact with the back of the chair.

Because of this the hilt was torn from his grasp, and the sword falling, remained for an instant upright, the heavy handle

resting upon the floor. But during that instant the Lord of Elmet lost his balance completely and pitched forward heavily, so his unprotected body met the sharp point of the blade and the steel passed quite through him, even so far as the hand-guard.

For a moment Decius and the young Lord of Trevera remained as though rooted to the floor, looking down upon the empaled body of their enemy. Ataulf lay upon his face, the broad blade of the sword appearing through his back and showing red in the light of the blazing logs. And even as they gazed upon this thing the man turned over upon his side so the crimson glare shone upon his face and the agony written there.

After a time the terrible silence was broken by hoarse panting and a choking voice, which came from the stricken master of the house.

"Pull out the blade, for I suffer terribly."

Then Decius bent down and lifted the man in his arms, saying shortly to his companion:

"Grasp the hilt and pull steadily, in that way death will come the sooner. This man has done great wrong, and I would have killed him gladly, but now I desire only to end his sufferings as quickly as possible."

But even so, it was not until nearly morning that Death entered and bade the suffering man follow him.

As soon as it was daylight those who had ridden from Trevera left the body in charge of servants and rode out of the courtyard. And when, after some hours they reached their destination, and those who came out to greet them began to ask questions, Decius replied shortly:

"The man is dead; that is sufficient for you to know."

But Alaric, when he was alone with his sister, told her everything, and how Decius had bidden him draw out the sword in order that Ataulf of Elmet might suffer less terribly.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW WOLF THE BOLD RODE NORTHWARD.

UPON returning to the camp of the Bituriges, Decius and his companions

found everything in tumult and confusion. Messengers from beyond the Loire, footmen who traveled swiftly through the forests and bore uncomplainingly untold hardships, brought word that already Cæsar was breaking camp and making preparations to march northward.

It would have seemed that the rigors of a fierce winter and the great depth of snow, must hold back the Roman legions; but this was not to be. And because no one understood better than Vercingetorix that to oppose openly at that time the invaders must result in further disaster to his country, he at once decided upon another method.

Messengers on horseback rode from the camp with orders to the Bituriges not to delay in burning villages and even whole towns, together with the stores of provisions which were in them. In this way it was hoped the Romans might be conquered by starvation, and must of necessity retreat southward.

Then, it was the purpose of Vercingetorix, being relieved of immediate danger, to congregate so many warriors from all the tribes that Cæsar and his legions would be ground in pieces. Having chosen this method of conducting the war, the young Arvernian bade farewell to Harling and the other Biturige chieftains and rode away; for there were many different tribes to be visited in other parts of Gaul.

Then, for several nights and days, a dense pall of smoke hung over the territory of the Bituriges. Decius, who with a body of picked horsemen, rode northward to Avaricum, saw everywhere smoldering ruins and vast crowds of old men, children, and women, who, deprived of shelter and terror-stricken at the approach of the Romans, fled through the forests and along the highways. For they knew safety lay only in the north, where towns were fewer and it would be impossible for Cæsar to penetrate immediately.

Thus, through the biting cold, and immense stretches of snow, whole families made their way uncomplainingly; and with such death walked hand in hand and many, especially old men and children, perished miserably.

Some isolated dwellings as belonged to

to single nobles, such as Elmet and even Trevera, it was not needful to burn, for the Romans could find little comfort in single houses; but above all it seemed necessary that the capital, Avaricum, should be sacrificed, for in it was stored much provision, sufficient to feed a whole army for several months. To urge this necessity upon its inhabitants was Decius, with several of the chieftains, sent thither.

On the third day they reached the city, and an assembly of the priests and older men of the place being called, the matter was laid before them. Then great discussion arose, and in the midst of it an old noble, whose feebleness prevented him from taking part in the war, arose and began to speak.

"That it has seemed necessary to destroy unprotected towns in order that this Cæsar may not seize them I understand, but when it is a question of Avaricum it seems to me a different matter. I do not think that even all the legions in Gaul can accomplish much against us here, for we are strongly fortified and with many warriors in the city can beat off such assaults as are made against us."

Many agreed with this, and several voices cried shrilly:

"Let them come! In an open place, even in the forests, these Romans have done something, but here it will be different."

After that the discussion continued furiously, until finally an aged priest arose and demanded attention. And it was Getorix.

"It is indeed an evil thing for a people such as we are to sacrifice everything, and in the midst of winter to burn the roofs above our heads, exposing women and children to death and suffering," said he, and pausing, looked around upon the assembly; then, raising his voice he continued earnestly:

"But because it *seems* evil it is not necessarily so, and in sacrificing our towns and cities we may save all Gaul. This Vercingetorix is a noble of great cunning and has hit upon a method whereby the Romans may be led into a trap of their own making. Coming hither and finding only ashes, where they thought to capture houses and provisions, the choice will be given them to

retreat quickly or to perish through hunger. And although, in truth, this place is strongly fortified, it may be taken, and the plans of Vercingetorix destroyed forever. But if we burn it, it will make Cæsar powerless to injure us further."

For several moments great tumult succeeded these words, and presently a voice cried:

"Is it a prophecy—that unless we burn the capital, destruction will come to all of us?"

"It is not a prophecy, but advice I offer you. And because some of you do not understand perfectly the terrible power of these Romans, and what they are able to accomplish, I have brought here a noble who has actual knowledge of these things, having witnessed them with his own eyes."

"Let him speak, for we are listening," cried a number.

Then Getorix motioned to Decius, and the young man stood up before the assembly. And because they had heard of him, and knew how he had been honored by Vercingetorix, all gazed upon him with curiosity and waited to hear what he might say.

So Decius, hesitating a little, began to speak earnestly. And he related such things as he knew concerning the methods of the Romans and how the indomitable spirit of Cæsar entered into his soldiers, so each man became in turn possessed of something of Cæsar's genius, and believed that under him all things were possible.

Also he related the manner in which Cæsar besieged cities and how, in a single night, great earthworks arose even against the walls, so it became possible for the Roman engines to throw missiles and great stones above the tops of the highest fortifications. And these engines, and other warlike devices, he made plain to them were possessed in numbers by the Romans, who understood perfectly their terrible power and knew exactly how to employ them to the best advantage.

When he had finished, Getorix again addressed the assembly and urged it to consider most carefully what it had just heard.

"For," said he, "if this Cæsar comes

to Avaricum and encamps about the walls, encompassing us with fortifications and employing his engines against us, who can know what will happen? But if we destroy everything he can do nothing, at least for many weeks; and in the meantime Vercingetorix will be preparing to march against him with an overwhelming army, gathered from all the tribes."

But even this argument did not meet with general approval, and though many respected the priest's wisdom, and believed what Decius had told them, it was decided to fortify the capital more strongly, and to prepare to withstand a siege.

The following morning Decius and the Biturige warriors left the city carrying the decision of the council; and with them went the priest Getorix, for he desired to consult with Harling about the defense of the capital. And because, though the coming of the Romans was certain, it would not happen for some days, the party stopped for a night at Trevera, and then continued southward rapidly, until they reached the new camp established by Harling between the city and the advancing invaders.

When the chieftain heard what had occurred at Avaricum he was not greatly surprised, for he understood the temper of the people residing there; he even thought that possibly the place might hold out for so long that Cæsar, for the time, would give up hope of conquering it. Nevertheless, he resolved upon two things. He would not trust all his army within the walls when, if the city fell, every one must be taken prisoner; but would send to assist in the defense two thousand men.

These would be under the command of the chief noble of the capital, who would have besides three thousand warriors summoned from the north, and as many more less experienced defenders, who were servants and serfs gathered throughout the country of the Bituriges. A greater force than this the city could not comfortably hold, and it was sufficient to defend the walls if the Romans elected to assault.

And the second thing which the Lord of Trevera decided was to provide for the safety of his sister. For her to re-

main at Trevera would mean certain capture by the enemy, who would overrun all that territory; and to take her to Avaricum might, in the end, bring about the same result. But if she went northward, where were several strongholds, there would be nothing to fear for her safety.

In the first decision he was supported by all the chieftains, for it was seen the Romans would be dreadfully annoyed by the presence of a large body of armed men who, living in the forests, could harass them continually in the rear, so their entire attention could not be given to the siege of the capital.

And because Harling understood that kind of warfare perfectly (to rush out suddenly like an enraged wolf, which strikes with its fangs and then retreats again into the fastness of the forest, only to repeat the same thing at unexpected intervals), he considered he could be of more use without than within the walls.

With regard to his second decision he sent for Decius and said to him:

"You, perhaps more than others, understand what will come to pass when these Romans approach Avaricum, and that no one will be safe from their ravages unless behind stout walls or in the midst of an army. And because it is doubtful what may happen to the city, and I cannot permit Alesia to live among rough soldiers, I have decided to send her to Gergovia, which is a fortified place in the north, and to which this Cæsar cannot go unless he takes Avaricum and conquers our soldiers everywhere. And even if he should do that, he will have to wait yet some months until the snow has disappeared from the forests."

"You have decided wisely, for above all things her safety is important," answered Decius.

"I know *you* would think that, and therefore I desire you to go at once to Trevera," replied Harling. "And because the way is somewhat long, and unruly spirits may be met with on the road, I will send with you a dozen stout horsemen. Then you will take from Trevera such things as are required, and loading them upon wagons, begin the journey to Gergovia. Having reached there, and placed the girl in safety, you will return, for every sword is needed here."

Thus, it came about that once more Decius rode northward and came again to Trevera. And at the end of another twelve hours he rode forth, still northward, and took with him Alesia and such things from the house as she desired for her comfort.

On the third day, having passed through great forests and over frozen streams, they reached Gergovia.

Then when the young man had provided everything which it was possible to do in a strange place, he went to Alesia, though it was close to midnight and he had not rested from his task even for a moment.

"Even at sunrise I must depart, for by this time the Romans are approaching Avaricum, and every one is needed," said he.

"Can you not tarry even a day longer, until you are rested? A day can count little," said the girl wistfully.

For several moments he remained silent, for it was in his heart to stay, and the desire to remain near her took the place of everything. But he remembered what might be happening in the south at that instant, and how Harling had said every sword was needed; so he answered steadily:

"To remain here, even for weeks, I would choose gladly, but it was understood I should return at once, and to remain now would be to keep from service also those who came hither with us; therefore bid me go."

And because she understood perfectly what was in his mind, and that he had asked such a thing of her with difficulty; moreover, because she had been trained among warriors and was come of a warlike people, she raised her eyes and smiled faintly.

"Go," said she, "even at sunrise. And when these Romans are turned back, or it is permitted you, return to Gergovia where I will be waiting."

Then Decius stooped down and kissed her, crying joyously:

"Even Cæsar and all his legions shall not keep me, and when I return I will bring the priest, Getorix, for there will be something for him to do."

But because she feared greatly and knew that he was going to battle, where death was ever present, she did not an-

swer as bravely as was her custom and, when he was gone, went to the window and watched the stars till sunrise.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW CÆSAR FOUND WINTER QUARTERS FOR HIS ARMY.

AT Avaricum it happened just as Decius had told the assembly. Cæsar and his legions, having marched thither, began at once to invest the city, for the proconsul preferred to proceed carefully and not assault at once, when great numbers of his men might be killed and the walls remain untaken.

With incredible swiftness high towers began to spring up outside the fortifications, and from the top of these it was possible to look down into the streets of the capital. Also, the Bituriges looking out, saw what resembled a great serpent circling every portion of the wall.

Each day this grew tremendously until an earthwork eighty feet in height arose above the level of the plane, and the summit of this ominous fortification bristled with arms and Roman helmets. Then upon the top of the towers strange engines appeared, and when these were fixed in position, great stones and other missiles began to fall into the streets of the city and upon the roofs of the houses. Because of this many were killed, and there was no safety anywhere either by day or night.

Looking from the border of the encircling forest the Bituriges, under Harling, watched these preparations, and during no time were they idle. While part of the Romans turned their attention to the city other legions were constantly kept busy repelling the attacks of fierce adversaries.

Almost at every hour bands of northern warriors rushed from the fastness of the forest and hurled themselves upon the waiting phalanxes. These, eight or sixteen lines deep, presented a compact body to the frenzied horde which dashed itself in vain against them.

At times these phalanxes became disintegrated and the soldiers of Cæsar assumed the offensive. Then men fought in pairs; the Biturige warriors covering their bodies by great shields which

reached from the ground to the height of the shoulder, and fighting with heavy lances and their long swords; the Romans with smaller protection for their bodies and short-bladed weapons.

At such times blood flowed like water, and the din of the conflict reached even the ears of those in the capital. And though each time the invaders held their ground, and frequently drove the assailants even into the forest, the Bituriges rushed back to meet death, singing joyfully.

In many instances whole bands even cast aside their garments and, despite the biting cold, went into battle naked, their huge bodies being protected only by a girdle.

And if at any time the Romans began to give way and to retreat sullenly before these terrible onslaughts, Cæsar appeared suddenly on the spot and urged them to regain the ground they had lost. When that happened a fresh phalanx was formed immediately, and in turn the Bituriges were driven back, leaving many dead and wounded upon the field.

In the midst of this carnage single individuals performed great deeds of valor, and among such Decius and Harling did not stand second. But, although death at all times hovered over them, and each received numerous unimportant wounds, they returned alive into the forest and led fresh assaults against the phalanxes.

It so happened that in one of these desperate combats Harling and a Roman soldier became separated from the main body of the contestants and fought against each other on the slippery snow; and because the Biturige was stronger and desperate beyond measure, he presently succeeded in breaking his enemy's shield.

Then Harling, seizing the advantage which fortune had given him, rushed forward furiously, and because he was able to protect his own body from the blows of the other, it was not necessary for him to use his sword to ward off the hostile strokes. But the Roman was obliged to do this and began to retreat a little.

Because in battle to give way foretells disaster, and adds courage to one's opponent, the combat straightway became unequal, and at length Harling reached the

other's body with his sword. Wounded, the Roman slipped twice upon the snow and weakness seized his muscles. Then the Biturige struck once more and stretched his enemy prone upon the frozen ground.

But when, seeing the man was not dead, only sorely wounded and losing consciousness, he would have finished him and passed on to others, Decius appeared suddenly between them.

"My lord!" cried he hoarsely, for the breath in his body was almost spent through overexertion, "grant me once more the life of this man. It is even Lucullus, without whose assistance the young Lord Alaric would have remained a captive in Cæsar's hands."

At these words Lucullus opened his eyes and looked into the blood-covered faces above him.

"Ah! it is you, Decius!" said he faintly; "but permit this barbarian to finish me, for my sword-arm is almost severed at the shoulder and my service is ended."

After that he became as one really dead.

Harling, panting dreadfully and with his bloody sword in his hand, looked fiercely into the face of the young noble.

"To spare a Roman at such a time is not in my heart, and in asking it you demand much of me," answered Harling harshly.

But when Decius would have replied, he turned suddenly upon his heel and plunged again into the conflict.

Then, because others were drawing near, and to have remained standing there would have meant certain destruction, the young man rushed forward, also leaving Lucullus lying on the snow.

Later, when the battle was over, and the Bituriges had retreated into the forest, certain of his comrades came upon the old soldier, and seeing he was not dead carried him inside the fortifications. And after many days he recovered from his wounds, and when spring was come once more returned to Rome with those who conveyed more notable captives thither.

But because Harling had cut his sword-arm terribly he fought no more with the legions.

For the space of twenty-five days

Cæsar besieged Avaricum, and at the end of that time the city capitulated and all those who remained alive within the walls were made prisoners. And the provisions which were stored there fed the invaders for three months, until spring was come and the legions could be led against the army collected in the north under Vercingetorix.

This thing having come to pass, there remained no longer any reason why Harling and his few remaining followers should remain there. For the Romans, having taken possession of Avaricum, were too strongly fortified to permit of successful assaults, and to have attacked them would be to sacrifice brave men uselessly.

Therefore the Lord of Trevera ordered the warriors to begin the journey northward where the army, composed of picked men from all the tribes, was collecting.

With these warriors went Decius and the priest, Getorix, and before they reached Gergovia the latter spoke earnestly to Harling.

"It is probable that some weeks will elapse during which there will be no fighting, and each man can attend wholly to his own affairs. Now, it seems to me that the time has arrived when the gods favor what I am about to mention. Trevera is lost for a season and your sister must remain in a strange place where she will be devoured by homesickness; even you can not be near her for very long, because it is certain that Vercingetorix will demand your presence. You might, indeed, take the girl with you, but you understand such a decision would be unwise, for a maiden has no place among great bodies of soldiers."

"I have thought of that, but considered you might be near her in Gergovia and that would be some comfort to her," answered Harling.

"Even that is uncertain," replied the priest; "my presence may be required elsewhere and, if it is not, you understand I am growing old, and to the old death comes suddenly. The young lord, Alaric, might remain, but I know he desires above all things to be with the army and you could not wish otherwise, therefore, Alesia would be alone."

He paused for a moment, then added: "Unless it so happens that that noble, Wolf the Bold, is willing to remain in Gergovia and not accompany you to Vercingetorix; and, as there will be no fighting, why should he do so?"

"It would certainly not be necessary, at least until spring," answered Harling. "And you were saying—"

"Only that he would need an excuse which Vercingetorix would accept readily. If he should become Alesia's husband there would be no trouble," interrupted Getorix.

The Lord of Trevera remained silent for a time.

"That such a thing must come I know perfectly, but so soon—that is another matter," said he slowly.

"And why not?" answered the priest. "Now, for some weeks it will not be necessary for that noble to join the army, but later he must leave her to fight against these Romans. Let us give them a little time together, for who knows what may happen afterward."

Then Harling put away such doubts as were in his mind and answered soberly:

"You speak with wisdom, and above everything I desire to give the maid happiness. Let it be as you say."

The next day they came in sight of Gergovia and having entered the city, Harling, with Decius, the priest, and the youth, Alaric, rode straight to the house where Alesia was waiting. And when they had exchanged greetings and related everything which had occurred at Avaricum the Lord of Trevera took his sister aside and talked to her earnestly concerning the matter of which the priest had spoken.

"Tell me," said he, "are you willing to do this thing—even to-day?"

Then Alesia looked into his face steadily and answered:

"For these many days, lord, have I waited here in loneliness."

This answer Harling carried to Decius and the priest, and immediately each, in turn, visited the maiden. And Getorix spoke earnestly, but when the young noble appeared before her and they were alone together mere words were unnecessary.

On the day following Harling and his

brother rode forth from the city in order that they might join the army under Vercingetorix; and outside the walls they took farewell of the others, even affectionately.

But though her brothers, who were very dear to her, were departing from Gergovia, Alesia's face beamed joyously. For Wolf the Bold remained to comfort her.

THE END.

BY A SLENDER MARGIN.

By BURKE JENKINS.

The part played by a scrap of paper in piecing out the trail to a conspiracy.

AS I fed him the last peanut and turned my pocket inside out to clean it—preparatory to quitting the park—the squirrel chattered in what I took to be companionable disgust. I rose from the bench and started to cross the road on my way to the Seventy-Second Street entrance.

I remember that at the very moment I was muttering angrily to myself. Here was I, wealthy as I had ever hoped to be, in the pride city of the Western Hemisphere with all the attractions which new-fangled Yankeedom had to offer, and behold me, my almost entire afternoon spent in close communion with a gray squirrel and a bag of peanuts!

I know now as well as anybody what the trouble was; nothing else than that all-fired, not-to-be-resisted adventure lust creeping over me again.

But it's a funny thing: never at the time of its impelling force am I conscious of just what is the matter with me.

So I disgustedly started across that deserted driveway and strove to comfort myself in anticipation of the dinner I had planned; for it was nearing dusk of an early spring day.

At the point where I crossed the roadway there is an abrupt turn, flanked by a thicket of some density, so that I ascribe my escape entirely to my own agility, coupled, perhaps, with the prompt fashion in which the fellow who was driving the little, low-hung gray racing car applied the brakes.

I gained safety, but the violent check to his speed—there was but one man in the auto—caused a little oil-covered, black trunk that was lashed behind to

slip its fastenings and tumble to the dirt. It certainly was not light, for the impact broke it open; and then out of it rolled a remarkable assortment of articles: blankets, cooking tins, some clothing, some books, and I even caught sight of a pack of cards.

Another fact struck me as possibly noteworthy: the entire contents of that little spilled trunk were brand-new.

By this time I had gained the shrubbery and viewed the event from its cover.

The fellow stopped his car and reversed to a position beside the open trunk. His polished and really gifted burst of profanity lost none of its power on me, for I'm something in that line myself; but this time I was distinctly pleased at his disgust, for I hadn't yet recovered from my own anger over his running me so close.

But loss of time was evidently what he most dreaded, for he began to hustle those rather incongruous contents back into the box with little regard to order.

He had evidently forgotten all about me; anyway, he cast not a glance in my direction. I, on the other hand, lost not a move of his, for somehow he interested me.

Just as he busied himself finally with fastening the trunk back to its position on the rear of the machine, he stooped low for a strap buckle that swung under the axle. And then I saw something fall from his outside breast-pocket.

But he braced, buckled the strap, and was back in the car and off before I could run out and restore what had dropped.

As his dust faded in the distance, I picked it up. It was a blank envelope. Circumstances, I thought, justified me in

opening it, especially as it was not sealed; so I backed up to a park lamp, which had by this time been lighted, and unfolded the enclosure.

The letter bore no printed head; in fact, was simply a plain piece of paper on which appeared the following; written in a bold hand but unsigned:

Don't worry about me. I'm all right, though I can't tell you where. Please give the bearer my set of razors and rest easy until I return.

Nothing more. No address to the envelope, no signature. Rather a remarkable slip of paper in view of the situation as far as I knew it.

But, assuredly, there was nothing for me to do about it. The man was gone. The scrap couldn't really possess any great importance; so I crammed it into a side pocket and left the park.

I blessed the incident, for as I entered my selected restaurant and took my customary table near the window, I realized that my appetite had been agreeably whetted by the spice of real happening, coupled to some little mystery.

"Hello, Carl!" I greeted the waiter. "I guess you know the order, eh?"

"The usual one, sir?"

"Yes; and make the dressing yourself, will you, Carl?"

"Certainly, sir."

He bowed emphatically, mindful probably, of my usual foolishness in the matter of a tip. Then, as he rustled kitchenward, I took in the surrounding tables.

The place was comparatively empty; the hour was rather early for the customary habitués. But nothing could take my eyes from her as she sat facing me—and the door—at the next table. She was alone.

Her beauty was of the individual type. When you looked at her you felt her beauty and even her very personality to be of your kind.

My rudeness of repeated and continued staring was excused only by the fact that she paid absolutely no attention to it. Indeed, I doubt if she even noticed me. for something was distinctly upon her mind, and though her self-control was as manifest as her desire to maintain it, a practised eye read perturbation in her.

The waiter had brought her bread and butter, and a tinkling glass of water, but her expectant eye kept to the window beside me. And I—I watched the eye, and by that light, as it quickened to an interest, I knew there was significance to be attached to the application of brakes on a motor-car without.

I turned in interest and also looked out of the window.

There, trunk and all, was the little, gray racing machine I'd figured with already.

The fellow left the engine running, slid his goggles to the top of his leather cap, and entered the restaurant. But, once entered, hesitation struck him a moment. But only a moment, for as she sat alone and, at the time, was the only unattended lady in the place, he strode directly over to her.

The table was, as I said, next to mine. I could catch sentences, though I really didn't try till something happened.

"Miss Van Brunt?"

His voice was clear-cut.

"Yes," she answered rather excitedly, "what news have you, if any—"

I could catch no more, for he softened her speech with a finger to lip.

He wasted no time in words, but slid his hand down into that breast-pocket I had already noted. I couldn't but chuckle as I slipped my own into a side pocket and crunched the very missive he sought.

His face changed to an expression of alarm and decided vexation. She caught the contagion of his uneasiness.

"What's the trouble?"

"I had a letter; I've lost it."

Then he turned probably to a rehearsal of recent events, for his face suddenly lit to a thought and, turning to her, he whispered so softly I couldn't catch even a phrase.

But the result of his communication, whatever it was, was decided: for she rose immediately and left with him.

She took the seat he indicated beside him in the car, though she did so in what I took to be considerable uneasiness.

He himself busied about a lever or two, but I waited no longer. I didn't like the color of events.

I have always been a meddler. I make no excuses for my act.

I slid an even larger tip to Carl who, trained as he was, couldn't withhold his surprise at the loss of interest in the meal, for he knew my weakness. Then I grabbed my hat and made for the sidewalk.

What I wanted was there and it was not too late; for, though it was full night by now, a moon helped out the arc-lights and he wasn't driving over fast. I approached the empty "taxicab" I had hoped for.

"You see that little, low-hung gray racer?" I asked the chauffeur as I entered the cab.

"He was just here?" responded the fellow.

"Exactly," I replied as I handed him twice the fare for an hour; "keep him in sight."

"I understand," the man answered with alacrity coupled to a wink which was tended to convey that he knew even more than I did myself.

Then I realized that there was a woman mixed up in this little mission I had embarked upon. Heretofore, I had studiously avoided such a concomitant to my mix-ups.

That new little cab was a success, and my heavily overpaid jehu of the gas-horse knew his book.

By the time the gray car reached the park entrance (I had counted on this move somehow) our headlights were on friendly terms with his little red rear lamp. Then I indicated to my man to keep a semblance of distance.

Finally—and with no great delay—we approached that very sharp turn in the roadway which was flanked by the thicket behind which I had witnessed the letter incident.

The gray car rounded it under reduced speed.

I leaned forward and checked my own chauffeur.

"Stop!"

He obeyed silently.

I stepped from the cab and handed him an additional tip.

"Leave me here now," I said impressively, "and forget everything you know."

He grinned in appreciative subtlety.

"I'm a clam on those terms, sir," he answered, fingering the bill.

Then, without another word or sound, he turned the little, purring cab and glided away in the direction from which we had come.

I headed for the near-by thicket.

I gained its edge and peeked around to the turn in the road.

Sure enough, the car had been stopped. The girl still sat in the left-hand seat, but her attitude followed every move of the man as he paced restlessly up and down, scrutinizing every inch of that particular piece of driveway.

The car was very near me as I peered from the shrubbery's concealment. From up the road a bit, the man finally returned in disgust.

"Find it?" queried the girl uneasily, and I could see she was far more nervous than at the time she had been in the restaurant.

I even caught fear in the voice.

"No!" he grunted angrily, venting—as men will—his spleen on the nearest object. I'll just tell you what was in it! You'll have to trust my word for it."

I didn't like his tone. I stepped from my thicket.

"Perhaps this is what you want," I said calmly, holding forward in my left hand the paper.

He whirled on me the glare of the lantern he'd been searching with.

"Who the devil are you?"

My left hand dodged his grab for the missive; my right slid the cold eye of an article from my hip-pocket to the proximity of his nose.

"Into that seat with you!"

I indicated the position beside the girl.

"Why, what in blazes—"

Then in he went.

I sprang to the little trunk, and, as I dug the muzzle of my weapon into his side from behind, I coupled assurance to her with my order to him.

"Take her to him!" I ordered, most emphatically.

"What do you know?" he cried in surprise.

"Only what I can gather from this scrawl and what I've seen. I'm depending upon you for further particulars as we proceed."

My cold, blue argument met every rebuttal, so we whirled on in the coolness

of the night and, finger to trigger, I noted that our course was north.

II.

SILENCE sat on us all for some moments, for even I was somewhat impressed with the turn events had taken.

But, finally growing more accustomed to the speed (for we were hitting a pretty pace) and my eyes accommodating themselves better to the subdued light, I prodded the fellow and suggested:

"Don't you think you'd better *out* with the whole thing—save trouble and cross-questions?"

But my hope from that quarter was short-lived, for even from where I sat and leaned toward him, I could see those jaws set themselves under the leather of the goggles, and it was a type of set I'd seen in others and had come to respect. This man would yield nothing but what was actually forced from him.

I could feel it, along with the realization of a certain dignity and sense of hauteur which ill consorted with the affair he had in hand.

Whatever it was, facts as I knew them so far didn't exactly harmonize with his general fit-out.

So, while he bent low over the steering wheel and whirled the roadway by us, I turned toward the girl:

"Miss Van Brunt."

"You know my name?" she answered in unfeigned surprise.

"Nothing wonderful in that," I replied, "I heard him address you so back there in the restaurant."

"Oh, I see," she said. "You were there?"

"The next table."

Then I sought to give her the relief of laying bare all the facts.

"Miss Van Brunt, possibly you'll let me into your confidence enough to tell me something about this affair."

She turned and regarded me as closely as the passing park lamps would permit; then, apparently satisfied, or else reasoning that she could not render things worse, she answered:

"There's little to tell that I know. But what I *do* know has caused me the most anxious day of my life."

"Yes?"

"At nine o'clock this morning my father left for his office as usual. I had occasion to call him up on the phone at ten. At the office they told me he hadn't been in yet. I called him up again at twelve-thirty. Still he hadn't arrived. Then I became alarmed, for dad is the essence of punctuality.

"Finally I took a cab down to the office myself. There I found that my own uneasiness was more than matched by that of the staff. Then I hurried back home and got to the hallway just in time to hear the house phone ringing.

"I caught up the receiver in anticipation of news. A gruff voice, which I now think was feigned made the appointment with me at the restaurant, which appointment you saw me keep. That's all I know."

Instinctively we both turned to the man beside her and in front of me. Muzzle-prodded as he was (for I kept the gun playing about his ribs continually) he was driving the car as if on a pleasure spin. I could not but admire him.

He had paid no evident attention to the girl's recountal; though of course he had heard every word of it. He merely contended himself with a dim smile which might mean much or little.

I thought I would underscore my intentions toward him, so I said:

"No unaccountable breakdowns to the car, understand; and it may interest you to know that matters will probably lighten themselves for you if you clear things up a bit."

I had leaned forward close to his ear, so I could easily hear his subdued cursing of me for a meddler.

Then, turning again to Miss Van Brunt, I held toward her the slip of paper with its scrawl. Though it was far too dark to read it, the paper itself seemed to lend her comfort, especially as I told her its drift.

A lurch of the car at the interchange of the slip caused our hands to meet. In fact, in instinctive protection mine closed about her little glove; but, of course, this was merely incidental.

We had left the park, whirled up Seventh Avenue, crossed Central Bridge, and a turn or two found us entering the somewhat darker gloom of the Boston Post Road.

My confidence in the fellow and his well-meaning lessened. He was just calling my bluff with the gun. So I thought.

This idea was emphasized when he finally—some two miles from New Rochelle—brought the car to a stop on a strip of barren roadway which ran directly abreast of the Sound.

My temper rose.

"You evidently don't know what part of the country I come from!" I cried.

"Nor do I care," he answered in a coolness that made my own warmth tame. "If you hadn't that weapon so handily disposed you'd have found my own hailing port not to be despised. But I know when I'm covered."

"But what do you mean by stopping at this ungodly spot?"

"Simply because Mr. Van Brunt is out there where you see that anchor light flying."

He pointed to a little sheltered cove where, sure enough, there glowed a little lantern.

"Well, we want to go to him," I said, then addressing her, "don't we?"

"Yes!" she cried in delight.

"How? Unless I signal and meet the dingey alone, it will arouse suspicion."

"In whom?"

"You will see."

"Very well," I answered, "Miss Van Brunt and I will step behind this shrubbery; but, before doing so, let me state that I shoot nicely up to fifty yards."

"I understand," he replied with even a chuckle.

In spite of myself I began to like him.

As the girl and I stepped aside, he detached one of the head lamps from the machine and swept its gleam three times in an arc that took in the craft lying out there at anchor.

It was a prearranged signal that probably was momentarily expected; for, though I couldn't see the movement, I heard oarlocks rattle to hastily fitted blades.

Our man of the car returned the lamp to its bracket and leaned in nonchalant attitude against the car itself as he awaited the boat's approach.

From our distance in the shrubbery we saw the one man in the boat cease his

stroke and turn in final reconnoiter before landing. Then, reassured by a further wave from the man of the car, who stood in silhouette, he pulled to the bank, jumped from the skiff, and hauled it with a jerk beyond the tide limit.

Just what I counted upon doing, I myself, to this moment, have not the faintest idea; for here they had me, two to one, and with a girl to look out for besides. Fools rush in. Still, I didn't exactly do that.

I simply reassured the girl with a slight pressure of the wrist I hadn't yet released, and awaited developments. The first move was for them to make, and they made it.

The man from the boat had come up to the car, for our other fellow showed no tendency to meet him half way, continuing unbroken in his attitude of lounge. But the indifference was feigned, for, no sooner did they meet than a hurried whisper sent them both to the seats; a lever thrown set the motor from the neutral; and, ducking as they passed right by our place of concealment, they hit a merry pace down the road that lay back toward the city. There seemed to be something more than flight actuating them.

Miss Van Brunt and I peered at each other in the gloom.

III.

SHE it was that first awoke to our next move.

"The boat!" she cried.

"You're game?"

"Certainly," she answered; but I thought in somewhat forced manner.

"I don't think I'd worry about your father, Miss Van Brunt," I said. "The general tone of this slip of paper speaks of no personal danger to him. In fact, it is of a cool nature: even requesting you to send his razors."

She laughed lightly.

"Just like old dad," she explained, "can't stand another razor on his face, he says." Then her expression changed. "But he has been so preoccupied and worried for the last few days."

"You connect that fact with his disappearance?"

"Why not?"

This was a new note, but I didn't let her see it weighed upon me.

"We're just losing time," I cried cheerily, as I led the way down the bank, "we can find out something beyond conjecture perhaps."

She took to the stern-sheets of the skiff with a readiness that bespoke custom; and, as I'm no slouch of an oar, we were soon well out toward the anchored craft.

Near approach proved it to be one of those tidy little hunting cabin launches that have so rightly found favor with the cruising fraternity.

We came up on her slowly and silently, for we were in the enemy's country, as it were. But absolutely no sign of life manifested itself aboard, if we except a possible hint of existence in the shape of a cheery radiance from the little oval ports of the cabin.

I drew up alongside, caught the rail, and, steadying myself to the slight night roll, scanned closer. No one on deck. Then I helped her to the cockpit, made the boat fast, and together we approached the companionway.

Here we met definiteness, for a sturdy padlock barred us from entrance.

"But the light?" whispered Miss Van Brunt in alarm.

Then she stepped forward along the side runway and, bending low, scanned the illuminated interior.

It wasn't horror which sent me quickly to her side; for, as I bent beside her and peeked between the folds of a diminutive curtain, the scene spoke no great terror.

A hale old gentleman of mutton-chop and tan-gaiter type, sat in his shirt sleeves before a swinging table, a fat cigar glowing defiantly and a most absorbing game of solitaire setting wrinkles of pleasing worry.

Miss Van Brunt rapped at the thick glass and sang out delightedly:

"Dad!"

I couldn't wonder at the old gentleman's recognizing that voice.

Anyway, his apparent indifference to his plight and note of resignation left him. He rose excitedly, crossed to the port, unscrewed and opened it.

"That you, Nell?"

"Yes, dad."

"You're not alone?"

There was a mounting excitement in him that communicated itself to her.

"No, I'm with a gentleman."

"Who is he?"

She looked at me in perplexity. It appeared to be time for me to speak; so I bent toward his face near the open port and hastily explained as much as I could.

"Great!" cried the old fellow. "Wait a minute!"

He disappeared forward and we heard him clattering away there. Finally he reappeared with a hack-saw and a file, which he passed out to us.

"Can you cut the lock?"

"Surely," said I, and at it I went.

Ten minutes saw us all three in the little cabin together.

This certainly couldn't be the same quiet old gentleman of solitaire interest of the few moments previous!

The way he accepted me and my apparently unaccountable connection with the affair proved him the man he was for making all grist that came to his mill.

"You say they headed back toward the city?"

"Yes," we answered in unison.

He turned to me suddenly.

"Can you run one of these craft?"

I looked into the engine-room, recognized the type of motor, and answered:

"Yes."

"Then cut hook and make for the nearest phone."

"New Rochelle?" I inquired.

"Anywhere, but quick!"

I did actually cut the cable and we were chugging fast toward Echo Bay off New Rochelle.

Then the old gentleman explained somewhat.

"It's an intricacy of the stock market. That's all. I was swinging a pretty big move. Those clever scoundrels" (the old fellow grinned) "rather exceeded the usual Wall Street tactics though sticking to the spirit. My absence was required to hold an issue back. I was absented. There you have it. But—" and here he chuckled in boyish delight—"I think they'll just miss it."

"But it's very late, isn't it?"

"My dear fellow," explained the old chap, "I'll bet you a tidy sum that at this very moment my secretary, Weaver, is pacing the polar bear march right up

and down before that telephone of ours in the full agony of a last hope of hearing from me before midnight."

I glanced at my watch.

"You can do it?" I said as I swung the craft alongside a red-lanterned float.

"You bet I can!" he cried, in an exultant manner.

Twenty minutes thereafter he returned to us jubilant.

"You found him?"

"Sure!"

"May I ask who the kidnaping gentlemen were?" I inquired.

We had left the boat moored to the float and were headed for the railway station.

"You may ask, young man, but I'll not answer. There are two saws that fit the case: honor among thieves, and, all's fair in love and Wall Street."

All of which was the beginning of my acquaintance with Miss Nell Van Brunt.

THE BADGE OF WEALTH.

By BERTHA RUSSELL.

What happened to Abigail Smith after love took flight on the wings of a quarrel.

ABIGAIL SMITH was filled with the fire of ambition. She longed to be a social leader, to float on the uppermost wave of prosperity, amid the swirling foam of luxury and indolence.

Her "castles in Spain" were numerous and ever increasing. Somehow the bee had buzzed in her switch that she was an especial favorite of Providence, and hence she became imbued with the idea of a "golden destiny." With this notion rampant in her head, it is not surprising that Abigail came quickly under the spell of one La Grange Benedict, for who would not look twice and favorably upon a man with such a high-sounding name as that?

And it was not until Benedict had held a patent-applied-for right to Abigail's parlor sofa for six months and had succeeded in cruelly stealing away the fair one's palpitating affections that she awoke to the fact that her King of Gold worked for twelve a week as a book-keeper.

But then it was too late, especially in view of the fact that Benedict had lost his heart in return and seemed perfectly contented that Abigail retain possession of it.

But as often happens, the most perfect love is sometimes interrupted in its blissful career by misunderstandings which terminate in hot words of parting, the return of rings, and the pursuit of

other friendships. And so it came to pass with Abigail and La Grange.

She accused him of untruthfulness and the possession of an eye that rested not unfavorably on others of her sex, and to retaliate, La Grange intimated that she was fickle and a flirt. And right here is where love's shaft split asunder.

The next day found Abigail on her way to a summer resort for a week's rest, and to banish from her thoughts the image of the odious Benedict. She hoped to find new acquaintances and pleasures that would eradicate from her heart, all sentiment for the discarded one.

Benedict, earning but twelve a week, could not dash away to recuperate, so he was compelled to hide his sorrow as best he could. To give himself something to think about, not caring much now for the future or what it contained, he risked his all on stock speculation.

As for Abigail, it was an easy matter for her to find new acquaintances, for she was attractive of face and form, and full of life. And as she was striving to forget a misdeal in the near past, she threw herself with the more vigor and abandon into the swirl of summer gaiety.

Nor did she close her eyes to her chances. She reasoned that, inasmuch as love was now but a memory, a joy nevermore to be experienced, she might as well pick a millionaire as a pauper.

And as if in answer to her aspiring

thoughts there bobbed up on the horizon of strange faces one who boasted of a line of ancestors that reached almost into the B.C. age. But what was more to the point, and especially to the liking of the fair Abigail, was the fact that this gentleman displayed the true badge of wealth—a sixty-five horse-power touring-car.

His name was Chesterton De Haven, and he strutted about with a nonchalance characteristic only of the ultra-ultra, as every one knows. But once Abigail had decided that *he* was the objective point of her ambitions, there was no escaping the figurative noose she flung at his aristocratic head.

She soon had him fast as a fish that had swallowed a hook and by his very own methods, too. She had no touring-car, but she had a head that she could hold as high as the most stiff-necked of a queen's retinue.

And it was not strange, therefore, that within a very short time after Chesterton De Haven had been presented to her, she was occupying the front seat of his machine on all its excursions. Although he was not so good looking as La Grange, she could not somehow forget La Grange, and although his grammar often slipped a cog, so to speak, Abigail found him not unsatisfactory as a substitute.

Besides, his blood was blue and his pockets lined with gold. At least, so Abigail's imagination assured her. Then again, he was a man of the world, and told her of his travels at home and abroad, all of which she absorbed with the air of one to whom such things are trivial.

But her week grew near its end. She had only a couple of days in which to draw from Chesterton De Haven the proposal that would assure her of everything in life.

She felt instinctively that he was on the trembling brink of the important question and that doubtless it would come that very evening after the dance.

What would La Grange think when he learned that she was engaged to a millionaire? He would probably wish her to return to him, but she was determined that with love she would have nothing more to do. Her "golden destiny" had

come, true to her dreams and the infallible fortune-teller. She could have hugged that old woman were she within reach at the moment.

It was after dinner that evening that she received a letter, written in La Grange Benedict's well-known hand. She hurried to her room, overwhelmed by the memories of him she *had* loved, and after she had read the letter she was glad there was no one about to hear her amazed exclamation and see the guilty flush which painted her cheek.

Then, with trembling fingers, she hastily packed all her possessions, slipped down to the office and paid her bill, shy one day of the time she expected to remain. After ordering her trunk sent to the station immediately, she left the hotel by a side door, in order to escape Chesterton De Haven on the veranda.

She had some minutes to wait at the depot before the train pulled in and she made use of the time to send a telegram to La Grange. It read:

Leave for Atlantic City to-night. Love.

ABIGAIL.

And when she had crawled into her berth, an hour later, en route for the coast resort, she read again the note she had received from her indomitable twelve-a-week lover, who wrote with a happy disregard of their late quarrel and separation:

DEAR ABBIE: Cleared up a wad as big as your—I mean *my*—fist on the market to-day. Enough money to buy a flat. Expect to run down to Atlantic City over Sunday as there is nothing to keep me in town while you are away. Wish you could run over for the day. Maybe you can. What? I'd go to the Springs, but I understand there is a fellow there, an old enemy of mine, whose face I am tempted to pulverize every time I see it. Tell the girls to beware of him as he has the use of his employer's automobile—a broker whom I know well—and puts on the airs of a nobleman. He is a chauffeur and his name is Chesty De Haven. Wire me if you will come over.

Lovingly,

LA GRANGE.

AN ARM OF THE LAW.

By J. W. EVERTS.

An ordeal in "shadowing" that took the detective fever
out of one man and put another "on to a good thing."

PEABODY had been a detective just three days, and wished he were something else.

When he had applied for the job and the chief asked what made him think he wanted to be a detective, he had smiled in a confident manner and said he guessed he had the temperament. This subtlety passed over the chief's head, but as he approved of college men, he told Peabody to report the following morning and that he would be put to work at "shadowing."

Peabody went off with a light heart, and wrote to his girl and his mother that he was going to be a detective till he could find some occupation he liked better. He told his mother not to worry, as the work would not be dangerous.

This is how it all happened in the first place: After a satisfactory summer vacation, Peabody had dropped down on New York in September with four dollars and ten cents in his pocket and a fairly workable brain, brilliantly polished with a brand-new college education.

This he had acquired with some difficulty, at a rural university located somewhere between New York and Philadelphia. Peabody was normal—he hated Philadelphia, and had always spent his pocket-money in New York, when he had any.

He came to New York with the intention of being a reporter. He told the editors that he wanted to be a reporter—that is, he told them so when he could see them; generally, however, he wrote it on a little slip of paper and a condescending office-boy read it and then took it to the sanctum. The editor always sent out word that *he* didn't.

The four dollars and ten cents, which is another name in New York for Dire Necessity, made Peabody resourceful, and one day he had a bright idea: He would

apply to a certain detective agency whose sign was conspicuously displayed across the street, and he'd be a sleuth till the editors woke up.

It might not be quite like a Conan Doyle story-book, but it would do. And then perhaps he would write a story about it afterward, and thus double his profits.

He admitted to the chief that he had had no experience, but the chief took him.

Peabody was told that he would be put on the trail of a suspected man, whom he was to shadow. Also, that as the man knew he was being watched, it would be delicate work for a beginner to keep out of sight. Peabody congratulated himself. It sounded enticing.

He was stationed within sight of a certain house, with a minute description of his victim, and was told to watch till the man came out. His work would be simple, but not easy; he was to report absolutely everything he saw the victim do.

The half-hours passed and the hours passed. At last midnight came and he had seen nothing of the man.

He despairingly reported by telephone to the office, but to his surprise, instead of receiving a wiggling, he was told to be on hand the next morning. He breathed a sigh of relief and took the next car back to Brooklyn.

As this consumed forty-five minutes, he was in bed by one. He had no alarm-clock, but thought he could wake up at seven. He opened his eyes in the morning with a start and dived for his watch.

"Seven-ten, by Jove!" he cried, and sprang for his clothes, vowing to buy an alarm-clock next pay-day.

He had no time to stop for breakfast, and reached his post fifteen minutes late. Then he got his breakfast. It consisted of an egg-shake, taken in a near-by saloon which overlooked his territory.

Then the morning began to drag by, minute by minute, quarter-hour by quarter-hour, half-hour by half-hour, hour by hour, slower and slower, but the victim did not appear.

A hundred men passed who perfectly answered to the description. He doubtfully trailed a few of them for blocks, only to give them up in disgust and return to his corner. When he reported at noon with despair again in his heart and asked in his innocence how long he was to watch, he was told till midnight.

He gasped and murmured weakly into the telephone, "Oh!" Then he hung up the receiver abruptly and went out to think it over.

He had been on duty since eight—just four hours—doing nothing but stand on a windy corner with his hands in his pockets; and those four hours had been equal in length to any two whole days he had ever seen. Now, till six would be even longer, and from six to midnight! He threw up his hands in blank despair.

Clearly he was in for it; but he couldn't desert his trust. And all for twenty-five cents an hour!

It was cold, and as Peabody had started off in the morning lightly dressed, the chill struck him to the bone, especially with the slow approach of evening. There was no way to get a hot meal, because it involved leaving his post. He couldn't so much as wash the grime from his hands.

The elevated roared periodically overhead, carrying crowds home to hot dinners and warm firesides. Peabody groaned at the thought, and slipped into a corner drug-store to escape the cold.

From its windows he could overlook his ground very well, and on the strength of some slight purchase he stayed there till his visit lengthened into hours. At last the clerk, who had been watching him with rapidly growing disapproval, gave him a strong hint to move on.

Peabody bottled his wrath and got out.

Midnight came, but still there was no sign of life from the victim, except one short sally into the street that had enabled Peabody to identify him with some certainty. Peabody reported again, and was told to come back at eight the next morning and watch till midnight.

For a moment Peabody didn't answer.

"All right," he said at last, but there was an ominous calm in his tones. His resolution was taken; he'd resign to-morrow.

At eight in the morning Peabody appeared on his corner, and the sleepy drug-clerk stared at him more disapprovingly than ever. His persistence as a loungee had attracted the notice of the whole neighborhood, and he could see that he was the subject of many remarks.

This was not wholly without reason, however, for he had had no chance to shave since he had begun work; and five or six hours of fitful sleep, followed by light meals or no meals at all, had begun to tell on him.

"I surely do look like a tramp," he commented reflectively as he watched his image reflected in the windows of the unfriendly drug-store. "And to think," he chuckled "that I wrote the *mater* it was not dangerous work!"

"Dangerous!" he repeated sadly.

Suddenly his thoughts came to a standstill, and the warm blood began to leap through his veins in a way that made him forget that it was cold.

His man was coming around the corner at a rapid walk. It was the first time Peabody had gotten a real good look at him. He was coming nearer, and to show just how indifferent he really was Peabody began staring with absorbed interest into the window. The reflection in the glass did very well.

As Peabody took up the trail his ideas of detective work underwent another reversal. This, he reflected, was more like what he had read about. Apparently this business of waiting had its compensations—its moments of rest and cheer, as it were.

The victim started west on a cross-town street among the Eighties. The pavements were practically deserted, and Peabody's heart sank as he saw the man look around deliberately once or twice as he was beginning his pursuit.

But as he gave no sign of having noted anything suspicious, Peabody's hopes began again to rise.

They plunged almost together into the Subway station on Broadway, and Peabody's fear that a train would be already in forced him to follow close at the man's heels. At last they were seat-

ed in separate cars, and Peabody could distinguish his prey by his hat. When the guard called "Grand Central!" the man jumped up and went to the door.

So Peabody hurried to the rear of his car, and when the gate opened unsuspectingly stepped off onto the platform. The gate clanged to behind him and he looked cautiously around for his man. He was not there.

Peabody was not slow, and the circumstance was sufficiently illuminating. He uttered an exclamation and made a long dive at the gate of a passing car as the train pulled out with rapidly increasing speed.

"Here! What'n Hades are you at?" yelled the angry guard as Peabody landed on his hands and knees in a heap on the dusty platform.

Peabody arose slowly.

"Had to make it," he said breathlessly.

"Oh," snorted the guard with fine sarcasm. "Matter o' life and death, I suppose. We'll see about that," he added as he started for a forward car.

In a moment he returned, accompanied by a policeman.

"Here's the guy," he said, jerking his thumb at Peabody.

"See that?" said Peabody hastily as the officer was about to speak.

The man read the card which Peabody held out to him.

"He's all right, Bill," he said to the irate guard.

Peabody left them to continue the discussion if they chose, and made his way painfully into the car, for his fall had bruised him.

He noticed that several people, a pretty girl among them, kept glancing now and then toward his feet; and the pretty girl looked the other way very quickly when she saw his eyes upon her. He began to wonder uncomfortably if anything was wrong, and then he looked.

Where his trousers should have neatly incased the calf of his right leg, that muscular specimen was exposed to the public gaze through a rent that extended upward as far as his knee and downward nearly to the hem. He remembered now that he had felt something rip when he dived over the gate.

His face reddened to a brick color as

he caught a glint of stifled laughter in the eyes of the girl across the aisle, and rising hastily, he moved forward.

He passed from car to car cautiously, and finally got back to his old point of vantage, leaving a sensation behind him.

"Brooklyn Bridge!" called the guard.

Peabody saw his victim rise and fold a newspaper he had been reading. This time he was wary, and waited till he was sure his man was on the station platform.

He was becoming interested in the chase again, and once more decided that he wouldn't drop it for a hundred torn trousers-legs.

He emerged from the Subway exit not fifty feet behind his man. As the crowd was thick, he no longer had much fear of being seen, and the people who were staring after him didn't matter any more—he had become calloused.

The chase led toward Barclay Street, and the two were approaching it from Broadway at a rapid pace when a gust of wind came from the south. In another instant Peabody's hat was whirling fifty, and then a hundred feet away.

The victim had turned the corner, and Peabody, with a despairing look in that direction, tore after his straying lid. He could feel the game trouser-leg flapping gaily in the wind.

Peabody seldom wore red socks, but he swore strongly when he realized that now, by some chance, he had on a pair his sister had sent him. He hadn't wanted to throw them away, and had put them on with the comforting reflection that he had stopped wearing low shoes, and that anyhow he could wear the things out in four days. Now, their refulgent glory was not to be concealed.

The wandering hat at last lay still till he was nearly up to it, when it began to roll coquettishly down the middle of the Broadway car-tracks. Then a car came and put Peabody out of his misery.

He did not bother to pick up the remains of that hat, as his one thought once more was to get past the crowd of several hundred appreciative onlookers.

Suddenly Peabody saw some one on the corner. She was gazing at him with an expression that combined horrified recognition with alarmed concern; and their eyes met.

There was no way of getting down Barclay Street without passing her at close range. He set his jaw and started forward. He walked up to her rapidly.

"Don't be surprised," he said, speaking quickly. "I'll look you up and explain the situation later. Didn't know you were in the city."

Then without giving her time to reply, he darted away and to his relief saw the brown hat of the victim still in sight.

He gritted his teeth with exasperation as he ran. If it had been *any* one else it wouldn't have mattered—but she'd be writing about it to their friends all over the country. How in the world had she happened to come to New York at this time of all others?

The Fates had played him an evil trick. He must call her up by telephone first chance he got—no, he had forgotten to ask her address. Duncie! Duncie! Now he *had* done it.

He paused a moment, half-minded to take the chance and go back. But the victim was nearly out of sight, so he doggedly took up the chase once more, considering that verily the evil of the day was quite sufficient.

A mirror in a shop window he was passing gave him a view of himself. Things had reached a point where there seemed to be nothing left but a kind of desperate humor which partly saved the situation.

"You need a shave," he remarked to the image in the glass with a grin, "*and* some new pants, my boy," he added.

But he couldn't see much humor about it when he thought again of that address he hadn't stopped to find out.

Still inventing a variety of epithets for himself, he hurried a moment later into the ferry-house with his hair on end from the wind, and his eyes snapping defiance at the much interested crowd.

The boat whistle was blowing. Peabody had nothing smaller than a five-dollar bill, which the ticket agent was exasperatingly slow about changing, while he took up part of the time favoring Peabody with a stare which the latter returned with interest.

At last, with the change in his hand, Peabody seized his ticket, and sprang forward with every thought intent on catching the departing boat. In his

haste he forgot to drop his ticket in the receiver as he went through the gate. When the gateman came to, Peabody was half way down the room and in another instant had cleared the doors.

The chains had stopped rattling and the boat had cast off. He approached with growing despair. It was a five-foot jump, and would be ten before he could reach it. And below the propeller was churning the water to a white foam, which did not look inviting.

He heard a startled shout from a deck-hand, and the next thing he knew he was hanging on with both hands to the swaying iron barrier that is put across the ends of ferry-boats to keep passengers in rather than to keep them out.

Most of the boat-load had moved forward to the bow, but among the few who remained behind and had been attracted by the shout of the deck-hand, was the object of the chase.

He gazed at Peabody with an amusement in which there was to be seen no trace of personal concern. If he had seen that he was being followed, he had not noted Peabody's successive steps toward success as a sleuth.

Indeed, it would have been difficult for him to recognize in the unshaven, hatless, unkempt specimen before him, with a trouser-leg flapping in the breeze, any semblance of the natty, well-dressed man he had for two days past seen lounging in the vicinity of his house.

To complete the disguise, Peabody had landed near the greasy hinges of the gate, and in his effort at self-composure had put a blackened hand to his already grimy face.

There was no doubt in the minds of the passengers as to what the occasion demanded. A hardly suppressed guffaw greeted Peabody as he climbed lamely over the gate.

His prey was within ten feet of him, and Peabody realized then that further shadowing in his present remarkable array would be useless. He had bungled everything, and all that remained was to go back to New York and report his failure.

He sat down dejectedly—for once indifferent to the amused stares of the passengers. Finally they lost interest in what was after all only one novelty in a

city full of novelties, and paid no further attention to him.

But the victim continued to stare at him with increasing interest—and in his eyes there grew a look of dawning comprehension.

He came over and seated himself by Peabody's side.

"You seem to be in rather a bad way," he remarked, looking his pursuer up and down in a leisurely fashion.

Peabody nodded, and retained a non-committal, non-cordial silence, which, however, did not seem to produce the desired chill in the atmosphere.

The victim gazed meditatively at Peabody for a few moments. There was a strong touch of humor in the eyes that looked him over so calmly, and he found nothing criminal in the face.

"I have observed you for some days through a pair of field-glasses," began the other coolly, "and I've noticed that patience isn't your conspicuous trait. Of course I know you are following me—we need make no pretense on that point."

Peabody was embarrassed for a moment as he thought of his employers. Then he laughed.

"I suppose not," he smiled. "I guess I've bungled the case a good deal."

"Oh, no," said the victim, "you've been at a disadvantage through the blunders of your predecessors. When you came I had my eyes opened. You've done very well under the circumstances."

"You've stuck at home close enough," grumbled Peabody. "I've had an awfully dull time of it. Why on earth didn't you come out and give a fellow some fun? It's hard work—this business of doing nothing."

The victim nodded sympathetically, and offered Peabody a cigar, holding it so that the label was enticingly easy to read. Peabody glanced at it.

"Thanks," he said.

"It takes time, my boy," went on the victim. "How long have you been in the business? Three days? That explains it. Now, if you had been an old hand you wouldn't have been so easily fooled by that ancient trick I played you in the Subway."

Peabody looked up surprised.

"You saw me then?" he asked.

"That's where I got this," he added rue-

fully as he viewed the great rent in his trousers.

"Too bad," commented the victim. "You ought to have gone in the car ahead of me, and then you'd have had the advantage."

"I've been an ass," said Peabody with conviction. "Of course it will do no good to track you any longer, and I'm going to quit the job anyhow. There's nothing in it."

"Yes, seventeen hours is pretty bad," commented the other. "What induced you to take it up in the first place?"

"I thought I had the temperament," grinned Peabody. "What I'm really after is newspaper work."

"Ah," said the victim, and then he paused thoughtfully. "Do you know what you're on my trail for?" he asked presently.

"Haven't an idea," said Peabody promptly. "I wasn't told, and I didn't ask any questions."

"Well, it isn't necessary that you should," rejoined the other. "Though I have an idea for my part," he added with a broad smile, "that they are barking up the wrong tree."

"So you want to do newspaper work, eh?" he went on. "Had any experience?"

"A little," said Peabody. "I corresponded for a couple of papers when I was in college."

"What ones?"

"The *Chronicle* and *Record*," said Peabody.

Then he stared in surprise—the other leaned back in his seat rocking in a gale of laughter.

"What's up?" demanded Peabody suspiciously.

The other controlled himself.

"You see," he began at last, occasionally breaking out into gleeful chuckles, "my name is Wilcox. I'm the sporting editor of the *Chronicle*. And of course yours is Peabody. I've noticed your university pin. We've known each other considerably more than three days—at a distance."

Peabody bit his cigar through and stared a long time in astonished silence, while he took it all in. Before he could answer the pilot was ringing the bell to back water and the victim arose.

"Come around to-morrow," he said. "In case you've thrown up your present job by then," he added with a pleasant laugh. "I may have something for you that will be far more congenial."

"Now I'm going to Newark, and I

guess you may as well go back and buy some new pants."

That night Peabody wrote to his girl about it.

That was a year ago; he's married now.

A SLAP-DASH ROMANCE.

By ELLEN FARLEY.

A long-distance job taken at short notice and which terminates without any notice at all.

ABSENTLY I turned over in my hand the pair of tan suede gloves. Seventy-nine cents meant a reckless expenditure when my total capital was three dollars and ninety-six cents and a lead quarter. Still, gloves are an essential asset, and, with the rip under the thumb neatly darned they would present a genteel front to a snobbish world.

"Give me those, please," I finished aloud to the saleswoman, haughtily disdainful of the patronage of a "reduced to seventy-nine-cent" customer.

While I waited for my change, a confused patter of voices behind me took definite form, and from careless listening I grew greedily absorbed.

"So, you see, my dear, the pressing necessity of the case," insisted a shrill falsetto. "I had no idea well-bred girls are so scarce."

"I should think the agencies could easily find some one for you," said a mild voice.

"Agencies—institutions for the inept and imbecile"—railed the falsetto. "Decaped, helpless gentility and overbold upper housemaids are all they have to offer, my dear. Of course, the right person could be found—if one had time. I really fear I'll have to fall back on the upper housemaid, after all. But I must run. Good-by. So glad I met you."

It wasn't the moment to stop and falter. I turned swiftly and walked toward the door with an eye over my shoulder to see if the owner of the shrill falsetto followed.

Then, turning abruptly, I stood face to face with her as she paused outside the ornate portal of Modem's, rummaging in her bag for the carriage-check.

"I beg your pardon," I began. "Doubtless you will think me crazy—but I overheard you in there"—with a nod toward the broad aisles behind us—"and I want work."

There was something in the cold sharpness of the eyes scrutinizing me now from behind a jeweled lorgnette that made me state the case with—to myself—brutal conciseness.

I faced the stare unflinchingly. A liveried attendant was lustily bawling a carriage number behind us.

"Mm—er—well, suppose you come in the brougham with me," she hesitated.

As I settled myself opposite her in the dark-blue interior, my outward demureness hid a wild recklessness of spirit.

"You don't look like a bloodless ninny," she began abruptly.

"I'm not," I assured her.

"Nor ultra-refined and helplessly elegant."

I had a detached feeling, as though I were a bolt of silk or a piece of china. Leaning forward, she rolled up the window-shades tightly and regarded me from my feet up with that cold, impersonal scrutiny, while I fixed my eyes on the curtain-tassels and preserved an unmoved demeanor.

"You look well-bred, at least. And you're not pink-and-white. I won't have a pink-and-white person around me. They're fools. But you may be a pickpocket or a shoplifter, for all I know. They tell me some of them look astonishingly like ladies nowadays."

"Mr. Field, of the *Sunday Era*, will tell you about me," I suggested. "I've been doing some stuff for him."

"Too bad you're literary," she remarked. "Writers are a messy lot."

"I do illustrating," I corrected.

"They're all alike, I fancy," she insisted suspiciously. "Why don't you keep on—what d'ye call it—illustrating?"

"I have to live also," with bitter sarcasm.

"Are you willing to sail for Europe in the morning?"

That left me a bit breathless. Yet—why not? I wasn't tied by blood or friendship to a soul in the world. However, the egotism of self-preservation insisted on a degree of wariness.

"There is, of course, some one who will tell me about you," I suggested suavely.

She started a bit. Evidently, she thought her blatant prosperity unquestionable.

Yet there was a gleam of mirth behind the glittering lorgnette that heartened me. I felt I had taken the right rôle.

"I might refer you to the butler," she said grimly. "My name is Arden—Mrs. Jacob Arden."

"You are—the Mrs. Arden?" I cried in impetuous astonishment.

Despite the undeniable, autocratic manner of wealth, I could scarcely believe this blunt-speaking, abrupt mannered woman, with the strong masculine face, could be the much-talked-of Mrs. Arden of many millions.

"Just so," she said absently. "And now, suppose we come to business. I want a secretary. She must be well-bred, clever, strong. I won't have a common-looking, dowdy person, and I don't want a pink-and-white doll. I want no whining sycophancy nor keep-off-my-coat-tails independence. Her duties are—whatever I choose to ask."

She paused, watching me keenly, but I was silent. After all, it was rather a large order. But at once she resumed:

"Understand, child, I am not unfair. You won't be asked to do anything any sensible girl could object to. Part of your time each day will be your own. I'll pay you one hundred and fifty dollars a month."

She lifted her lorgnette and again inventoried me.

"That tailor suit will do nicely for

traveling. I shall expect you to dress well. You know how to wear your clothes—there's half the battle won."

I gasped once or twice, swallowed hard, and as calmly as possible informed Mrs. Jacob Arden that I would accept one hundred and fifty dollars a month.

II.

I REALLY dare say it wouldn't have made any difference had I known it from the first—it would have taken a very great deal to have separated me from that one hundred and fifty dollars a month then—but when Mrs. Arden met me on deck as the Statue of Liberty was vanishing into a speck, presented a man bundled in shawls in a steamer-chair as her brother, and asked me if I'd mind reading to him a while, I felt a certain vague resentment.

All I could see of the man was a pair of eyes surveying me from the bundle of shawls, but I disliked him at once. Instinctively, I felt that he was remarking to himself that my nose was too short and my mouth too big and my face too pale. I had admitted all these defects to my reflection in the mirror long ago—but, nevertheless, I wasn't accustomed to reading that opinion in the eyes of men.

An indistinct mumble came from the shawls, and Mrs. Arden resumed her stately promenade up and down the deck.

"What do you want me to read?" I asked, presupposing the bundle contained ears somewhere.

Again the unflattering gaze surveyed me.

"Where in blazes did she get *you*?" a voice drawled.

"He seems to have the family trait of affability," I thought to myself. But aloud I said calmly:

"Picked me up at Modem's for one hundred and fifty dollars."

"Reduced, I dare say."

I grinned a little reluctantly. I *was* "on my uppers" that day.

"Oh, reduced all right, but hardly a bargain at that," I deprecated. "Shall I read this?"

I picked up a volume from the floor beside his chair.

But the eyes in the bundle had closed. However, I had been told to read,

and intended to earn my salary conscientiously.

Opening at random, I read half a dozen quatrains of old Omar. Then I glanced at the motionless bundle. Apparently he was sleeping.

I dropped the book into my lap, and lay back dreamily in my chair, lost in the wonder of the ocean.

"Why do women bleach their hair?"

I started, clapped my hand on my own mahogany brown head and rubbed my eyes. The bundle was speaking. I eyed it cautiously, and decided Mrs. Jacob Arden's brother was probably half-witted.

"It's a mooted question," I answered soothingly, "whether softening of the brain leads to bleaching the hair, or *vice versa*."

No answer from the bundle. But from its depths I could see a pair of unwinking eyes fastened upon me. Under the steady gaze I grew a bit nervous.

Of course, if he were dangerous, he wouldn't be at large; but—well—at least I ought to know what topics to avoid.

"Do you believe in fairies?" came the voice from the bundle.

Murmuring unintelligibly, I arose and fled down to Mrs. Arden's *cabin de luxe*.

"Please tell me just how—er—crazy he is," I demanded. "I'm not afraid, but I really think one should be prepared."

Her gray coiffure and complexion lay brazenly on the tiny dressing-table before her. Her long, yellow, wrinkled neck and heavy masculine face, topped with its wisp of gray hair, arose incongruously from a white lacy *décolléte* underwaist. But she lifted the inevitable lorgnette, and surveyed me with the same solemn dignity of full panoply.

"Girl," she said, "are you sane?"

I stifled a mad desire to shriek aloud. Then I took a firm grasp on my nerves.

"Your brother, Mrs. Arden," I explained, "has rather remarkable manners. I could only explain it on the madman theory."

"Mad fiddlesticks!" said Mrs. Arden crossly. "He's merely in love or possessed of seven devils."

She looked hard at me and sighed.

"Where have you been that you haven't heard of Jimmie Arden's duel. Here; look at it in all its horrors."

From a portable writing-table she slipped a sheet of newspaper, with great, splashy headlines, "A Millionaire's Mad Romance." Around the page a border of chorus girls in inconsequent skirts pirouetted.

"It's twaddle," said Mrs. Arden, tersely jerking the paper away from me again. "Comic opera slush. A silly duel *did* occur in Madison Square at three o'clock in the morning, and that disgusting actress-creature was mixed up in it. That's all."

"Mixed up how?" I questioned eagerly.

"That I refuse to discuss," said she, fixing me with an icy stare, and I saw at once she didn't know any more about it than I did. "But this much I will tell you, Miss Gray. An Arden shall never marry an actress if I can help it. The names of too many of our first families have been trailed in the filth by such creatures. I am taking James abroad, and shall keep him there until he sees reason. And I must ask you to assist him in no way to communicate with this—person. Just at present he's very weak—the wound promised to be dangerous at one time. But James never was very tractable, and when he gets well—"

"Look out for squalls," I finished to myself.

"Goodness! child," said Mrs. Arden, "you look absolutely pop-eyed. But go back. There may be emissaries of that woman on deck talking to him now. My brother is not to be left alone on this voyage."

I returned on deck reflecting. The idea of keeping espionage over a burlesque duelist was distasteful. If I were back in New York I felt I would resign the \$150 a month without a sigh.

But, in the middle of the ocean, I could hardly balk. Neither did I like the thought of being stranded in London.

The bundle of shawls in the deck-chair remained motionless. I wondered how he looked unwrapped—this "Jimmie" Arden, whose millions had gained him a tinselly fame from New York to San Francisco. I studied him from under slanting lids.

"Born with the curse of millions, poor thing," I murmured platitudinously, and then laughed a bit at my hypocrisy.

"So Jane told you, eh? And you're wondering why a man would shoot at another for a bleached actress?"

"Why, no," I cried, startled into truth. "I was thinking how nice it must be to be 'cursed with millions.'"

"But you've had Jane's version of the Florette Fleurelle scandal?"

"Florette Fleurelle!" I gasped. "Oh!—" My voice sank in disappointment.

I simply couldn't hang a shred of romance on Florette Fleurelle-Milligan.

"Eh—what—you know her? *You* don't look like an escaped chorus girl."

"No, indeed," I assented indignantly. "Florette was just Mamie Milligan when I knew her, and we went to school together in the same village."

"Ah! I suppose you were just the dearest chums."

"No," I snapped shortly. "Her mother was our washerwoman, and Mamie was a cringing little sneak, even then."

I didn't mean to say that—it rang cadish. But the sneer I fancied I heard in his voice simply dragged it out.

"She's very pretty," remarked Mr. Arden significantly.

"She was't then," I laughed. "Her hair was drab, and her freckles were like copper pennies. She was a horrid sly little cat—knew how to get her own way. Why, she could coax my prettiest sashes away from mother by looking pathetically envious at them. Often poor mumsy punished me to subdue my haughty pride and make me act like a little lady to Mamie Milligan. I dare say it's the same policy of judicious whining and crawling that's made a star of Florette Fleurelle. Where do you think she got that name?"

"The Lord knows," said Mr. Arden devoutly. "What's your front name?"

"Margaret," I informed him briefly.

"And they call you Peggy?"

They do, but how on earth did he know? Anyway, I felt that discussing front names with my employer wasn't businesslike, so I picked up the inevitable Omar.

"Shall I read?" I asked briefly.

"If you like," he assented. So I read, and he watched me.

As I've said before, my face isn't the

kind that will stand studying. When I talk one isn't so apt to notice my facial shortcomings. But whenever I'm silent, and I find any one looking at me, I always feel that he is finding them out. So I stopped rather soon, and we talked again.

He told me a little about himself, and I told him rather a good deal about myself; about the big old homestead in the country town where I'd been a really happy kiddy; about the interrupted college days that left me unfitted for anything; about my struggle to get along in New York; about the books I liked; about the time I met Mamie Florette Fleurelle-Milligan on Broadway and she'd tried to patronize me.

Afterward I tried to think of something I hadn't told him, and I was amazed to find I'd given him a brief synopsis of my life up to date. However, we grew to be very good friends in the next two days.

When one ignored his abrupt imperiousness, he was a really nice man, and I decided the tinselly reputation was mostly libel.

We were within a day of London, when he asked me to help him escape.

"Escape!" I ejaculated. "Where? How? From whom?"

"From Jane," he said gravely.

I stirred uneasily. I had almost forgotten that I was playing the part of watchdog. Daily I had reported to Mrs. Arden that he was convalescing nicely; that he was very quiet; that he didn't seem anxious to make any friends or see his old ones; and she had seemed wholly satisfied. Now, however, she would soon be able to look after him herself.

In London I supposed I would see little enough of him. I felt rather blank at the idea. Not that I am an iota sentimental, but I really liked him, and—He was repeating:

"I want you to help me escape from Jane. I want to get married in London."

Since that first day I had never heard anything further of Mamie Florette Fleurelle-Milligan. But now I met his gray eyes bravely.

They were nice eyes, with a mocking twinkle far back that sympathized with you while it laughed at you, so you couldn't really mind.

"Oh!" I cried miserably; "I can't conscientiously help you marry Mamie Milligan. You see, I know her—and—oh!—you'll think I'm jealous—because—because—she's successful. But it isn't that—don't you see. I really know her, and when *you* really know her you'd be sorry, and—please don't ask me to help you do that."

Mr. Arden was regarding me gravely.

"Peggy," he said, "I'll tell you something, and you're the only person alive that knows it. I have never even seen Mamie Florette Fleurette-Milligan outside the radius of the footlights. But I know I wouldn't marry her if she were the last woman on earth."

"But the famous duel?" I faltered.

"The infamous duel, you mean," he returned grimly. "Well, child, it was simply a champagne duel."

He flushed a bit.

"Morgan and I clashed in an argument over Fleurette—I don't know what—the shape of her nose or the vileness of her acting—at the Martin that evening. I am not a drunken fool ordinarily or often, but I was that night."

Then, with an impatient shrug of his shoulders, he dismissed Mamie Florette Fleurette-Milligan.

I tried hard to keep my mouth corners down, but an irrepressible delight was simply bursting within me.

"But, you see," Mr. Arden went on, "there is another girl, and I am going to marry her in London. Jane would object to her nearly as much as to Fleurette—in fact, Jane has the objection habit in rooted form. I'm rather crippled now from that fool bullet, but I don't intend to be dragged off to that stuffy hole—Brighton. I am going to marry the girl and carry her off to the highest point in Switzerland, where Jane or any one else will never find us."

He was gazing dreamily out to sea, and I stole a quick sidewise glance at him. Then I slipped softly away.

Isn't it wonderful to find yourself in love—wonderful, hateful, puzzling? You reason it down coldly, scornfully point out a thousand reasons why you're not, why you shouldn't be, laugh at the absurdity of it until the love lies crushed beneath your scorn and logic.

And then—you turn around, and there

it is laughing at you out of the corners with the smile of his eyes and the twist of his mouth, and you are smiling foolishly at the remembrance of some "nice thing" he said.

I dare say not being in love before made it worse for me. It's humiliating enough at best to be swayed by some one else's absence or presence, or smile or frown, like a puppet on a string, but to tumble into love with a man unsought and unwanted—well, it's the depths of abasement.

But, of course, I decided to help Jimmie Arden. There was nothing else left for me to do.

I told him so later, when I had pulled myself together and freshened my eyes with cold water and rice-powder. But afterward I avoided him.

Mrs. Arden reappeared on deck the last day out, and I helped Jeanne, her maid, with a thousand things below.

From the Paddington Station we drove straight to the Cecil in a victoria, and I had my first glimpse of London.

Foggy London? I, for one, shall never associate fog with London town again. The only speck on the breezy sunshine of the day was the gloom that enwrapped me as I pre-eded Jimmie Arden into the hansom that afternoon, ostensibly for a spin in Hyde Park.

"We are going first to get a license," he said, and in his excitement he put his hand over mine under the apron of the hansom.

"But the girl?" I questioned.

"She'll be at the church, all right." His voice exulted and his eyes shone at me expectantly.

There wasn't a bit of trouble with the license. As he waved it at me, running down the steps, I realized that I had hoped there might be.

We drew up in front of a quaint, ivy-covered church, and the obsequiously smiling driver beamed down at us encouragingly, as Jimmie told him to wait. I was trembling a bit, but I managed a smile and jest at cabby's obvious mistake.

"You would make a very pale bride," said Jimmie, looking at me curiously.

Far up the aisle where the altar-cloth shone dimly in the gloom a shadowy figure stood.

"Ah," said Mr. Arden, "the minister

is waiting. I phoned him this morning."

"But the girl?" I ventured tremulously.

I felt that it was a slap-dash way for a multimillionaire to get married.

"You're the only girl," he whispered. "Haven't you guessed that yet? Peggy, will you marry me?"

Well—why not? I was honestly in love with him, and perhaps you won't believe it—but in that moment I forgot the golden glory of his millions.

So I cast away the doubting shreds of pride and married Jimmie Arden of fabulous millions and tinselly fame—I, who six days before had been stranded, penniless, forlorn, in New York.

THAT FINE ADVERTISEMENT.

By LEE BERTRAND.

What happened when the author of a play tried an experiment in the booming-line.

WHEN his play was finished, Wiggins was a hopeful man. When he found a venturesome manager who was willing to produce the play, Wiggins was a proud man. When the play was actually produced, Wiggins was a sorely disappointed man.

For, contrary to his expectations, the public did not flock to the Globe Theater, where the play was running.

On the opening night the house was fairly well filled, for people came out of curiosity, attracted by the lurid posters which had been pasted all over town proclaiming that "A Fight for the Right" was the strongest political melodrama ever written.

But, after the opening night, the public formed its own opinion as to the truth of this contention, and this opinion was molded by the dramatic critics, who did not dignify the play by fiercely assailing it, but instead treated it in that facetious, ridiculing spirit which spells death to the hopes of the aspiring playwright.

After that the audiences at the Globe were so small that to "count the house" was a feat as easy as it was painful. Only one-half of the orchestra stalls were filled each night, and, even at that, the majority came on passes.

An audience mainly composed of such people is not a paying proposition, of course, but it is better to have "a paper house," as such an audience is technically designated, than to play to empty seats.

Therefore, Wiggins and the management of the Globe Theater began to distribute passes with prodigal liberality.

Wiggins gave box seats to his boarding-house landlady and orchestra stalls to each and every one of his fellow boarders.

This generosity made him very popular in the house. The unfortunate playwright sorely needed popularity somewhere, for he certainly was not popular at the Globe Theater, where Haggin, the manager, scowled upon him with bloodthirsty ferociousness and told him repeatedly that he (Wiggins) was "the worst lemon that ever came over the pike during the last half century."

"I've lost over three thousand dollars already on your miserable play," he growled one night, two weeks after the opening. "We're losing money hand over fist. There's scarcely enough dough in the house to-night to pay for the electric lights. Oh, you blooming lemon, if only I'd known how your confounded play was going to turn out!"

"Well, you ought to have known. If you can't judge the merits of a play before it's produced you're not fit to be a manager," snapped Wiggins, goaded into fury by the other's continual recriminations and his own bitter disappointment. "Don't blame me for your own short-sightedness. You weren't forced to produce my play. You went into this venture of your own free will, and you must take the consequences."

There was so much justice in this remark that the irate manager was discomfited.

"I suppose I haven't any right to blame anybody but myself," he muttered.

"When a man buys a gold brick he must expect to pay the price of his folly, but at the same time he can't be blamed for yearning to thrash the man who sold it to him. That's the way I feel toward you, Wiggins. When I look at those empty seats inside I can hardly refrain from taking it out on you personally."

"Well, you'd better not try it," growled Wiggins. "When a man has spent a year writing a play and has the mortification of finding out that that play is a failure, he isn't exactly in a mood to stand for having his nose punched without hitting back."

"I, too, feel awfully much like smashing somebody, and if you dare to lay a hand on me I'm liable to break every bone in your body."

There was a glint in Wiggins's eye which prompted the manager to allow this challenge to pass unheeded. The two men were standing in the lobby of the Globe Theater. Next door was the Tivoli, at which "Hop, Step, and Whistle," one of the big successes of the season, was being played.

Haggin gazed through the plate-glass doors at the crowds pouring into the lobby of the rival theater and at the ticket-speculators who thronged the sidewalk, rending the air with their cries and offering choice seats at exorbitant prices.

He groaned with jealousy at this enviable sight.

"No speculators stand outside our doors," he growled. "Even the scalpers don't want our tickets at half-price. Nobody seems to want to see our show. And I can't blame them, either," he added, glaring at Wiggins. "It's the rottenest play ever staged."

"Oh, I don't know!" cried Wiggins fiercely. "I've listened to you abuse my play, Mr. Haggin, ever since we opened, but I'm going to tell you now that I think it's your fault the play's a failure."

"What!" cried the indignant manager, his eyes dilated with surprise. "You say it's my fault! I didn't write the play, did I?"

"No, that's very true; but I don't think the play's so bad—I really don't. It may be weak in spots—"

"Weak in spots!" interrupted the manager disgustedly. "It's got so many bad spots that it looks like a case of

measles. I tell you the play's absolutely rotten. If it wasn't, the public would come to see it. The public is the only real judge of a play. I'm not one of those 'art for art's sake' fellows. The box-office receipts are the only real test of a play, in my opinion."

"Well, if you knew your business, perhaps the public would come to see our play," retorted Wiggins, looking the manager straight in the eye.

"If I knew my business! Listen to him talk!" sneered the manager. "I can't go out on the street and kidnap an audience, can I? I gathered together a strong company, and the stage settings are as elaborate as you could want. What more could I do?"

"The company is all right and so are the stage settings," Wiggins admitted. "I think the great trouble lies in the fact that my play hasn't been properly advertised. I know you've flooded the town with the sheets and hand-bills; but that isn't what I mean. What we want is newspaper publicity. Now, take that play next door. There's columns in the papers about it every day. That is the main reason why it is such a success."

"Well, I've got a press-agent," growled Haggin. "He does his best to get stuff in the papers; but he tells me it's pretty hard to get the editors to give space to such a poor production. I guess he's telling the truth, too."

"No, he isn't," declared the playwright emphatically. "That press-agent of yours doesn't know his business. If he sent out the right kind of stuff the papers would have to print it. Now, I've got an idea—"

"You have, eh?" exclaimed the manager somewhat eagerly; for he was desperate enough to be willing to listen to any suggestion. "What is it? By all means let's have it. Perhaps even *you* may have an original thought—although one would never suspect it after seeing your play."

"Well, it's just this," went on Wiggins, ignoring this brutal thrust. "You know my play is founded upon facts. It depicts the present political situation in this town. My hero is really patterned after the present mayor, and my villain is a caricature of O'Rourke, the Democratic boss. Now, why can't we persuade the

mayor to come and see the show? If we could get him to occupy the stage box some night, the papers would have to give us a good notice. They'd deem it a good news-story that the mayor of this town should come here to see himself and his bitter political opponent portrayed on the stage."

"By Jove!" cried Haggin excitedly. "That isn't a bad idea. His honor the mayor ought to have received an invitation before now. If we could get him to witness a performance it would be a fine advertisement. That press-agent of mine ought to have conceived that idea long ago. I guess I'll bounce him and get a live man in his place. That's a pretty good scheme of yours, Wiggins."

"That isn't all of it," said the playwright proudly. "My plan is much more elaborate than that. Listen! You know the bitter enmity that exists between the mayor and O'Rourke. They never appear together in public, you know. If his honor gets an invitation to attend a public dinner, and he hears that O'Rourke is to be present, he always manages to fall sick or find some other reason for not attending. Now, if—"

He suddenly lowered his voice and whispered the rest of the sentence in the manager's ear. As he did so, the latter's face broke into a broad smile—the first smile that had been seen there since the opening night of "A Fight for the Right."

He seized the playwright's hand effusively.

"That sounds to me like a first rate scheme, Wiggins," he said. "It certainly would be a great political sensation, and ought to do our show a whole lot of good. Say, you ain't much good at writing plays, but if you ever want a job as a press-agent, you can name your own price. It's a bully idea. But do you think you can work it?" he added anxiously.

"Leave it to me," said the other. "I'll go to see the mayor first thing in the morning. I think I shall be able to persuade him to attend."

True to his promise, Wiggins next day visited the city hall and sent in his card to his honor.

The latter did not know Wiggins from the man in the moon, but after the play-

wright had explained the object of his visit to two or three different secretaries, the mayor, who prided himself upon his democracy, graciously granted him an interview.

"So you have written a play," exclaimed his honor as Wiggins entered the great presence.

"Yes, Mr. Mayor. And I have also taken the liberty of patterning the character of my hero after yourself."

"You don't tell me!" exclaimed the mayor, looking duly appreciative of this compliment.

"It is a political play," continued Wiggins, "and, as its title implies, it depicts how the right—represented by yourself and your faction—triumphs over the corrupt, which is represented, of course, by O'Rourke, the Democratic boss, and the names in my play are disguised, but anybody familiar with the political situation knows who the characters stand for. Now, don't you think that you would like to see the play, so that you could judge whether I have depicted the situation rightly? We should esteem it a great honor if *your* honor would attend a performance. I should be delighted to place a box at your disposal. Can I flatter myself, Mr. Mayor, that you will accept our invitation?"

"You say that in your play the villain is a caricature of O'Rourke?" inquired the other.

"Yes, Mr. Mayor, and he is badly crushed by the hero—a humble stage portraiture of yourself."

"Then, by Jove, I'll attend a performance!" exclaimed the mayor decidedly. "It is proper that such plays should be encouraged in the interest of civic advancement. I will be pleased to accept your invitation."

"What night, please, your honor?" cried Wiggins eagerly, making a memorandum in his note-book when the mayor declared that Wednesday evening would suit him admirably.

Elated at the successful result of his visit, Wiggins left the city hall, but he did not return at once to the theater. Instead, he went to the headquarters of O'Rourke, the Democratic boss, and after some difficulty managed to obtain an interview with that famous exponent of advanced political methods.

"Mr. O'Rourke," he began boldly, "I have written a play."

"Well, that ain't quite as bad as committing a murder," the big boss assured him.

"I have taken the liberty of patterning one of my principal characters after your esteemed self," continued Wiggins. "Under the circumstances, I venture to take the liberty of inviting you to see the play. Can I offer you a box?"

"Humph!" exclaimed the political boss, with a frown. "What kind of a fellow have you painted me in your play? I suppose I'm a regular dyed-in-the-wool villain, eh?"

"Not exactly," answered Wiggins, avoiding the other's searching gaze. "I have tried to paint you in a pretty good light, Mr. O'Rourke. Come and see for yourself if I've succeeded in doing you justice. Can I reserve a box for you, say for next Wednesday night?"

"By jimminy, I *will* go to see your play!" exclaimed the boss, thumping the table with his mighty fist. "I suppose you've roasted me unmercifully—they always do; but I can stand for a roast. I enjoy seeing myself cartooned, and the uglier you make me the better I like it. Yes, I'll accept your invitation. Wednesday night is as good as any other to me. I'll be there."

"Thank you so much!" exclaimed Wiggins gratefully, and after he had left O'Rourke's headquarters he smiled sardonically and hurried to Haggin's office to acquaint the manager with the complete success of his mission.

"You've done fine," the latter assured him. "It'll be a great stunt. We'll put the mayor in the left-hand stage box, and O'Rourke in the right-hand stage box, directly opposite to him. Neither will know that the other is to be present until they enter their respective boxes and catch sight of each other. Then they'll glare across the theater at each other, and there's no telling what will happen."

"The papers are bound to print good stories about the incident," said Wiggins exultingly. "It will be the first time that the mayor and O'Rourke have confronted each other in public since the day of their historic quarrel."

"I suppose the mayor will be sore on us when he finds out he's been tricked,"

remarked Haggin a little apprehensively. "He'll accuse us of bad faith and all that sort of thing."

"All the better for us if he does," declared Wiggins. "The more he says about it, the more of an advertisement we'll get in the newspapers. Isn't it a great scheme?"

"It certainly is," cried the manager warmly. "You're a wonder, Wiggins, my boy. I want to apologize right now for all the mean things I've said about you. I still believe that your piece is rotten, but I think that after we've sprung next Wednesday night's political sensation upon the public we'll play to crowded houses for the rest of the engagement."

When Wednesday night arrived the theater was specially decorated for the great occasion. The mayor's box was adorned with red, white, and blue bunting, and American flags were suspended from the galleries.

Haggin had sent out a brief and mysterious announcement to the city editors of all the local newspapers, informing them that it would be well to have a reporter present at the Wednesday night performance of "A Fight for the Right," as an important happening was expected.

The visit of the mayor was not advertised in advance. Although Haggin realized that such an advertisement would have brought several patrons to the theater, he carefully refrained from taking the step, inasmuch as to have announced the mayor's contemplated visit would naturally result in O'Rourke learning of it and probably staying away.

But in order to have a crowded house to greet his distinguished guests the manager handed out "paper" with more liberality than ever, and before the curtain went up on Wednesday night every seat was filled.

His honor the mayor arrived early. He drove up in a closed carriage, accompanied by his private secretary.

Wiggins and Haggin were in the lobby, waiting to receive the great man, and with many bows and scrapes they ushered him to his box.

Many in the audience recognized the familiar figure of the city's chief executive, and as he took his seat a burst of applause greeted him, for the mayor was very popular.

His honor acknowledged this cordial greeting with a bow and a pleasant smile. and, settling himself in his cushioned chair, prepared to enjoy the play.

Just as the curtain was going up, there was a commotion in the box on the other side of the theater.

A tall, broad-shouldered, square-jawed man, accompanied by a couple of friends, had just entered the box.

Many in the audience recognized him as O'Rourke, the Democratic leader, and there was some applause; for of course the boss had his admirers.

The mayor glanced across at the opposite box, and, as he caught sight of the new arrival and recognized him, his face paled somewhat.

As for O'Rourke, he stared at his hated enemy, the mayor, and his fat face went fiery red.

"Darn it!" he muttered to his two friends. "They've handed me a lemon. They didn't tell me that sniveling cuss was going to be here. I've been bunched. I'll make it hot for the management of this theater for playing this dirty trick on me."

In the meantime the audience had become fully alive to the comedy of the situation and its sensational possibilities. An excited buzz went around the house. Everybody was whispering to everybody else that it was the first time the two political enemies had faced each other in many months.

The newspaper reporters were covertly taking notes. It looked like a good story to them. Wiggins and Haggin were almost delirious with delight. The scheme was working splendidly.

His honor the mayor, his face white with anger, leaned toward his secretary and whispered:

"Do you see who that is in the opposite box, Slattery? The management of this theater has tricked me. It's a scurvy trick, too. They have taken advantage of my good nature."

"They ought to be horsewhipped," replied the indignant secretary. "It's a mean piece of business—to repay your kindness in honoring them with a visit by making a laughing-stock of you."

"I've half a mind to get up now and leave the theater," muttered the mayor.

The secretary shook his head.

"You can't do it, sir," he said. "Just think what the papers would say to-morrow if you did that! They'd say that his honor the mayor was routed by O'Rourke. You've got to stand your ground, sir."

"I guess you're right," said the mayor, with a sigh. "I can't do anything. My hands are tied. Whatever step I take will benefit the rascally management of this theater by adding to their advertisement. It is a most embarrassing situation. I'll never accept another such invitation."

"Well, O'Rourke doesn't seem to be enjoying the state of affairs any more than you do," replied the secretary soothingly. "He seems to me to be boiling over with rage. It's easy to see that he didn't plan this meeting. I suppose you'll have to make the best of it, your honor, and lend yourself to a miserable advertising scheme."

But a brilliant idea had suddenly occurred to the mayor. He whispered it in the ear of his private secretary, and the latter nodded approvingly.

"Excellent, Mr. Mayor! Excellent!" he said. "It will spoil their game, and make them mighty sorry that they tried to play such a trick on you. It will serve the rascals right."

As the first act proceeded, the audience glanced often at the figure of the mayor, and from him their glances were diverted toward O'Rourke's box, for everybody could see that the two leading characters of the play were caricatures of the two distinguished visitors, and everybody was anxious to see what effect the play was having upon the mayor and O'Rourke.

To the surprise of everybody, the former did not seem to be paying any attention to what was going on on the stage. He was leaning back in his chair in a very restful attitude.

His eyes were closed and, suddenly, deep snores coming from the direction of his box betrayed the startling fact that he was sound asleep. His secretary, too, appeared to be wrapped in the arms of slumber.

O'Rourke glanced across at the box of his political opponent, and as he discovered the somnolency that reigned therein he uttered a gasp of surprise.

But O'Rourke's strongest quality was his ability to size up a situation quickly.

It took him only a few seconds to understand the mayor's clever plan to defeat the purposes of the theater management.

He whispered to his friends in the box, and a few minutes afterward every occupant of the place, including O'Rourke himself, was apparently fast asleep and snoring lustily.

And they continued to sleep and continued to snore throughout the first act. So did the mayor and his private secretary.

When the curtain came down at the completion of the act, his honor awoke with an ostentatious start, and, nudging his secretary, left the theater. Two seconds afterward O'Rourke also awoke, and he and his friends made their exit. The two boxes were empty for the rest of the performance.

The next morning Wiggins entered Haggin's private office, looking like a man who had been whipped.

"Have you seen the papers?" he inquired of the manager in a funereal whisper.

"Yes," groaned Haggin, "I've seen them. You're a fine specimen of human intelligence, you are. There isn't a single paper that doesn't say that our show was so bad that it put both the mayor and O'Rourke to sleep. It's a fine advertisement for the play, ain't it? Confound you and your crazy plans. Now we're worse off than ever. You've killed the piece. For two pins I'd punch your blooming head!"

And the wretched Wiggins was so completely crushed that he answered not a word.

But it was not until later in the day that the manager's wrath against the playwright reached its full height.

This happened when a special messenger arrived from the mayor's office bearing a letter from his honor.

Haggin read this letter, and then, with an oath, went in search of the unfortunate Wiggins.

"Read that, you blithering idiot!" he howled, when he had found him. "Read this letter, you escaped lunatic, and see what you have done!"

Apprehensively, the trembling playwright drew the mayor's communication from the crested envelope and read:

JAMES HAGGIN,
MANAGER GLOBE THEATER.

DEAR SIR: I want to thank you for the kind invitation you extended to me last night. I must apologize for having gone to sleep during the performance. I really could not help it. While I was awake, however, I was able to note that there are several structural features of your theater which are in violation of the building laws. These will have to be attended to and the theater will have to be closed immediately until the building is rebuilt in accordance with the law. You will hear from the commissioner of buildings, to whom I have reported the matter.

I desire to thank you again for the opportunity you afforded me last night to make this discovery. Of course, I am actuated solely by a desire to safeguard the interest of the public in this matter.

Yours very truly,
THE MAYOR.

DAYS OF MY YOUTH.

DAYS of my youth,
Ye have glided away;
HAIRS of my youth,
Ye are frosted and gray;
EYES of my youth,
Your keen sight is no more;
CHEEKS of my youth,
Ye are furrowed all o'er;
STRENGTH of my youth,
All your vigor is gone;
THOUGHTS of my youth,
Your gay visions are flown.

St. George Tucker.

A TRICK OF CHANCE.

By FRED V. GREENE, Jr.

A rush to catch a train, checked by a trivial circumstance which leads to large consequences.

"GOOD Heavens! it's twenty minutes after nine and the train leaves the Grand Central at ten!"

Mason had suddenly glanced at the clock, and now gathered up the scattered papers and reports.

Kendall Mason was the head bookkeeper for the New York branch of the American Playing Card Company, whose main office was in Cleveland, Ohio. For some years he had been an assistant, but the death of "Old Snell," as the head bookkeeper had always been known, gave Mason the promotion.

The next day, at nine o'clock, there was to be a meeting of officers and directors at the Cleveland office, and Mason was to be there to read the reports of the branch. This was an event he had looked forward to—it meant his contact with those higher up, and as he had instituted many changes in old Snell's system, he considered it his first opportunity to prove to the company officials his true value.

For some days he had been working upon the statements, often laboring at the office far into the night, but at last the task was completed and turned over to the stenographer for tabulation, and as the finished statements came back to his desk, a few at a time, Mason could not refrain from congratulating himself upon the clear and concise way in which he had handled the different accounts.

"I suppose 'Daddy' Armstrong took an afternoon train," he remarked, rapidly sorting the papers and reports. "I heard he went home early."

Mr. Armstrong, or "Daddy," as all the clerks called him behind his back, was the president of the company, in charge of the New York office, and very popular with all his subordinates—consequently the nickname.

Jamming the papers into his bag, Mason slipped out of his office-jacket and

rushed over to the safe, directly alongside of which hung his coat. Taking his hat from the hook, he placed it upon his head, and then took down the garment beneath it, stepping away as he slipped his arm into the sleeve.

But something was wrong—it seemed caught. A quick look, and his face paled as he exclaimed in dismay, after tugging as hard as he dared without tearing it: "It's—locked—in the safe! Higgins is a fool!"

Sure enough, about two inches of the front of the coat had been caught in the closed door—the garment hung right alongside—and was gripped so securely by the steel doors that there seemed only one thing to do—to tear it out.

But on second thought Mason realized this would not do. He could not appear before the officials of the company with the corner of the front of his coat torn off—and they would not care to listen to explanations regarding it.

To go home and get another suit was impossible. It would take him a full hour to do this, and as the train left at ten—it was now nine-thirty—this was out of the question; and further, as the ten o'clock was the only train he could take that would get him in Cleveland at nine in the morning, that certainly was the one he must catch.

"I'm a fool not to have thought of that before!" he blurted out, as a sudden idea struck him. Rushing to the telephone, he called excitedly: "Central! Central! 8260 Plaza—quickly!" Then he added aloud to himself: "If I can only get Higgins down here to open the safe—what a fool he is, anyway. I suppose the old duffer is in bed by this time. Why they keep him as cashier—what rotten telephone service!" he broke out as he banged the receiver hook up and down.

"They do not answer," came the cool information over the wire.

"Keep ringing them!" he ordered impatiently, "and call me when you get them."

Hanging up the receiver, Mason exclaimed angrily: "He goes to bed with the chickens—and she'll have to wake him up."

Turning from the telephone, he glanced at the clock and groaned aloud: "Nine-forty! But if I leave at ten of, I can make the train. It's too late now to get Higgins up, even if the old fool can be wakened. I must get that coat out. To-morrow is the chance of my life!"

Once more he seized the coat, pulling frantically upon it. But not an inch did it give. Again he tried, pulling harder than ever. But a sudden, suspicious little rip of a few threads quickly proved this was not the thing to do.

He dropped it quickly and stepped back a pace or two, eying the garment angrily.

"If that coat were only a double-breasted one, I'd cut that corner off in a minute. When it was buttoned it would never show. But it isn't!"

As he said this a sound resembling a fully developed groan escaped through his gritted teeth.

"I'll pay old Higgins out for this if it takes me ten years to do it." Then in sheer desperation, as if that steel monster before him would cringe and obey his desires, he rushed at it and, frantically seizing the handles, bore his weight down upon them, seemingly expecting—

Before he realized it, Mason found himself sprawling upon the floor. The handles had suddenly been forced down, apparently following his commands, and this was so unexpected that Mason lost his balance and fell heavily, crashing against a desk as he went down.

He quickly regained his feet, however, and exclaimed: "Can it be—"

He stopped suddenly as he saw the top of a soft felt hat disappear behind a large filing-case at the other end of the room.

Forgetting his desire to open the safe, and thinking one of the clerks had played a practical joke upon him, he strode angrily toward the spot where he had seen the hat, calling out: "It may be a joke to you, but you'll pay—"

"Steady, young feller," interrupted a voice as a rough-looking man stepped out from his hiding-place and pointed a revolver directly at Mason. "No noise, now. I'm desperate and I'll make this friend of mine speak if you force me to."

"What—the—" Mason stammered, completely taken off his guard. He staggered back a few steps. "Look here—what do you mean?" he demanded.

"Just what I say," coolly replied the man. "I want what's in that safe. To-morrow's pay-day, and the money's there."

A smile spread over his face as he noted how completely taken aback Mason appeared to be.

"Now, I don't want no trouble, so you just step over in that corner and watch me get it," he went on. "I'm in a tight box, and if I'm caught it's all up with me, so I'll shoot myself before they'll get me. But if I do, you'll come with me. So step over there—and be darn quick about it!"

Mason had listened anxiously to the burglar's speech of warning, yet hardly heard it, endeavoring as he was to think of some scheme to outwit the fellow. But a revolver in one's face, with a desperate man's hand upon the trigger, is anything but conducive to the hatching of clear and concise plans.

With a forced laugh, Mason broke out: "Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but the money is not in that safe."

He watched the burglar's face and noted the slightest trace of disappointment pass over it. Realizing that he had made some progress, he continued, pointing to the other side of the room: "It's in that safe over there."

By now he had completely forgotten his desire to catch the ten o'clock train.

For a second the burglar's eyes shifted to the spot indicated. It was Mason's opportunity.

With a spring that brought into play every sinew in his muscular body, he threw himself full upon the other. He had found the proper moment, as before the man had time to press the trigger Mason was on him and they rolled on the floor, each endeavoring to gain an advantage.

Not a word escaped them as first one, then the other, seemed a sure victor in the desperate wrestling match.

The burglar was a heavier and a larger man than Mason, but the weight of the one seemed an even match as against the agility of the other. The awful strain was now beginning to tell upon them both, their breath coming in quick, short gasps through clenched teeth.

Suddenly the burglar forced Mason upon his back and buried his knee in his chest.

"I've got you now," he hissed as his large, powerful hands wound themselves around Mason's throat and he pressed his head firmly against the floor.

Mason's squirming and wriggling proved useless. He could not loosen that vise-like grip, and the heavy knee seemed to be crushing out his very life.

His eyes bulged from their sockets—the attempt to speak terminated in a faint gurgle. Everything seemed to dance before his eyes, then sudden darkness gathered around him as he heard a voice exclaim: "Here! What's this?"

In his halt swoon Mason saw himself before the directors, reading statement after statement, and could distinctly hear the many favorable comments upon them as he explained the new systems he had installed. And just as the president walked over and patted him on the shoulder, with the remark, "Mason, we'll double your salary from the first of the month," his eyes opened and the real events of the evening were before him.

"Don't ye dare to move, or I'll bore a hole in ye big enough for a trolley-car to run through!"

As he heard this injunction he roused up and took in the situation at a glance. There was Raftery, the night-watchman, revolver in hand, standing over the prostrate form of Mason's burglar.

In the tussle the robber's pistol had been knocked to one side, and Raftery, passing through on his rounds, had heard the noise of the scuffle. Hurrying through the building in the direction of the sounds, he had arrived just as Mason lost consciousness, and was now standing guard over his prisoner, not daring to move until help came from somewhere.

As he realized Mason was rising—he did not look to see, but kept his eyes fixed upon the burglar—he questioned:

"Are ye hurt much, Mr. Mason?"

"I think not," was the faint reply.

But the tussle had left him so weak that he staggered and lurched heavily against a desk.

Raftery heard Mason stumble and cried angrily, still keeping his eyes on the prisoner: "Ye dirty blagard, I've a mind to put a bullet in ye, just on general principles. Don't ye dare to move," he cautioned quickly as the burglar attempted to raise himself on his elbow.

Without turning to Mason, the watchman questioned kindly: "Are ye able to git me a piece of rope, sir? I'll tie up this rogue. Or if ye will telephone for a cop 'twould be better. I'm perfectly willin' to git him off me hands."

"I'll phone—that would be better," Mason replied as he limped painfully toward the instrument.

As he walked across the room his glance fell upon the clock. Five minutes of ten—and *he had missed his train*, and what he considered the opportunity of his life. With an inward curse that took the outward shape of a groan, he turned and shook his fist at the prostrate burglar, then he grasped the telephone receiver with the other hand.

Police headquarters were got after an aggravating delay, and the incident quickly related.

"We'll have a couple of men up there double quick," was the announcement at the other end of the wire.

Limping back to the watchman's side, Mason remarked: "Raftery, I'd better go down and let the policemen in. The outside doors are locked, you know."

Raftery was not particularly well pleased with this plan. Although he still kept his eyes directly upon the burglar and his revolver pointed straight at his head, he showed his fear of the man.

"Sure, Mr. Mason, lit thim bang on the door. We'll hear thim and I can go down and lit thim in. We'd better both stay here till they come. Ye know—"

"Raftery, I'll stay here," Mason interrupted angrily—plainly detecting the watchman's fear of being alone with the man, who had not moved, but still lay stretched upon the floor. "Give *me* the revolver."

"Are ye sure it's safe ye'll be, sor?" questioned Raftery as he handed the weapon over almost eagerly.

"Certainly!" Mason declared as he seized it. Then addressing the burglar, added: "You had me once, but I've got you now, and if you move it will be my chance to even up things a bit. Do you hear?"

An angry grunt was the only reply, and Raftery hurried from the office, glancing back over his shoulder apprehensively, as if he almost expected to see another tussle.

As Mason stood there awaiting the policeman, the thoughts of the evening revolving in his mind, he wondered just what the outcome would be.

Would the directors postpone their meeting? He would telegraph, immediately he was rid of the prisoner, the cause of all the trouble. A thought struck him—he would phone to Mr. Armstrong's house to find out what hotel he stopped at in Cleveland, and then wire details.

Perhaps they might continue the meeting the next day, just to hear those statements read. Oh! if they only would—

Heavy tramping in the hall broke into Mason's reverie, as two blue-coated officers entered the room followed by Raftery, who remarked: "Right over there they are," and then fell back discreetly in the rear.

The policemen walked briskly over to where Mason still stood guard over the thief. Grasping him roughly by the collar of his coat, one of the men pulled him to his feet as he questioned: "What does this mean, anyway?"

"Hold on, now; don't get fresh," growled the burglar, as he raised his hands to protect himself from the blows he evidently expected.

But one of the detectives, either thinking he intended to strike at them or else meaning to intimidate the prisoner, dealt him a stinging blow in the face, flooring him, where he lay still, evidently fearing a repetition of the attack should he rise.

"Here, you get up here," commanded the policeman as he jerked the man to his feet. Then running to his brother officer, he added: "Mike, we'd better get the wagon. Call them up."

As the one addressed as Mike walked

to the telephone the other questioned Mason:

"Tell me all about it, sir."

The details quickly given, the officer turned to the prisoner with: "Well, got anything to say?"

The burglar retreated a step, evidently expecting another blow, then replied: "Well, I'll tell de whole game if yez'll give me a chance. I ain't de whole guy in dis mess."

As he hesitated a moment the officer broke in: "Well, go ahead. Who is?"

"Higgins—he—"

"Higgins!" exclaimed Mason in dismay.

"De very one," continued the burglar, now speaking more confidently as he realized that for a moment there was another who had taken the attention of the men. "He lef' de safe unlocked, and I sneaked in as de gang was quittin'. If you hadn't butted in by hangin' aroun' I'd 'a' done de job by now." This last was addressed to Mason.

"Ye see dat guy—I mean Higgins," he continued, "has been playin' de ponies—"

"Good Heavens!" Mason groaned.

"And de bookies hit him bad in de wallet," he added, apparently not noticing Mason's interruption. "So he fixed it wid me to do de job, and we was to whack up. But I guess de only t'ing we'll whack up will be de hull time we git in de coop together, divided between him and me. Anyway, I don't care much. I'm only a poor rummy, and I know I'll git enough to eat, anyhow."

"I guess that's the wagon," broke in the officer who had telephoned, as a rumble sounded in the street below.

"All right—come along!" commanded the other policeman as he slipped the handcuffs upon the burglar's wrists. "Just for precaution's sake," he remarked as the click of their locking was heard.

After they had left, Mason sat down at his desk to think.

"Higgins gone wrong!" he exclaimed. "I can hardly believe it. But it sounds possible if not probable."

His eyes burned, his breathing was labored, and his chest pained severely.

"What had I better do?" he questioned aloud.

A glance at the clock showed him it was now ten-twenty-five.

"I suppose the best thing is to call up Mrs. Armstrong and try to find out where 'Daddy' stops in Cleveland, and wire him full details," he continued to ruminate.

Mason walked painfully over to the telephone. It seemed as if every bone, muscle, and joint in his body had been strained, bent, and twisted.

After he had given Central the number, there was some delay before the party called for answered. Then a man's voice, still thick with the sleep out of which he had been rudely awakened, inquired: "Well—what is it?"

"Is this Mr. Armstrong's house?"

"Yes," came the impatient reply.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Armstrong stops while in Cleveland?"

"Who are you?" demanded the voice.

"I am Mr. Mason, the head book-keeper—"

"Is that you, Mason? I thought you were on your way to Cleveland by this time. Why—"

"Why, Da—I mean, Mr. Armstrong, I thought you were, too!" Mason exclaimed in surprised tones.

"No. Something came up at the last moment that prevented my going. I phoned your house, but they said you were going direct from the office to the train. So I judged you were going to take an early one."

"Mr. Armstrong, may I come right up to see you? It's very important."

Mason's voice was now all eagerness. He could hardly see how the directors' meeting could be held without the president.

"Yes, if it is really important. But come as soon as possible. I'll expect you right away. Good-by."

Slamming the safe-doors shut and locking them carefully, Mason rushed out of the office, carrying his grip of papers. He was soon ringing the bell of the Armstrong home, and his employer answered the door himself, clad in a bathrobe and slippers.

"Well, Mason, what's the trouble?" he demanded, apparently not greatly pleased with the fact that his sleep had been broken into.

Mason quickly related all the events

of the evening, and when he came to the confession of the burglar, implicating Higgins. Mr. Armstrong broke out: "Higgins! I can't believe it!"

The rest of the story seemed to be lost upon the president, who had fallen into a train of thought that Mason noticed only too plainly. At last Mr. Armstrong remarked in a far-away tone: "Mason, I can't believe it. Higgins and I were boys together—we grew up together. There is some mistake, Mason—some mistake."

"But how about the meeting?" Mason questioned, far more interested in that than in Higgins's future.

"Oh, that? I've wired Cleveland to postpone it another day. We'll go out together to-morrow night."

With a sigh of relief, Mason exclaimed: "Thank Heaven!"

Mr. Armstrong gave no intimation that he heard Mason, but continued thoughtfully: "Say nothing to any one about to-night, Mason. See Raftery at once and caution him. I'll phone the police myself, and see Higgins the first thing in the morning."

Rising from his chair, he held out his hand and murmured: "Good night."

Mason hurried back and explained all to Raftery, then proceeded to his home, where he spent a sleepless night.

The next morning he was at the office bright and early. Mr. Armstrong was already there, evidently awaiting Higgins's arrival.

Presently the cashier walked in nervously, his face pale and haggard.

As he approached his desk, Mr. Armstrong walked toward him slowly. As Higgins noted the look upon the president's features his face paled and his limbs seemed to totter beneath him.

"Dave—did you?" was all the president said, as he gazed sadly into the cashier's face.

But there was no reply.

"How much—was it?" again questioned the president.

Higgins glanced around the room and noted the faces of the clerks, wide-eyed with wonder at the scene being enacted before them. Then he walked deliberately over to his desk, pulled out a drawer, and seemed to fumble among the papers. Suddenly, without any warning,

he raised a little vial to his lips, and before any one could prevent him had drained it of its contents.

"I knew—it—would—come to—this," he groaned as he sank in a heap upon the floor.

Every one was full of excitement now, and one of the clerks, with more presence of mind than the rest, telephoned for a doctor. But before he arrived David Higgins had breathed his last—passed from the presence of his superior on earth to the great Superior beyond.

With tears in his eyes and a voice that shook with emotion, Mr. Armstrong addressed the clerks, who stood at a respectful distance, horror-stricken at what they had just witnessed:

"Boys, the office is closed for the day. I'll await the arrival of the coroner. Go."

Then turning to Mason, he remarked sadly: "Mason, meet me at the ten o'clock train to-night. The meeting must be to-morrow. It cannot be postponed again."

TRAGEDY BY WIRE.

By GRIFFIN BARRY.

A message that precipitated discord instead of the harmony it was intended to convey.

Have ate four Sotalia.

PHILIP.

CHARMING Mrs. Harrison had been crying, but at this astonishing telegram she stopped and called back the Irish maid.

"What does it mean, Nora?" she said through her tears—tears whose cause was Philip, by the way.

"Dunno, mum. It come over the tili-phone. The man at the office sid he'd haf to give it to me that way because his boys are on shtrike. What's sotalias, mum?"

"I don't know what sotalia are," replied Mrs. Harrison. "And Philip was never guilty of grammar like that in his life. Oh, Nora, are you sure you heard aright?"

"Shure, mum. The man repatid it. Maybe sotalia is in the dictionary."

No, the word was not in the dictionary, but they did eventually find it in an encyclopedia.

And when Mrs. Harrison had read the definition once, she read it again, then shrieked: "'Sotalia—a succulent West Indian fish, edible in small quantities, but often poisonous if more than one is eaten.'"

Did Philip mean that he had eaten four?

To find a way out of the tangle, she groped back over the events of the day,

harrowing enough already to a bride of half a year.

Continuous heartache had been her portion since her husband banged the outer door at 8.30 A.M. Cooing over fruit had passed into cozening over muffins, which ended in a flat refusal from Phil Harrison "to take any theater party to the opera on any night next week."

An earthquake was easier to believe than a refusal from Phil. Always before he had unwrinkled her frowns by a kiss on his favorite spot beneath her ear; he knew he could count on the result. This time he but slammed the outer door.

Reluctantly, Amy Harrison faced the awful suspicion that her husband had committed suicide. She could make nothing else out of the despatch.

Its grammar was inexplicably bad, but can a man facing death think of grammar? Probably the telegraph company had bungled it. What bitter folly were quarrels!

It needed only a tragedy to change the spoiled wifeling into a woman. She figured carefully how she might find him in the city.

His office replied over the telephone that he had left early in the afternoon. She queried all his haunts she could remember. Result: general ignorance. Had he eaten these sotalias at the club, on the street, or at some horrid little for-

eign restaurant, where anything might happen?

Then she remembered Phil saying that his friend Agressi, the Italian tenor, was an authority on subtle poisons. Had Agressi seen him die?

She tried to think of Agressi's telephone number, and failed. The Metropolitan Opera-House gave it to her after agonizing details about her name and business, but Agressi brokenly remarked that he hadn't seen "my fren' Haree-sonna" for a month.

Amy at length steeled herself to wait for them to bring him home. As darkness fell and her longing grew, she even began to hope that he would be brought, *not* dead—dying, only, if that must be.

This, in spite of the plain words in the telegram and the corroborative doom she had read in the encyclopedia.

Finally, the wife who trembled to think she might be a widow gathered all the pillows, hot-water bottles and restoratives in the house, and with a huge invalid-chair, decided to meet Phil at the 5.50 train, his usual one.

Her mother from across the street accompanied her, bringing two trained nurses and a doctor. A neighbor or two heard the rumor and gathered.

A glossy black pup, their mutual joy, was there. (The sensitive brute seemed to mourn, too. His yaps at the arriving train helped hide Amy's sobs.)

And Phil did appear—pale, but alive.

"Can you forgive me, my love?" he said, as two men helped him off the train.

She sobbed with gratitude at the sound of his voice, and kissed a skin bruise on his hand—made by his own nails at the first agonies of sotalia poison.

With this outward and visible sign before her, she had only to look once into his eyes to forgive him forthwith.

"Oh, if you had succeeded!" she cried, moistening his coat.

"But," he returned, a little proudly, "I did succeed."

"What!" she shrieked, and drew back.

At the same time he saw the assemblage awaiting him on the platform and drew back also.

"Phil, do you mean that you must die yet?"

"Die? Well. I was certainly almost killed getting these tickets. I succeeded, though, at the expense of a bruise or two."

"Do you mean to say you didn't eat any sotalias?"

Phil looked at her as if she were talking gibberish.

"Sotalias," she repeated. "'Succulent West Indian fish, poisonous if—' Didn't you eat them and try to die because we had quarreled?"

Her husband gave one weak gasp and sank into the invalid-chair.

"Take me home, Amy, and stop talking that way."

At home, he asked for the telegram. They brought it just as the Hibernian Nora had copied it. When he read it, he emitted a series of wan chuckles. Then he wrote beneath it the message he had really sent. Amy read:

Have eight for "Sodalia."—PHILIP.

"Eight means eight tickets, Amy, dearest. 'Sodalia' is the name of the new opera in which your favorite tenor is to sing. I fought my way through the crowd at the box-office to punish myself for being a brute this morning. A broken rib and a bruise isn't much, if it proves I love you."

Amy straightway became contrite and tearful.

"We'll discharge Nora to-morrow," she said, from his knee.

"And throw away the encyclopedia," he laughed; adding, after a bit, his fingers deep in her hair: "I can think of still another improvement."

"Yes?"

"Next time, you might omit being a goose."

WELCOME.

So glad the word of greeting,
So sweet the kiss and smile,
That parting, for such meeting,
Were almost made worth while.

George Alison.

THE MAN IN THE GREEN CAR.

By F. K. SCRIBNER.

The strange adventure that befell an American in Germany,
and the outcome of which concerned a conspirator in Paris.

MY chauffeur got upon his feet and drew a greasy hand across his perspiring face.

"It's bad; *mon Dieu!* nothing could be worse, *monsieur*," said he, in a voice of woe.

I kicked aside a stone and swore softly under my breath. Then the sight of the little Frenchman's face touched a humorous chord.

"Oh, yes," said I, "several things might have been worse—that ditch yonder, or this, in one of those mountain passes. It would have meant a jump of a thousand feet or more. But it's been bad before, and we've gone on in a couple of hours or so; surely you can fix the thing again?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Usually, yes, as *monsieur* has observed; but, now, *mort du diable*, it is the engine—buckled."

I knew it was serious, but had the fancy to encourage him; perhaps he might find it not quite so bad.

"Then we will unbuckle it, and perhaps creep on down into the valley, where I see the lights are beginning to twinkle." I waved my pipe in a half circle toward the north.

But Pierre saw no humor in my words.

"It is possible *monsieur* does not comprehend—one does not mend such things so easily. Everything was going nicely; *monsieur* must have observed. I was repeating to myself *splendid!* I felt we should gain an hour—into Fremstadt, down there. I was about to shout for joy, my blood was as sparkling wine, of all things I loved nothing more than the magnificent machine whose pulses throbbled under my touch. Then—pouf—and I discover the transmission has gone to—what would you say, *monsieur?*—to smash."

The sense of the humorous died out

within me; I saw the end. To be dragged eight weary miles into Fremstadt by a team of sweating plow-horses; to go on to Paris by rail, leaving Pierre and the machine behind.

A day might have made no great difference; but a transmission gone to smash—it was the limit.

I looked up at the sky. Already a few stars were beginning to twinkle. In another half hour darkness would be upon us, and the machine a useless hulk in the middle of a deserted road eight miles from our proposed stopping-place.

"You are *sure?*" I asked feebly, the last ray of hope flickering in my breast.

"*Mon Dieu!* it is the truth," groaned Pierre.

The honest fellow was on the verge of tears; and why not?

We had covered over a thousand miles, a great circle which would bring us back to Paris. He loved the car as one may love his dearest friend. At times his pride in that senseless mass of steel and brass had been almost laughable.

He had dreamed of rushing over the last arc of the circle, speeding across France as we had sped over miles and miles of the smooth Continental roads. Then he would boast long and loudly to his fellows.

Now I would go on to Paris alone, and he must wait in the little German principality while unsympathetic hands wrought amid the vitals of his hope and pride.

In the last remaining light he fell prone in the dusty road and repeated the examination. When he again arose I knew hope was gone; it must be the plow-horses.

I sat down upon a boulder by the roadside and watched him as he tramped away. We had passed a farmhouse two miles back and had seen the owner leading horses to the barn.

It might have been fifteen minutes, and I had refilled my pipe for the second time, when the familiar thrum, thrum came out of the increasing gloom. Then suddenly from the way Pierre had gone, around a broad curve, swept a pair of glaring headlights. A great green motor slowed down a few hundred feet away, crawled forward almost to my machine, and came to a standstill.

"Ho!" cried a not unpleasant voice. "Lucky we didn't run you down; you'd have deserved it, with not a light lit."

I realized my carelessness; I could at least have set the lamps going. Luckily my German is excellent, so I was not at a loss for a reply.

"I should have lighted up, but I couldn't have been any worse off if you had dashed into me," I answered, and arose, fumbling for my box of matches.

The speaker in the other car alighted and came forward.

"Ah!" said he, "so you've gone to smash. Bound for Fremstadt?"

"I was," I answered, "and perhaps I'll get there in the morning."

He turned and spoke a few words to his man. The latter jumped down, reached under the seat, and flashed a powerful hand electric-lamp.

"We'll take a look at her. My man here is an expert when it comes to road accidents. Are you alone?" said the owner of the car.

I explained that my chauffeur had gone back, and why; then I spoke of the broken transmission.

"Get down and see; perhaps it isn't so bad," said my companion shortly, and the business end of the electric-lamp disappeared under my machine.

In the glare of the headlights I could see something of the man who was offering me assistance. I saw something, for his coat-collar partly hid his face.

For the moment I was startled, at first I knew not at what, then it dawned upon me. From the short mustache upward the resemblance was striking. The nose, the set of his eyes, the contour of the head might have been my own.

Also clad each in long linen duster and peaked cap, we might have been taken for twins; perhaps one was a trifle taller or broader of shoulder, but standing there in the road it was not evident.

He was looking at me, too, and I saw the wave of surprise across his face. Perhaps we each remembered the old assertion made by a long-dead philosopher—that in the same generation nature always uses the same mold in fashioning two members of the human race. Their births may take place thousands of miles apart, but each man and woman, except when death has intervened, has somewhere an exact counterpart. They rarely, if ever, meet.

Standing there in the road between my disabled car and the glaring headlights, I realized the exception had taken place; I almost wished the other car and its owner had passed on and left me alone to wait for Pierre. Then the weird sensation passed, and I was upon the point of speaking when he forestalled me.

"My man will be finished in a moment; let us hope you are mistaken as to the nature of the accident."

It was plain he did not care to refer to the resemblance, though I knew it had not escaped him. It was my cue to ignore it also.

Presently the fellow crawled from beneath the car, threw back the hood, and examined the interior. When he turned, the hand-lamp half raised, I saw the look of utter astonishment which crossed his face.

For a moment he stood stock-still in the road, looking from one to the other of us. Twice his lips parted, but each time the words died upon his tongue.

Then I saw his employer make a little gesture. The man stared stupidly, utter amazement written on his face. My companion suddenly relieved the situation.

"Well," said he sharply, "is it the transmission? This gentleman is doubtless anxious, and—it's getting late."

The fellow found his voice.

"It is the transmission; a bad job, your—your—"

The other interrupted hastily:

"That settles it." Then to me: "The car cannot carry you to Fremstadt to-night. Accept my condolences."

I took a long pull at my pipe.

"Thanks," I replied, "but it is the fortune of the road. The city, I believe, is about eight miles?"

"Nearer nine." He half turned toward his car. "I might take you up, only—"

we are going but a little way farther, when we turn off—to the left. It could be only a lift of a couple of miles, and I presume you wish to go right on to the city?"

"What else?" I answered. "And, in any case, I must wait for my man. He will doubtless be able to get the horses."

For a moment the other hesitated, then I saw a smile overspread his face.

"I fancy," said he, "you will create a sensation if you pull into the city behind two tugging plow-horses. You see—er—that is, your car is green, so is mine, and—er—the resemblance is a little startling."

"I see," I answered dryly. "Your friends in Fremstadt will think—you have broken down."

He was upon the point of swinging himself into the car, then paused abruptly.

"Oh, hang it!" he said laughingly, "it can do no harm, and it will astonish them—the pair of us. Come, get up! I'll leave my man here and run the car in myself, right through to Fremstadt."

I shook my head.

"Thanks, but I'll stick to the sinking ship; you have been overkind already. But would you mind giving me the address of a first-class garage? It will help matters out a little."

"Better go through with me. My man will explain when yours returns, and you'll find the car safely housed in the morning."

"No," I answered, "I'll see it out; thanks just the same."

He seemed to be a little disappointed, then began to laugh again.

"Doubtless you've read the Zenda story and Thurston's 'Masquerader'; perhaps, after all, that wasn't pure fiction," he remarked.

"Perhaps not," I answered, "but we can neither of us offer the other a throne or a seat in Parliament; don't let me detain you longer."

I felt he was laughing at me, and at that moment my temper was not of the softest.

"Well, if you won't get up, I'll have to leave you to the mercy of the horses. And about the garage." He gave me a street and number, with a careless word of recommendation.

"By the way," he added, "I have neg-

lected to inquire your name, and—if you propose to remain long in Fremstadt."

"Swift," said I, "and I shall leave for Paris as soon as possible—by rail."

"You are an American?" He had produced a cigarette and lighted it.

"Yes," replied I shortly, "and many thanks for your trouble."

The next moment he was in the car and his man at the crank. The big machine began to buzz and quiver.

"I can recommend the Crown Hotel; of course you will want to put up for the night," he called.

"Of course," I answered, "and thank you."

The green motor started slowly forward, swerved around my car, and the rear light flashed in my eyes.

"Good luck!" he called back, and the light receded rapidly.

Envy arose in my heart and consumed me; then I fell to wondering who the man might be, my more fortunate second self, who was speeding merrily toward the distant lights of Fremstadt.

Mechanically I lit my lamps and watched them flash out in the fast-increasing gloom. It was perhaps less than a quarter of an hour when Pierre appeared, the advance-guard of a lanky youth who led a pair of sturdy farm horses.

The look on the poor fellow's face almost set me laughing, but I stifled the inclination.

"Perhaps we are fortunate, *monsieur*; at least, we can have the use of these beasts for the night. Of course we are expected to pay for the time they are absent from the stable, and something for this boy, who has already been between the blankets," my chauffeur explained.

"They will certainly take us into Fremstadt, especially as the way is mostly down-hill; and I see you have brought a rope," I answered.

Pierre looked as though the latter was to be used in his own execution. I laid my hand on his arm.

"After all," I said, "it is only the fortune of the road, and think of the miles she has traveled. We are not the first, Pierre."

He muttered something under his breath and turned to the lad beside the

horses, but at that moment the youth appeared to be stricken with a strange malady. His mouth was half open, the coil of rope had fallen from his hand, and his eyes, fixed on my face, were round as a pair of saucers.

For a moment Pierre stared at him, then burst out angrily:

"Come! At what are you gaping? Is it that you have never seen before a gentleman met with misfortune? Is it not enough we lie wrecked on your wretched road, but you must lose your wits when something is required of you? Come, about your business; do you not see Monsieur Swift is waiting?"

But a sudden idea had flashed into my head. The expression on the lad's face was one of utter amazement—an amazement mingled, it seemed to me, with fear.

Me he had never seen before, yet my face had set him gaping. It was the man in the green car, my double, whom he believed me to be. And who was this man, that his sudden appearance on a country highway wrought such consternation in the mind of a common yokel?

I decided to solve the problem in the easiest manner possible.

With a gesture I shut off the beginning of another outburst on the part of my little Frenchman.

"My boy," said I to the lad, "you appear to be ill at ease; for whom, then, do you take me? There is nothing to fear."

He swallowed with difficulty.

"Your highness!" he stammered—"surely your highness understands that my father did not suspect—that we—in demanding pay—did not understand—"

He stopped and shuffled his feet uneasily in the dust.

"Ah!" said I, "then you know that I am the—" I hesitated.

"The crown prince," he stammered; "and your highness will—"

"Oh, certainly," I interrupted, and a queer feeling ran up and down my spine.

Then the man who had sped away in the green car was no other than the crown prince of the little principality upon the highway of which Pierre and I had foundered. And *that* was why he had hesitated in asking me to ride with him toward the city.

It was because of that he had spoken

of the astonishment of certain ones in Fremstadt did the pair of us appear together. Because of that he had remarked that the appearance of my car, dragged behind a pair of plow-horses through the streets, might set the honest citizens staring.

The Crown Prince of Fremstadt and my humble self were as alike as two peas; the crown prince owned a green car, and mine was green. He had understood the humor of the situation—the little comedy which was sure to follow—and he understood also who must, by necessity, play the fool when the broken motor crept into the lighted streets of the capital city.

It is very fine, such a thing—in story-books. I had enjoyed reading the adventures of the hero in the Zenda tale; but I had no fancy to assume a similar rôle, even though it be a bloodless one.

To be bowed at and scraped to, hailed as "your highness," bore no charms for me, and, deep down in my heart, I suspected that his real royal highness would not permit so rare an opportunity to pass unproductive.

Of course he was going through to the city, he would expect I would put up at the Crown Hotel, and he doubtless had in mind to play his little joke—on others, possibly, but by making use of me.

For a moment the thought came to turn about and avoid the city altogether; then I realized such a move would be the height of folly.

There was not another place within forty miles where I could hope to get the machine repaired, also to catch the express for Paris. It must be either Fremstadt or a long journey over the mountain roads with a disabled car in tow. Then, what excuse could I give to the chauffeur did I turn my back on the nearest haven of refuge? It was plainly Fremstadt.

I turned to the silent youth standing beside the horses.

"Then you have seen me—the prince—perhaps in Fremstadt?"

"Many times, your highness; and it was but two days ago your highness did my father honor in stopping at our door," he answered.

It was plain he did not hesitate in taking me for the prince, and in Frem-

stadt there would be dozens who might do so. And suddenly a way out of the difficulty flashed into my mind, depending much on one little thing—if an express for Paris left the city after nightfall.

After all, it need not prove difficult to avoid observation. If we went down into the city our arrival must be at a late hour. Glancing at my watch, I saw it was already nearly nine o'clock.

Coming into the town, I would avoid the Crown Hotel and the garage which had been recommended by my late companion of the green car. Getting other quarters would throw the prince off the track did he choose to attempt to carry out his joke. Pierre could attend to the storing of the car and the details connected with its repair; in the meantime I would remain indoors during the day. If a train left for Paris in the evening I would slip out and take it.

I saw no reason why my plan might not be successful, why I could not enter and leave Fremstadt without being observed.

I nodded to Pierre, who had listened in astonishment to the short dialogue carried on between the boy and myself. Plainly he thought the former either drunk or crazy; possibly he had doubts concerning me.

"Let us be moving," said I shortly. "Thank God the way is nearly all downhill."

"It is as *monsieur* says—it will not be so very difficult," Pierre answered, and, with the lad's aid, attached the rope to the machine.

I do not think a word was spoken, except when the driver urged on the tugging horses, during the first six miles of our toilsome journey into Fremstadt. But when we reached the outskirts of the city I addressed the boy.

"You know the streets, my friend?"

"It is so, your highness; and the shortest way to the palace," he answered respectfully.

"But it is not to the palace we are going—to-night," I replied carelessly. "Rather to one of the places where it will be possible to have the damage mended."

I could see that he was disappointed—that he had hoped to ride into the court-

yard of the palace, the visible motive-power of the prince's car.

"It is for your highness to command," he answered.

I saw that the boy was not a fool, and that some explanation would be the wiser.

Why the prince should avoid the palace under such circumstances and at such a late hour was a riddle he might seek to solve in his own way. It would be better not to arouse his curiosity too far. I chose a way, the surest to make him a faithful ally and to flatter his vanity. I made him a confidant.

"Listen," said I sharply. "I do not desire it shall be known at the palace that I have met with a misfortune on the road. You understand?"

"It is known that your highness is the most fortunate of all motorists," he replied naively.

"And for that reason I do not desire it to get abroad that—what has happened to-night."

He nodded knowingly, and I knew he was thinking: "The prince does not care to lose his reputation and to have certain ones smile behind his back because he has entered the capital drawn by two plow-horses; and who indeed would desire such a thing?"

I took out a gold-piece and put it in his hand.

"Remember," said I sternly, "that I forbid you to address me as 'your highness' or to speak of this matter to any one you meet. And—proceed as quickly as possible to a garage not to much frequented. You know of such a place?"

He rubbed his head.

"There is that of Rudolf Wiernier, but it is a small place and not in a good quarter of the city. I have been there often, for Rudolf is related to my mother," said he.

"And this Rudolf understands the mending of machines?"

"There is no one smarter, though his place is small and trade not very brisk with him. Yet, if your highness desires to employ the best mechanic in Fremstadt I will take you to him."

"Do so," said I, and settled back in the car.

As we entered the more lighted streets I put on my goggles and turned the collar of my coat well up about my ears. I

saw Pierre glance back at me hastily, and the expression on his face almost set me laughing.

Plainly the honest fellow thought I had quite taken leave of my senses, but he said nothing, and we crept through the streets of the city.

Either our guide avoided the more crowded thoroughfares or the populace retired early, for we met very few pedestrians and scarcely a vehicle. Some turned to look at us, and a few laughed.

Pierre hung his head, and I knew he was swearing in his choicest French. Had we been entering Paris he would have wept tears of shame.

Slowly we dragged through one street and another, and then the seemingly never ending journey came to a termination. Our driver pulled up before the closed doors of a modest garage, a two-story wooden building, from the upper windows of which lights were shining.

Leaving the tired horses standing in the middle of the street, he rang a bell, and presently a door opened. After a moment's conversation with some one within, the boy, accompanied by a grizzled old fellow, approached the car.

The man looked us over critically, shrugged his shoulders, and rasped out in a gruff voice:

"And so you are in difficulty? Yet, the hour is late, and it is not my custom to work after sundown."

I saw our guide move his feet uneasily; it was plain he feared I might take offense at the old man's manner. I hastened to avert a whispered warning.

"As you say, we are in difficulty, my friend, but I do not desire to have anything done to-night. I have heard you repair cars skilfully."

"So it is said; you then desire something to be done in the morning?" replied the old fellow briefly.

"I desire to leave the car with you until it is whole again; it is the transmission," I answered.

"Then it will not be to-morrow, nor the day after, nor the next," said he. Turning to the lad, he added: "Unhitch the horses; together we will all push the car into the shop."

The boy glanced at me apprehensively. The Crown Prince of Fremstadt pushing a car into a garage in his own capital!

Once more I threw myself into the breach.

"Good," said I; "let us do so quickly," and climbed out of the machine.

Half an hour later, the car safely stored for the night, the boy paid and sent about his business, followed by Pierre I entered a modest hotel in a not over-fashionable quarter of the city.

A sleepy clerk eyed us critically, for I still wore the goggles and my collar was turned well up about my ears.

"Go," said I to Pierre; "engage us rooms, and do not haggle."

He hesitated for a moment, shrugged his shoulders, and addressed the clerk.

"It is *monsieur's* desire to be given a room as quickly as possible. As you observe, haste is necessary. It is the dust of your wretched country that has injured *monsieur's* eyes, and pain is racking him. Also, as you may have noticed, the wind of the mountain has caused a soreness of the throat; even to-morrow a physician may be required. To-night, however, it is rest—quiet and some food *monsieur* requires."

Face to face, as he thought, with an equivocal situation—for the honest fellow believed I had lost my wits—he was making the best of it in his own way. Evidently, too, his manner impressed the clerk, for within a quarter of an hour we were seated in a little private dining-room and Pierre was pouring for me a glass of claret.

He set down the bottle, waited until a quick-eyed serving man had put several dishes before us, and then said earnestly:

"Will not *monsieur* remove the glasses, and—*monsieur* may observe the room is warm. Surely the soreness of the throat—"

The waiter passed through the door, for I had intimated his services would not be necessary. As the catch clicked I leaned back in my chair and burst out laughing.

"You—you poor man, and do you think I have quite gone off my head?"

The little Frenchman threw a doubtful look across the table.

"Drink the wine, *monsieur*," said he earnestly, pushing the glass toward me.

I took off the goggles and slipped out of my motor-coat, then sat down facing him.

"See here," said I, controlling my mirth; "own up—you think me crazy!"

"*Monsieur!*" he ejaculated, but I could read his thoughts.

"Why?" I demanded.

He hesitated, moved uneasily, then burst out:

"And why not, *monsieur*? The goggles, your words with the peasant-boy, the—"

Then I explained just what had occurred and why I had entered Fremstadt so disguised that my brother would not have known me. Pierre asked no questions, only shrugged his shoulders and nodded from time to time. Quick-witted, he understood.

"And listen," I concluded. "I don't fancy leaving you alone in this beastly hole, but I can't stay shut up in this hotel until the car is fixed—perhaps a matter of several days. I shall remain indoors to-night and to-morrow. In the morning go down and inquire about the express to Paris—if one leaves at night. Make what excuses you wish for my non-appearance, though I fancy no one will trouble themselves on that score. I shall leave at the first opportunity, and you will follow with the car as soon as possible."

"It is as *monsieur* says; *monsieur* goes on to Paris, and I follow as quickly as possible," he answered. Then, shrugging his shoulders: "But it is in my mind to first observe this—his highness; it is wonderful, is it not so, *monsieur*?"

Early the following morning he knocked at my door.

"At nine to-night the express leaves for Paris; it is that *monsieur* desired to know," said he.

"Good!" I answered. "To-day, my friend, it will be the worst of headaches which confines me indoors, but to-night I shall travel to Paris. I wish you could go on with me, Pierre."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"In time, *monsieur*; but not until I have seen this—this Prince of Fremstadt," he replied.

II.

HAD the express not been so late that first thing might not have happened, for the warmth of the station-platform would not have driven me to carelessness. For

a quarter of an hour I marched up and down, my coat-collar well about my ears; then, as the minutes passed and no express, I felt my linen wilting. The platform was poorly lighted; I threw back the collar and continued my restless pacing, as near as safety permitted to the edge of the broad causeway.

He came out of the lighted station, past the little groups around the door. A tall, gaunt figure, wrapped, despite the weather, in a cloak which muffled his chin.

At first I did not notice him particularly, as he halted and looked up and down the long platform, a somber figure silhouetted against the light of the broad doorway. Then suddenly he stepped forward swiftly, without noise, and before I could realize it his hand was upon my arm.

"Ah!" said he, in a gruff voice. "It is most fortunate. If the train had not been late I must have missed your highness."

I bit my lip, but I knew a denial would profit nothing, for he was looking straight into my face. I shrugged my shoulders.

He dropped his hand from my arm. Certainly he must be a person of importance, else he had not taken a liberty.

"As I said," he continued in his gruff voice, "it is most fortunate. But a short time since I learned that your highness had left the palace, and I knew, no matter how, what your highness might intend to do—to leave Fremstadt on the night express."

"And why," I demanded, resolved to play the part, if only for a few minutes—"why should I not leave Fremstadt if I so desire? Will you answer me?"

He threw back the collar of his coat with an impatient gesture. When I saw his face—cold, haughty, severe, the face of an old man, a face seemingly carved out of marble—I felt a cold chill run down my spine.

What if it should be the ruler of Fremstadt, the august father of the prince—his royal highness!

For the second time he touched me lightly upon the arm.

"Why?" said he coldly. "And you ask me *why* you should not leave Fremstadt at this particular hour? You are going to Paris, and—in two days more

the great square before the palace will be crowded with your subjects. Can you go to Paris and return in two days?"

"And why not," I answered, "if—if it is necessary?"

I thought he would have shaken me, for a spasm of anger crossed his face.

"If it is necessary," His voice came to me like burnished steel. "In God's name!" he burst out. "Has the madness of the father then descended to the son? On the third day the citizens of Fremstadt will meet to greet their prince—their prince who on that day must assure them he will serve in place of the old man whose brain is clouded after years of honest rulership. They expect it—and it is their right—that Prince Karl of Fremstadt will take oath before them to serve the state loyally.

"They have heard many things, and there are some who doubt, but your words will mend what has been broken. What you may have done—in Paris and elsewhere—will be forgotten if you stand up before your people and swear to them to serve the state even as your father has done. For that have I worked—an old man upon whose shoulders the burden rests heavily. But if you do not come before them, if it is known that in such an hour the Prince of Fremstadt is absent from his capital, my work will have been in vain. And you ask me—is it necessary?"

So that was it, and doubtless the old man before me was the prime minister. The old king was in his dotage, his heir was about to assume the regency, and the people doubted.

I had the whole situation in a nutshell.

The old man's voice softened.

"Karl," said he. "I have arisen from a couch of sickness to hurry after you, and—at the end of two days?"

I hesitated, for I found myself in a desperate situation.

What if the laws of Fremstadt permitted the minister to hold the king's heir to the city did the welfare of the state require it? I saw the glitter of helmets at the door of the station.

If I did not answer, might he not take me to the palace? But if, on the other hand, I answered as he desired? What harm could come to me afterward? I would be safely in Paris and the real

crown prince, did he not appear before his people on the appointed day, must furnish his own explanations.

I squared my shoulders.

"I understand perfectly," said I calmly. "The Prince of Fremstadt will meet his people before the palace. Are you satisfied?"

A grim smile touched his lips.

"Whatever you may have done, and wild oats must be sown, you have never passed your word and broken it. Go to Paris, or to the end of the world, if you so desire; you have given your promise not to fail me."

A long, low whistle came from down the line—the belated express was approaching. The prime minister pressed my hand, muffled his chin in the cloak, and without another word passed across the platform and into the station.

People were beginning to approach, and I, too, turned up my coat-collar. In that moment I regretted I had given my word—or the prince's word—for the old man's trust touched me deeply.

What if Karl of Fremstadt did not appear on the third day? Where was this prince who had alighted from his green car to lend assistance to a stranger? In his palace, I hoped, where he would remain until what was required of him was accomplished.

The express rushed alongside the platform. I saw a vacant compartment, and, dropping a silver-piece into the hand of a guard, entered and sank down on the cushions.

A bell rang violently, and all along the line of cars the guards were slamming the doors. One looked in at me, and his grasp was on the handle. Then a man darted across the platform and hurled himself through the opening into the compartment. The guard slammed the door, and the train began to move.

The compartment was in semidarkness, for the light burned poorly. I leaned back and studied my companion, who faced me from the opposite corner farthest from the platform.

He manifested no interest in my presence, and for perhaps a quarter of an hour we remained silent as the express rushed onward.

Presently I took from my case a cigar and ignited it slowly. The flame from

the burning match threw my face into bold relief, and I held the slender torch until the fire scorched my fingers.

I heard a sharp exclamation from the farther corner of the compartment. The man opposite was looking squarely at me, over the flickering flame of the match into my face.

I dropped the burned bit of wood out of the window, reopened my cigar-case, and extended it toward my companion.

"Will your highness honor me?" I asked quietly.

For a moment he did not reply, then I heard him laugh softly.

"Pardon," said he, "in this infernal light I failed to recognize you. And so you have left the car in Fremstadt?"

He accepted a cigar and lighted it slowly, the flame throwing his face into startling relief. It was as though it was my own, reflected in a mirror.

"Yes, your highness," I replied. "The break was a bad one."

"And you are leaving Fremstadt; not over-complimentary to our ancient city," said he.

"I have business in Paris," I replied.

"Which has arisen since the night before last, I take it. To motor to the French capital must have taken three days. You did not appear in a hurry, up there on the mountain road."

I turned the cigar slowly between my fingers, watching his face through the drifting smoke.

"I received the summons to Paris that night—up there on the mountain road," I answered.

A smile touched the corners of his mouth.

"And an inkling that Fremstadt should be avoided," he ventured.

"For certain reasons, yes," I answered.

He nodded, puffed for a moment on the cigar; then:

"Because you feared—well, the resemblance is a little striking."

"I feared nothing, your highness; only I dislike—complications."

He chuckled, leaned back, and looked at me.

"It does not flatter me, upon my word," he laughed.

"That I disliked to be taken for the Prince of Fremstadt?"

"Just that; it would have been a novelty for each of us."

"Doubtless," I answered calmly.

"I could have planned a little entertainment, a—" He laughed.

"Yes," I broke in. "and I the clown."

His face sobered.

"You are mistaken; it is not our custom to insult strangers, but it would have pleased me to introduce you to—well, my prime minister."

"I have had the honor to meet your prime minister," I answered coolly.

His surprise was manifest.

"Old Friedel—the Wolf—in Fremstadt?"

"Not an hour ago—at the railway station."

"*Gott verdammt!*" And he saw your face?"

"Naturally; I do not wear a mask."

"May I inquire," he asked soberly, "what passed between you? A hundred marks had I but been there!"

"Would that you had, your highness; then it had not been I who was reminded of his duty," I answered.

"Ah!" said he softly. "It is a habit into which the count has fallen."

"Of the duty of the Prince of Fremstadt to his country and his father; of what is expected in two days, before the people, in the Palace Square," I went on.

He uttered a stifled exclamation.

"I see," said he coldly, "the prime minister took it upon himself to mix in your—my affairs. You must have been, at least—surprised."

"So much so, your highness, that I gave my word that I would appear before the people at the appointed hour."

"And he believed it was I who gave the promise?" He jerked out the words spasmodically.

"Again, naturally; the resemblance is somewhat striking, as your highness may have observed."

He half arose from his seat, and for the moment I thought he would throw himself upon me. Then the first heat of his anger passed, and he sank back upon the cushions.

"You fool!" he muttered. "You infernal fool!"

I leaned forward and spoke sharply, controlling my temper by an effort.

"See here!" I said coldly. "Remember you are not now in Fremstadt or at liberty to insult a stranger with impunity. What may be your purpose in leaving your capital so hastily is none of my business; you may go hang for all it is to me, but your minister has returned to the palace believing you will not fail your duty. Ill luck has fashioned the resemblance; ill luck brought me to Fremstadt and to a meeting with the prime minister. I took the only course possible."

For several moments he gnawed his mustache, then put out his hand impulsively.

"I ask your pardon; I spoke hastily, but—you do not understand," said he.

"Nor do I care to; already I have mixed too much in your affairs," I retorted.

"Come!" he cried heartily. "I have asked your pardon; it should suffice between gentlemen. But you have put me in a pretty box. The devil take it—what am I to do?"

"Go back to Fremstadt," I answered.

"But I must go to Paris; my word is pledged, and I have never broken it," he cried hotly.

"To the prime minister—that you will not fail him," I interrupted.

"But first to—a certain lady—that I will go to Paris; you do not understand."

"It is not over-difficult—the solution: a day in Paris and you may return to Fremstadt in season," I suggested.

He shook his head.

"Impossible! She will demand more of me; fool that I was to promise."

Then, as I did not answer:

"I must have been drunk or crazy: but in either case my word binds me. And now it seems I am committed elsewhere—to keep the engagement with the minister. Damnation! Can you suggest nothing, having got me into it so cleverly?"

"Scarcely," I replied, "being somewhat in the dark regarding the Paris end of it."

He hesitated, then spoke rapidly, his hands clenched upon his knees.

"You see, a month ago I was in Paris, and *mademoiselle*—well, we saw something of each other. I returned to Frem-

stadt, but I gave my word I would hasten back to Paris—that we would tour France together—for a week—when she so requested. She doubted, and—I swore it—and to-day her message summoned me."

"And you are going, in the face of your duty to your people? Surely the excuse—she will understand—"

He smiled grimly.

"Yes, that I will keep my word, even though I know that it is a plot to injure me. I have enemies, and they have won her over; it is her purpose to keep me away from Fremstadt when the welfare of my house demands my presence there. I was a fool—a blind fool—to fall into the trap; to be outwitted by a woman. But the die is cast. Do you fancy she will let me go?"

"But under such circumstances you can break your word—to her."

His jaw set firmly.

"Under no circumstance will I forswear myself; there is, they say, madness in our family; perhaps on that point I am mad, but—I will keep my word."

I saw he was in deadly earnest; that no argument could move his purpose; yet I ventured:

"But the word I have passed to the prime minister?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"He will believe I have forsworn myself, but my conscience will be clear; it must go at that," he answered bitterly.

For several minutes each of us remained silent, then his highness leaned forward eagerly.

"There is a way; *Gott in Himmel*, why did I not think of it—that Zenda business—you remember?" he burst out.

I shook my head, for I understood.

He laid his hand tremblingly upon my knee.

"And why not?" he asked. "I can coach you; and already it has fooled old Friedel—he has the sharpest eyes in Fremstadt. It will not be difficult—only to appear before the people and utter a few words. That night you can leave for Paris—a few hours in Fremstadt only."

"It is impossible; I cannot think of it," I answered firmly.

"You are afraid?"

"As you will, but I will not return to Fremstadt."

He relapsed into gloomy silence, then broke out in a constrained voice.

"God knows, my friend, I love my country, and had resolved to be the man. In many ways I have played the fool, and the people have lost much confidence. I had hoped—but fate is against me. To break my word is impossible, though I realize perfectly what I may forfeit in going to Paris."

"Then you have no love for this woman—this tool employed by your enemies?" I inquired.

He laughed harshly.

"Rather hatred; I am her fool, her dupe, but"—and he straightened his shoulders—"even to such a one I will not stand forsworn. Call it madness if you will—then I am truly mad, for I am resolved."

I lighted a fresh cigar and leaned back against the cushions.

Despite myself, I admired the man—he who would forfeit so much to keep his oath. I understood perfectly the game his enemies had played—and won. They had counted upon his weakness, and the woman waiting in Paris would show no mercy. Instinctively I, too, began to hate her; for the moment I thought myself the Prince of Fremstadt, and stood in his place.

He was leaning dejectedly back against the cushions, the half-burned, unlighted cigar between his fingers, and his gaze fixed on the fleeting landscape without. I moved uneasily, flicked the ash from my cigar out of the open window, and leaned forward.

"Your highness," said I calmly, "in my country there is a goddess whom men style Chance. A moment ago I refused to accept the plan you broached because it appeared to me to be the height of folly; yet there is an alternative. Will you listen?"

He nodded wearily, and his lips quivered.

"It would appear," I continued, "you have given your word to go to Paris—to meet there a woman whom you profess to despise. On the other hand, through me, your word is pledged to be in Fremstadt at a certain hour. You have suggested a desperate way out of the diffi-

culty; I offer another. Shall we permit the fickle goddess to choose?"

He looked at me searchingly.

"Go on!" said he harshly.

"It is this. I propose going to meet this woman in your stead. She will take me for Karl of Fremstadt. I will act the part until you have met your people, and she will never know. There are two propositions; shall we permit chance to choose between them?"

He leaned forward and asked:

"Do I understand you will abide by chance—that you will go either to Paris, playing my part, or to Fremstadt, to stand before my people?"

"As chance decides, so will I act," I answered firmly.

"But it is not so easy to deceive a woman; her eyes and wits are sharp. What if she should discover I had broken my word?" he asked.

"I do not think she will discover, no more than the prime minister will detect the fraud. It is I who am taking chances; surely *you* are not afraid?"

"And you will do this for me? Why?" he demanded.

"Because it suits my fancy, and perhaps something more," I answered.

"You will go to Fremstadt or to—her in Paris?"

"As chance decides."

"I accept," said he sturdily—"as chance decides so will I act."

I took a coin from my pocket.

"Here is an English sovereign," said I; "heads, Fremstadt for me; tails, I meet *mademoiselle* in Paris. You are agreed?"

"Yes," he answered; "for God's sake decide quickly."

I spun the coin in the air; it fell with a faint jingle of metal upon the floor of the compartment. The prince leaned forward, striving to read the decision in the semidarkness.

I struck a match and bent down, holding the flame so he could see which side of the coin lay uppermost. Together, our heads almost touching, we leaned forward, our eyes riveted upon the piece of gold.

Fremstadt or Paris. and for whom?

III.

IN the great square at Fremstadt a surging mass of humanity pressed back-

ward and forward, each head turned and every eye fixed upon the palace from which would issue forth the man into whose hands was to be given the destiny of the state.

All during the night before crowds had poured into the city, through the mountain passes, across the plain. The ancient capital was packed as it had never been before, and every foot turned toward the palace, where the young regent was waiting to take oath before his people.

A band beneath a balcony struck up the national air; from somewhere a gun boomed out, the deep detonation rolling back against the hills. The tumult of the crowd became hushed; men and women craned their necks to see.

A window opened, leading to a draped balcony. A group of noblemen appeared before the people—but no sound went up. Then came the aged prime minister, and a cheer swelled across the square. Yet the multitude waited.

A figure crossed the threshold of the window, a man clad in the dark blue of the royal guard. Advancing straight across the balcony, he laid a hand upon the shoulder of the minister and pointed to the draped chair. The old man shook his head, but the other forced him down.

In the presence of the population of Fremstadt the aged minister sat while his sovereign stood before the people.

A mighty roar went up—a shout which drowned the playing of the band and the detonation of the guns. Men swung their hats and screamed, women waved their handkerchiefs.

It was a good beginning—the courtesy to the old prime minister, who had employed his days in the service of the state.

But presently Prince Karl, one hand resting on the balustrade, raised the other toward the people. A great hush fell upon the multitude, and his highness spoke.

All could not hear the words, but the gist of them was plain—the prince was promising to carry out the policy of the old king, his father. Men nodded to each other, and women wept; a mighty wave of enthusiasm swept the square.

"God save Prince Karl; may he rule over us forever!" came from ten thousand throats.

The prince bared his head; once more,

the cannon thundered and the bands joined in the tumult. Before the people the aged minister arose and, kneeling, kissed the hand of his new sovereign, then turning raised his voice and cried with the enthusiasm of youth:

"He has never broken his pledged word, nor will he now—long live our regent king!"

And all that day and far into the night Fremstadt made merry, and from the palace lights blazed in every window.

And in Paris, in a room not far distant from the Faubourg St. Germain, a man, standing before an open window, turned and faced a woman.

"Shall it be to-morrow then, *mademoiselle*?" said he.

"And why to-morrow? It is not possible your highness has grown impatient?" she asked languidly.

His highness shrugged his shoulders.

"Not impatient, but already two days have passed and you exhibit no enthusiasm. You have perhaps forgotten for what purpose I came from Fremstadt," he answered.

"Ah! our tour through France—the beautiful tour which you promised me many days ago. Well, perhaps I have changed my mind."

The cigar in the man's hand trembled.

"Then why did you send for me?" he demanded.

"Because," and she laughed softly; "perhaps it was because it pleased my fancy."

His highness calmly lighted the cigar and blew a cloud of smoke through the window.

"Knowing that I should have been in Fremstadt—to-day? It was to please your fancy I am here?"

A faint smile of triumph crossed her face: she fanned herself idly.

"So you should have been in Fremstadt to-day, *monsieur*! ah, yes, I have heard something of that, and of how Prince Karl was to address his people. Well, you are here in Paris, and—the good citizens of Fremstadt—do you think you have disappointed them, your highness?"

The prince flushed hotly and came a step nearer to her.

"What are you saying, *mademoiselle*?" he asked sharply.

"Only, that it is possible you should not have come to Paris—just now; seeing that I have changed my mind."

"And knowing this, you sent for me; knowing my duty lay in Fremstadt?"

"As an experiment, for I had heard you would not break your word. Yet one grow weary—of a new toy, *monsieur*, and I shall no longer hold you back from your duty. If your people need you, go, your highness."

"Now that it is too late?"

The girl laughed merrily.

"That is your affair, and doubtless you can explain sufficiently. You see I tire easily, *monsieur*."

For several moments the prince smoked in silence; if the other looked for a violent outbreak she was disappointed. Presently he removed his cigar.

"Then I understand I am dismissed; that I am—a fool, *mademoiselle*?" said he coldly.

"Others may answer that question, not I," she replied lightly, and leaned back in her chair.

The prince crossed the room, hesitated, then turned abruptly.

"One thing," asked he sternly; "it was a plot to injure me—contrived by others than yourself. A month ago—" She shook her head.

"How can I answer that, *monsieur*; if you have injured yourself, who but yourself is to blame? Surely not I."

The prince's lips tightened.

"I understand; you were to hold me here until to-day," said he coldly.

"But now I hold you no longer; I

give you back your word, *monsieur*. Perhaps in Fremstadt the people will meet again—who knows," she answered.

His highness crossed to the door and opened it. The girl, busied with a cigarette, ignored the movement. On the threshold he hesitated.

She looked up indifferently.

"You are leaving Paris?" she asked.

The prince closed the door without replying.

Crossing the Faubourg St. Germain and a bridge which spanned the Seine he came to a great hotel. At that moment the populace of Fremstadt were making merry. Passing under the wide arch of the portal he turned to the right and approached the desk.

"Letters or telegrams?" he asked briefly.

A clerk plunged his hand into a pigeonhole.

"A telegram, *monsieur*, which arrived an hour since," said he pleasantly. The message was headed "Fremstadt" and I read it quickly.

MONSIEUR: To-day the prince addressed his people; from the midst of the crowd I saw and heard him. In three days the car is completed.

PIERRE.

I smiled as I folded the strip of paper; thinking of a woman, near the Faubourg St. Germain, who at that moment gloated over an empty triumph. On the day following she was the wiser.

On the sixth day Pierre brought the car to Paris.

A FACE.

WHEN sinking in ye summer sky,

Ye mist has dulled ye sun's bright rays,

If then ye captivated eye

Too long or too intently gaze.

For hours after, on ye brain

Ye dazzling image will remain.

So I one day looked on a face—

"One look," quoth I, "can do no wrong."

But, ah, for this weak human race!

I looked again, I looked too long,

And now, no matter where I be,

Ye image of that face I see. •

Charles F. Lester.

FOR FEAR OF A HAND.

By MARTIN CROSS.

A thrilling half day that followed hard on the heels of a street accident.

THE first thing that I remembered after realizing that I was in a strange room, was that my watch was probably broken.

In a dazed sort of way I reached down to the pocket where I always kept it, and was on the point of feeling around for it when there came to my ears the sound of a familiar voice, which uttered, in tones of the deepest despair, the words: "But the hand—oh, Heaven, the hand! Carlotta, let us be brave! But what can we do? It is the hand!"

I could not help being struck with the utter desperation of the man who thus referred to some "hand" in such accents of despair.

It was a voice I knew well, and for a moment I wondered how I could be listening to it, for I had not seen the owner of that voice for some time. But my mind quickly returned to the matter of the "hand."

What hand could be meant? Here in America there are many hands, but there is only one Hand with a capital H. And it was this which the voice of my friend Partucci seemed to mean, the hand which has stricken so many Italians low—the Black Hand—the hand of fear.

But what had Partucci done to merit the attention of that cutthroat band, the Black Hand? He was an honest citizen, kind of heart, and notoriously helpful to his newly arrived countrymen. In fact, he was the most charitable Italian I have ever met, and that is saying a great deal.

Surely there must be some mistake? Partucci a marked man, who some morning would be found murdered or be blown up by an infernal machine in his own house? No—surely not!

And yet, that voice, that tone of abject despair? No man speaks like that unless he is in great fear. It is the voice of one who knows, who has been warned, that something terrible is about to befall himself or some one dear to him.

But Partucci, my friend, my landlord during these three years? I could not believe that any danger should threaten him and his.

All this time I had lain in the same position, fearing to move lest I should do myself some injury. I ventured to turn my head and open my eyes.

There was no pain, except a slight sensation of stiffness in my neck, and a throbbing in my head. I congratulated myself on my escape from at least a week's imprisonment in bed. Evidently my fall had been an easy one.

Suddenly I wondered why I had heard no sound since that single cry of agonized despair, and I craned my neck to see what I might of my surroundings. But as I was lying flat on my back, I could make out but little.

My movements, however, attracted the attention of some one who was on the watch by the fireplace on the other side of the room. Footsteps approached quietly over a thick carpet.

"Ah, my friend! You are better? It was an unfortunate accident, the fall; but I am almost inclined to be glad of it, since it has brought you to my house."

It was Partucci who spoke, and now his voice held nothing save the courteous accents for which he was especially noted among his tenants. I felt a hand descend and close on mine, and tried to respond to the pressure as he said: "I trust you are feeling better?"

I replied that I felt so well that I should like to get up, and, despite his restraining hand, I did so.

For a moment I felt a little dizziness, but it passed and left me as well as I had been before the accident which had sent me flying to the ground as the automobile went by.

"Ah, you are really well? I am glad. But you must have something to brace you up, my friend. A little wine? It is here, on the table. One moment."

Partucci left me standing by the sofa on which I had been lying, and sprang across the room, to return with two glasses of good Italian wine. The drink refreshed me, and I felt as though I had not been unconscious for twenty minutes.

Partucci began to explain. He told me that the accident had taken place almost exactly in front of his house, that he had been coming in at the time, and that he had secured assistance to bring me into his parlor, where I had lain in a state of semiconsciousness for more than a quarter of an hour.

That is to say, the shock of the fall had dulled my senses of hearing and seeing for that time, but the fainting spell had lasted for only a few minutes. Bartoll, the doctor next door, had come in to take a look at me, and he had administered a restorative.

That accounted for the slight taste in my mouth which I remembered noticing on my awakening. As soon as he had given it, Bartoll had gone away to attend a patient, saying that I would shortly come to.

I thanked Partucci for his kindness, but he waved my thanks aside in his courteous manner. The mention of Bartoll having an appointment recalled to my mind the fact that I, too, had an engagement to keep. And also, I did not wish to inflict my presence on Partucci at a time when he was suffering from mental anguish such as his words had indicated.

Should I try to say anything about it? I looked hard at him, and pretended to see in his immobile face an expression of unhappiness.

"If you won't let me thank you, Partucci, you will at least tell me what is troubling you? You seem unhappy. Will you tell an old friend what is the matter?"

I tried to speak with just the right inflection of concern, for Partucci is very quick at detecting things.

He started, but declared that I was mistaken, as there was nothing the matter.

I was sure that he was not telling me the truth.

He turned the subject quickly by inspecting my clothes, and thereby drawing my own attention to them. They were

badly besmirched with the mire of the street where I had fallen, and in one or two places they were torn. On the table stood what remained of my hat, a mocking ruin, like the hats which scarecrows wear.

"You must let me lend you some clothes to go home in," said my friend, after the damage had been seen. "Fortunately you are about the same size as myself, and you are so very dark that you will look like an Italian in the clothes I shall lend you."

He laughed at the idea, as if he were trying to forget the thing that was troubling him.

He led the way to his own apartment, where I was to put on the garments which he had offered to loan me. As we passed a room whose door was shut, I fancied that I heard the sound of some one crying, with stifled sobs that would escape despite all efforts at restraining them. Partucci, in front of me, hurried on as if to get away from the sound.

I understood that his wife, Carlotta, was weeping because of the menace of the "hand," whatever it might be. To me the matter was perfectly plain. Partucci had been doomed by the Black Hand, although for the life of me I could not understand why.

When we came down again the crying had ceased. I thought I understood why Partucci had left me alone while I dressed. He had been comforting his wife, and had told her to be careful lest I should suspect something from her weeping. If only he would confide in me!

I shook hands with my friend, again thanking him for his goodness, and went down the steps in time to hail a passing hansom. As I got into the carriage, I told the driver to take me to my house, which was about ten blocks away.

I settled down on the cushions, to worry myself with a vain endeavor to understand what was brewing between Partucci and the Black Hand.

When I got down in front of my house, which I had rented from Partucci during the past three years, I noticed a shabby Italian, of the laboring class, lounging about with one eye on the front door. The fellow started to speak to me, but I sprang up the steps and rang the bell for my man Weeks, who detests Italians.

He came quickly to the door, opened it, and almost slammed it in my face.

"Hold on! What are you doing, Weeks?" I shouted, just in time.

There was a look of astonishment in his eyes as he partly widened the crack through which he was peering at me. In a flash, I remembered Partucci's words, and understood.

My Italian-like clothes, with the soft felt hat pulled down over my eyes, added to my dark face, and caused the man to think that I was one of the people whom he hated more than any other.

I had scarcely got inside when he burst out into a running fire of remarks and queries.

"What's the matter, sir? Are you hurt? Confound these Italians, the good-for-nothing dagoes! Did you see that loafer on the steps, sir? I've ordered him away twice already. Say the word, sir, and I'll shoot the vagabond. The police ought to know about it. Sure you're not hurt, sir?"

He kept up this sort of thing all the while he was tenderly leading me into the study and divesting me of my shoes and coat. As soon as he had supplied me with my slippers and helped me on with a smoking-jacket, he became once more the quiet, taciturn English servant that he always was.

Weeks is a treasure, and knows his own worth.

After I had explained to him that I had been knocked down, and my clothes ruined, he went away to fill the bath, the sole panacea, in his eyes, for every ill. No matter what happened to me, or what I intended doing, at least twice a day, besides my morning tub. Weeks would have a bath waiting for me, and would respectfully suggest—although not in so many words—that I needed washing.

This time a bath was exactly what I wanted, and it was with an air of precision that he announced the water was just right.

When I came out of the tub, I found a complete change of clothing awaiting me. I got into them and went down to the study to smoke and think about Partucci's affairs; but suddenly I recollected the delayed engagement. Accordingly, I directed Weeks to get me a hansom.

When he came in to say that it was waiting outside, I saw that something was the matter. While he helped me on with my coat, I carelessly inquired what it was, and for the second time that morning he burst out explosively.

"It's those dagoes, sir—begging your pardon, sir! The fellow you saw has gone away, sir, but there's been three since then, the cook tells me. Shall I do anything, sir? They're a murdering lot, and I don't trust them, sir. That's a fact, begging your pardon, sir."

I began to wonder whether there might not be some connection between Partucci's fear of the "hand," and the fact that I had been in his house that morning.

Had I been seen to leave it in the garb of the man who had been warned by the hand? What was the meaning of this persecution of Weeks, this haunting of my doorway by Italians of the lowest order?

I began to feel uncomfortable.

I went down the steps as naturally as I could, but meanwhile I kept my eyes open for signs of an Italian in the vicinity.

Sure enough, there was one leaning against the railings of the house next door, and a little farther down the street I could see two more, coming up toward my home. The fellow against the railings sprang forward to speak to me, as I thought from his actions, but the hansom moved off before he reached my side.

I noticed that the two others turned to look after the cab as I drove by, and I thought that one of them made some sort of a signal to a person whom I did not see, down the street.

The gentleman with whom I had a business appointment had gone out, after having waited twenty-five minutes for me to come. He would be back in half an hour, said his clerk. Would I wait?

He had left directions to say that I must see him that day. They had telephoned to my house, but Weeks had told them that I was out for my morning walk, and that he did not know where I was.

I was certain that, when I came out of the Mercantile Building, where my man of business has his offices, I should find an Italian lounging about within

convenient distance of my hansom, which was waiting.

Nor was I mistaken. There were no less than three, and I thought I recognized the two fellows who had been walking up the street when I drove by.

Without a doubt, I was being followed by servants of the Black Hand, because I was supposed to be sympathizing with Partucci, a doomed man. The thought sent a shiver down my back.

I meant to employ the half hour before my man of business returned in ordering some new clothes from my tailor. Accordingly, I directed the man to drive thither, and soon I was talking patterns and prices with the best tailor I have ever known.

I picked out several patterns that suited me, and had agreed on the usual prices, despite the fact that the woolen-market was a trifle higher than usual, when Jenkins said that he would like to take my waist-measure over again.

He is always hinting that my waist is becoming too large. It is very disagreeable of him, but I say nothing, for he is a king of tailors.

I retired to the seclusion of the little curtain drawn across the rear of the shop, and adjusted things so that Jenkins could take his confounded measure and be done with it. He is an autocrat, and would never think of measuring a waist with clothes over it. Queer fellow!

At the very moment when I was about to sing out that I was ready for him, the door opened, to the accompaniment of the little bell whose tinkling, I have told Jenkins fifty times, I do not like. The sound of it irritated me anew, and I was about to say so very plainly, when a smooth, oily voice inquired the whereabouts of "the *signor*."

I jumped fully ten inches from the floor. One of those Italians had had the nerve to follow me into my very tailor's! They meant business—that was evident. It was a relief to hear Jenkins, after having tried to persuade the man that there was no "*signor*" in the shop, say a sharp word to the husky Swede who sews on buttons and things.

There was the sound of the door opening and shutting, and of the oily voice uttering expostulations and entreaties.

Jenkins came behind the curtain to

take my waist-measure. "Funny thing, Mr. Saunders," he remarked. "That dago wanted to see you, I do believe. Said something about a paper, but it didn't go with me. This is a tailoring establishment, not a bucket-shop. You didn't want to see him, did you?"

Want to see me? I was absolutely certain of it. The thought of the peculiar business about which he wished to see me sent another shiver of apprehension down my back.

I could not help indulging in gruesome speculations as to the nature of the weapons that would be used against me. Would it be a stiletto, a revolver, or the still more horrible garrote.

Of all ways of killing a man, the most ghastly is to choke him to death with a skein of silk. That, I believe, is the way they garrote one.

I was in no pleasing frame of mind when I left Jenkins's shop. There were a good many people passing in that vicinity, and I could swear that I saw at least five Italians among the lot.

One thing seemed certain; the Black Hand must be a very wealthy organization, to be able to keep so many men on the constant prow, without their ever having to get a steady job. I came to the conclusion that they must spend their spare time in practising their silk-string business on dummies.

Undoubtedly, I had been conscious of a sensation of uneasiness ever since this business of being followed by Italians had begun, but I do not think I really began to be afraid until that terrible apparition at the window of the carriage almost scared me to death. For the hansom was speeding back to the Mercantile Building, when suddenly a voice whispered in my ear: "Da pape-a, *signor*. I come-a. I Giuseppe. I come-a to your house, *signor*. Da pape-a."

There was a yell from the driver overhead, followed by a cut of his whip. Almost paralyzed with fear, I looked up in time to see a villainous-appearing Italian leap from the step of the hansom, where he had perched himself to whisper his threats in my ear. Was that a silken cord that caught my eye as the murderous fellow vanished?

The driver opened the trap and looked down at me.

"Fresh guy, dat! De nerve of him, to jump up on my step! But I got him good; he'll wear de mark fer a day or two. What'd he want, anyway?"

As coolly as I could, I told the man that I did not know what the Italian had wanted—to beg, I suppose. My apprehensions were by no means dispelled when I heard him mutter, as he closed the trap, something about a "Black-Hand dago trick."

What paper was it that the Italian had reference to in that short, threatening speech of his? He was coming to my house, with a paper to show. Was it a death-warrant? If so, he was very bold to threaten me in broad daylight.

Somehow, the proceedings did not strike me as being according to what I had heard of the Black Hand. And yet, there was the indisputable evidence.

I had been followed all the morning, ever since I had left Partucci's house, by a cutthroat gang. I had been warned that some paper was to be served on me, by the very man who would come to my house with it. I had seen the thin, venomous-looking cord with which, no doubt, he would try to strangle me.

The audacity, the sureness of the thing made me afraid.

You can imagine that I was in no mood to transact business that day. The hansom stopped at the Mercantile Building, but not for worlds would I have got out and risked being knifed on my way into the place. There were four or five Italians in uncomfortable proximity to the entrance. So I hailed the driver and told him that I would go home instead.

The hansom swung about, and we rattled away. To my now excited imagination, it seemed that the Italians were disappointed, for they made some sort of a signal, as I thought. Or were they only exchanging greetings? I tried to take comfort in the latter suggestion, but could not.

No sooner had we drawn up at my house than an Italian shuffled off the steps and approached the hansom. Now for it, I thought. But the man only came close, took a good look at me, and then moved away.

I breathed freely for a moment. The fellow was not an assassin, but a spy. At least, the end was not yet.

But I was now so thoroughly alarmed that I dared not risk dismounting from the hansom. Accordingly, I directed the driver to get down and ring for Weeks. This he refused to do, saying that the law did not allow him to leave his vehicle unattended. But he would try to attract attention by blowing a whistle.

He looked at me curiously, evidently wondering why a sprightly old gentleman who had already made several visits should be disinclined to get down at his own home. I am sure he thought that I had been imbibing on the sly.

The sound of the whistle brought Weeks to the door. Indeed, he had never been very far from it, for he was more suspicious than ever concerning the "dagoes" who were haunting the neighborhood. He came running out to the sidewalk.

"My Heaven, sir! What's the matter? Here you haven't been to your appointment at the Mercantile, for they've telephoned three times! And—I know, sir. It's them dagoes. Better let me get my revolver, sir."

I silenced him with a gesture, for the cabman was beginning to take too great an interest in my affairs. As calmly as I could, I ordered Weeks to leave the other servants in charge and to come with me, as I wished his services elsewhere.

I could see that he was anxious and alarmed, but he is too well trained to show surprise at any of my orders, and he obeyed without further speech. He went into the house again, and returned almost immediately with his hat.

Meanwhile, I had decided to do the only thing that suggested itself to me. If I were to get into trouble with the Black Hand because I was Partucci's friend, I might as well have the advantage of his advice on how to act in this crisis.

Weeks started as if shot when he heard me give the address. He recognized it as that of my landlord, who, he knew, was an Italian. I understood what was in his mind. He was thinking that there must be some connection between this Italian and those who had been so much in evidence all the morning.

But I did not think fit to tell him anything, until suddenly he put his hand into his pocket and drew out a formidable

pistol. Then I realized that it was time to calm him down, even at the expense of increasing my own fears.

So I began at the beginning and told him everything that had happened, but I insisted that he should do nothing until he received instructions from me. That had the desired effect, for he is a well-trained servant.

I had just finished repeating my positive orders, when we came to Partucci's house.

Weeks got down and helped me out, and I made him stick close beside me while I ascended the steps and rang the bell.

I am not ashamed to admit that I was really badly frightened. At any moment, for all I knew to the contrary, I might feel that ghastly cord around my neck.

Partucci himself opened the door. As soon as he recognized me he sprang forward and embraced me, dragging me into the hall while Weeks closed the door. With the tail of my eye I saw an Italian far down the street.

"Ah, my friend! You have heard!" exclaimed Partucci, as he released me. "We have suffered so! Poor Carlotta has been almost out of her mind. But it is all over now. There will be no operation. Lucia will not lose her hand, so that dear good fellow, Bartoll, says! Rejoice with me, my friend!"

He threw his arms around my neck again.

I was astonished, nonplused.

What was Partucci talking about? Had his troubles driven him insane? But no; I remembered that his little daughter, Lucia, had a painful abscess on her right hand. So *that* was it!

"Since morning we have feared," continued Partucci. "Bartoll was afraid that our Lucia's hand would have to be cut off, in order to prevent the abscess from spreading; but he is sure, now, that it will not be necessary. Oh, the agony of that thought, my friend! But it is good of you to come. Did Bartoll tell you? And you will forgive me, will you not, for having told you that nothing was wrong? We could not speak of it—it was too terrible."

You can imagine how I felt while the truth of the matter slowly dawned on me. I had awakened just in time to hear my

agonized friend say to his wife those despairing words which had seemed to tell of a warning by the Black Hand. He had been grieving over the loss of little Lucia's hand, and I had interpreted his words into something even more fearful.

But that did not explain why I should have been pestered in so seemingly threatening a way by so many Italians. I saw that the best way out of the difficulty would be to do as I had intended, and ask Partucci's advice.

So I began at the beginning of my tale, and told him everything, from the time that I had left the house disguised in his clothes to the time that Weeks had driven the last loafer off the steps. Weeks told his side of the case, also.

Partucci looked puzzled. But he laughed at my fears that I was being followed by conspirators.

"A paper, you say? Wait a moment. I have an idea. I will telephone to a friend who knows something about these things."

He took the receiver from the hook as he spoke.

There followed the interchange of courtesies with Central, and then a stream of Italian, smoothly flowing. After he had been speaking, with occasional breaks, for about three minutes, Partucci burst into a roar of laughter. I was at a loss to understand, and waited impatiently until he hung up the receiver.

"It is very amusing," he began. "You will excuse me, my friend, if I seem to laugh at your fears. But I am so overjoyed at the good news about Lucia that I could laugh at anything. And really, it is very funny. I have spoken with Bazzo, who lives on your street. He also has been troubled with Italians this morning, but by the lack of them. It appears that he is repairing his garden-wall, and, as he has quarreled with Jones, the labor contractor, he advertised in the papers for two Italian workmen."

"Now, there are many workmen out of work at present; and that is the reason for your fright of this morning." He paused as he noted the puzzled expression on my face. "What is your number on your street, my friend?" he asked amusedly.

"Eighty-five." I replied, still puzzled.

"Exactly," said Partucci. "And Bazzo's number is fifty-eight—you see? The Italian paper has printed eighty-five for fifty-eight, that is all. The murderous villains you saw, those who have made your servant cross, are innocent laborers out of work. They went to number eighty-five, as the paper said. That is all."

"But the man who signaled?" I protested.

"It was a signal that the *padrone* who wished to employ men was not at home, but out in his carriage."

"And the villain on the step of the cab?" I said, still not convinced.

"Oh, one more enterprising than the rest. The same for the man who followed you into your tailor's. They will do anything for the sake of work, at this time."

"But how do you explain the garrotting-cord?" I asked. "I tell you, I saw it plainly."

Partucci made a movement of his arm around his head.

"The cabman's whip," he said. "Come up-stairs, my friend, and see little Lucia."

THERE'S MANY A SLIP—

By MARVIN DANA.

If you have ever heard the proverb about the cup and the lip you will see how it applies in this story concerning a slip of paper.

"THERE is your ring," the girl said coldly, holding out a solitaire diamond. "Take it, and go. I never want to see you again!"

The young man thus addressed stared at the scornful face with dismayed amazement. Mechanically, he took the ring.

"Good morning," the girl added suggestively, as he still stood dumb.

But with that he found speech.

"Grace—Grace! What is it? What do you mean?"

"Why, that our engagement is ended."

"But, I do not understand. Why—"

The girl regarded him contemptuously.

"I shall not discuss it. Will you go, please? If not—"

"But the reason, Grace? Surely, there is some horrible mistake."

Without another word, the girl turned and swept from the room.

The lover, thus abruptly discarded, remained yet a few moments in bewildered despair; then he went slowly, as one dazed, to the door and out into the street.

"Of course it's a mistake—it must be!" he groaned. "What can have happened? And I leave for Europe to-night, to be gone three months—not another chance to see her. But I'll write."

He did, and in the course of time he received back his letters unopened.

Thus were the villainous machinations of Walter Brackett crowned with success. For Brackett had sought to win Grace Yardsley, and had failed, despite the fact that his suit had the warm approval of Grace's father by reason of the young man's social position and wealth.

Brackett attributed his failure to a single cause—James Walsh. In this he was justified, for very shortly Grace's engagement to Walsh was announced.

Moreover, Mr. Yardsley gave his sanction, though grudgingly. He knew that Walsh was worthy, for the lover had been for some years in his employ, and had indeed become his confidential agent.

The course of true love ran smooth for four months. Then the following paragraph in a noxious society weekly afforded Brackett an evil opportunity:

James Walsh, who is engaged to one of our most charming heiresses, must be more discreet, or ill will befall him. Only extraordinary efforts on the part of friends prevented his latest escapade from being aired in a police-court. This disgraceful episode occurred at Blank's restaurant last Friday evening, when he and another well- (or ill-) known man about town were having supper with an actress now playing a minor rôle at the Gaiety Theater. The

two gentlemen quarreled over the favor of the fair one and at last passed from strenuous recriminations to blows.

Mr. Walsh knocked his adversary down twice before bystanders could interfere. He himself bears no scars from the fray, but the other party to the combat will remain in seclusion until the hue of the skin beneath his right eye again becomes normal.

It is to be hoped that no whisper of the vulgar affair comes to the ears of Mr. Walsh's fiancée; for that damsel has much pride, as well as beauty and wealth.

Brackett, having read and pondered, planned and acted. He marked the paper and mailed it to Grace.

He took the precaution to disguise his handwriting in addressing the wrapper. The result was the interview with which this story opens.

It never occurred to Grace that she was being victimized; that Walsh is by no means an uncommon name, nor is James. Brackett might have enlightened her, but he did not choose to do so.

He counted on her pride to avoid explanations, and the issue proved the correctness of his judgment. He knew, too, that his rival was about to go abroad on an extended business-trip for Mr. Yardsley, and that this fact would favor the continuance of Grace's error. All in all, fate played into Brackett's hands.

Forthwith he renewed his attentions to Grace. They were received with indifference, but they were received. The villain was well content, and bided his time.

It came, in his opinion, about two months later.

Mr. Yardsley and his daughter were on the eve of starting for the West. They were to be gone a month, traveling whither the whim took them.

Mr. Yardsley was suffering from overwork, and this was to be his vacation. Brackett seized the opportunity to propose, and the girl did not refuse him.

She knew that the match would please her father, who had openly rejoiced when the engagement with Walsh was broken off. She had no love to give Brackett—her heart had given its all to Walsh—but, not knowing more of his character than he chose to reveal to her, she respected him.

"Give me time," she said at last. "No, not now"—as he would have urged her. "I will take a month for consideration. When we return, you shall have my answer."

From this position he could not move her; nor did he try very hard. It was enough, he thought exultantly.

With her father in his favor and Walsh out of the running, his success was assured.

II.

THE month was drawing to a close when Brackett received a violent shock. He was sitting in a Broadway surface-car, when he noticed the man sitting next but one to him on the same side of the car. It needed but a glance to reveal the disastrous truth: the man was Walsh!

Yes, Walsh was back from Europe thus inopportunistically. Brackett knew well what the chances were. If once Grace met her former lover, there would certainly be the probability of explanations.

The first fury of her anger long past, the girl might—nay, would—tell the cause of her breaking the engagement. Then Walsh would point out the vital fact that he was not the hero of the restaurant fight, and Brackett, for the second time, would find himself rejected.

There remained but one way to save his hopes. He must secure Grace's consent before her meeting with Walsh. Once she had given her word, she would not break it, he felt convinced.

Unhappily, he had no idea as to the whereabouts of the Yardsleys. It had been the father's intention to cut off all correspondence, for the sake of rest.

Brackett was in despair as he considered the situation. There was no one to whom he might appeal. It was not likely that Walsh would have the desired knowledge. Moreover, the two were barely on speaking terms.

And then, of a sudden, while Brackett was torturing his wits in this extremity, fate played another prank and offered him a means ready to his hand.

Walsh had been reading a letter. Now he tore it up carelessly and threw the fragments out of the open window behind him. One bit of paper, caught by an eddy of air, whirled back into the car and fell on the floor at Brackett's feet.

Instinctively, he glanced down at it, and a thrill passed through him as he recognized the writing. It was that of Mr. Yardsley.

Brackett looked guiltily toward Walsh, and saw that his rival was now absorbed in a newspaper. At once he bent down and picked up the scrap of paper. Furtively he slipped it into his pocket, and immediately left the car.

In the comparative quiet of a side street he paused to examine his find. An ejaculation of triumph broke from his lips as he read:

—arrive by the 7.30 P.M., Thursday, as I wrote you in my former letter. Be sure to meet us at the Grand Central Station—

Well might Brackett rejoice in his amazing luck. Chance had thrown at his feet the very information he needed.

The Yardsleys were to arrive in New York at 7.30 on Thursday, and Walsh was to meet them at the Grand Central Station. Brackett's course was clear.

This was Tuesday afternoon. He would make the necessary inquiries as to trains, and then, on the following day, hie him to Buffalo. There he would enter the New York train—that train due in the Grand Central Station at seven-thirty.

There he would find Mr. Yardsley and his daughter. Mr. Yardsley would confine himself to the buffet-car, as his habit was. Brackett would press Grace for her answer, would gain it: a reluctant but a binding "yes."

III.

As Brackett planned, so events befell—up to a certain point. Beyond that point—well, it happened in this wise:

Wednesday evening, in the drawing-room of the Yardsley mansion in New York, Grace nestled in Walsh's arms and begged for forgiveness.

"You see," he had said, "I am not the only Walsh, not even the only James Walsh."

"You are the only man in all the world—to me," Grace answered. And "I'll never be silly again," she promised.

But we may doubt if she quite kept her word.

And Brackett?

He made the right train at Buffalo on Thursday. He searched its every nook and cranny, but found no Yardsley.

He raged in vain. Something had gone wrong, but the mystery was beyond his solving. He verified his worst fears when he visited the Yardsley home that evening.

He found the wanderers returned. Grace greeted him gently, pityingly. He understood the reason, for Walsh was present and the lovers' faces told the story. He did not then or ever ask for Grace's answer to his suit.

But then, and ever, he puzzled over the mistake in his calculations. Mr. Yardsley's directions had been clear:

—arrive by the 7.30 P.M., Thursday, as I wrote you in my former letter. Be sure to meet us at the Grand Central Station—

To this day the wretched villain does not know that the full text of the passage ran:

We shall get away a day earlier, so we shall not arrive by the 7.30 P.M., Thursday, as I wrote you in my former letter. Be sure to meet us at the Grand Central Station at same train on Wednesday.

THE DREADFUL THING HE DID.

By MATTHEW WHITE, Jr.

A first night episode that startled the community and harrowed the star.

"WHAT rot!"

Willis Scott muttered the words under his breath, but they had evidently been heard by the lady on his left.

"Thank you," she whispered. "Just what I was thinking."

It was Willis Scott's twenty-first birthday, and it was being celebrated by a

dinner and a theater-party, to be followed by a dance. Scott was giving the whole thing himself, as he was well able to do, being an orphan with an income of a million a year. Naturally, he had hosts of friends, and the society columns of all the papers in town had that day commented on the fact that the Willis Scott theater-party at the Parnassus was the largest assemblage of the sort that had visited the playhouse since its opening somewhat more than three years before.

It was now twenty minutes to ten; the second act of a new play was dragging its weary length along, and another act still to come. And Willis was distinctly unhappy—an unheard-of thing for so fortunate a young man on such an auspicious occasion.

Worse than this, he was conscious of the fact that his two hundred and thirty-five guests, occupying the whole front of the orchestra clear across the house, must be equally uncomfortable. There was no getting away from it, the play was a bore.

He began to think fast. Quickly before his mental vision unrolled the vista of that delightful ballroom floor at Maderia's, and then came the thought of the omnibuses outside that had been ordered to wait for them.

But how to do it? The program between his fingers suggested the means. Taking out his fountain-pen he wrote rapidly along the edge a few significant words beginning with, "Please read and pass on."

Ten minutes later, when the leading lady rushed on to wring her hands in anguish and cry out over the footlights "He has gone! Will no one help me? Where shall I turn now?" the words almost caught in her throat. She was speaking them to practically an empty house.

Willis Scott had carried out his plan and borne off his whole party from a dull show to an added hour's enjoyment of the dance.

The happy guests heaped their thanks upon him, and when they separated in the early hours of the next morning they one and all declared that it had been a most beautiful party throughout, thanks to Willis's wonderful forethought

in cutting short the only part of it that threatened to be dull.

Meantime at the theater physicians were working over the young woman star, whose debut it had been. Bravely she had shut her teeth over the desertion of her audience and gone through to the end, for the benefit of the critics and the fringe of spectators left at the back of the orchestra and in the balconies. When it was over she collapsed and the doctors, who had been called hurriedly, were whispering that they feared she was down and out, when Fred Elton pushed his way forward.

He was press agent of the company, and he had a plan.

"It'll be all right, Miss Collins," he told her. "Leave it to me. We'll have them coming in droves to-morrow night. I must be off at once to put it through, though."

He was as good as his word. He got busy with the telephone, and the next morning's papers all spread themselves with a society news item that was certainly worth columns of favorable "write-ups."

The abrupt departure of the Scott theater-party was described in full, with a pathetic account of the plucky fight put up by the young star. Her collapse was circumstantially dwelt upon, and her plucky determination to play that coming evening in spite of all incidents and drawbacks.

The critics, too, devoted so much space to describing the bold departure of most of the audience that they had little left in which to roast the piece. In fact, they said very little about the latter, and the next night the box-office was besieged by throngs who wanted to see for themselves just how bad a play could be to drive nearly three hundred people out of the house.

The company did an enormous business during their week's stay, and when they were about to leave, Miss Collins wrote a pretty note of thanks to Willis Scott.

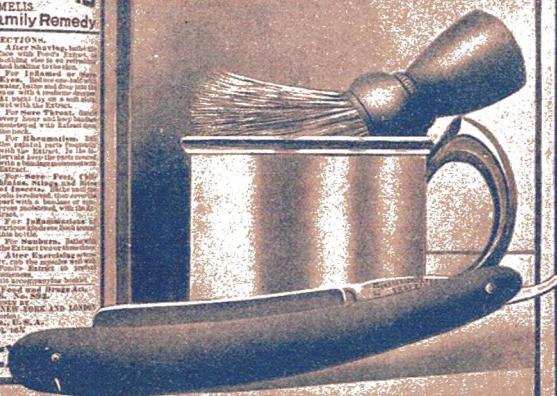
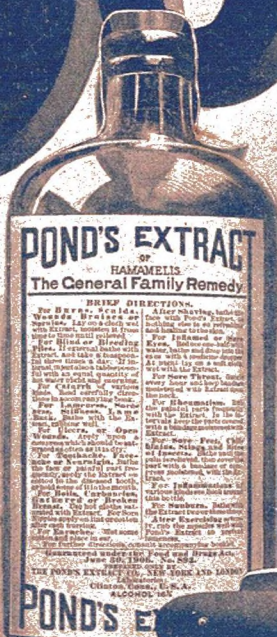
"I wish we could find another like him at our next stand," she sighed as they took the train.

For she realized as well as did the young millionaire that her play was deadly dull.

After Shaving

DONDS

EXTRACT



THE Health Commissioner of New York City recently found fifty barbers selling bay rum, witch-hazel, etc., mixed with poisonous wood alcohol.

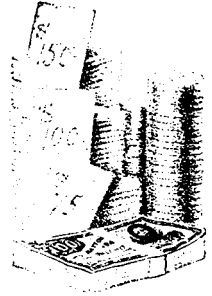
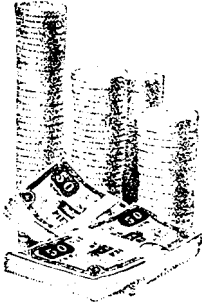
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Sold only in original sealed bottles; never in bulk.

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BIG SALARIES— AND THE MEN WHO GET THEM

BY VICTOR FORTUNE



Why Training and not "Pull" is the great
influence behind the fat pay envelope.

It used to be said, and not without some truth, that "pull" rather than ability put men in line for well paid positions.

But *this* is the day of the trained man—the expert. Competition in every business is so keen that employers are *compelled* to seek men of ability to do the work, rather than jeopardize their business interests by employing the man "with a pull."

This state of affairs is, perhaps, responsible for the number of men who, through training, have risen from the ranks of poorly-paid men to well-paid positions. Such a training doesn't necessarily mean a college education, a knowledge of the "ologies," or a familiarity with remote subjects that seldom, if ever, can be turned into dollars and cents by the average working-man. What it *does* mean is the hard-headed, everyday, common sense, *practical* training that makes men invaluable to their employers—*that leads to more money.*

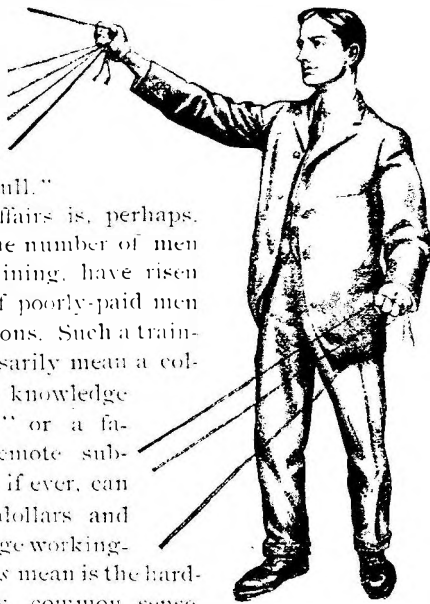
"Pull" received a hard knock with the coming of the International Correspondence Schools of Scranton. The I. C. S. has made it possible for any man, young or old, to place himself in line for promotion and a

bigger salary without having to depend on the influence of his friends.

ABOUT THE I. C. S.

With an instruction staff of over 400 *practical* experts; 200 courses of study costing \$1,500,000 to prepare and \$250,000 annually to revise; 5 home office buildings covering 7 acres of floor space and costing over \$500,000; with these great advantages the I. C. S. is positively the largest and best man helping institution the world has ever known. The International Correspondence Schools were founded in 1897, since when they have been first in size, first in number of subjects taught, first in simplicity, thoroughness and practicality. As an evidence of the salary-raising power of the I. C. S. it is only necessary to point to results: Of the total number of men whose salaries have been raised through I. C. S. training within the last year, over 4,000 have *voluntarily* reported salary increases aggregating, in one year, \$2,221,332. Add to this the number who have had their salaries raised but who have *not* been heard from, and some idea may be had of the magnificent work the I. C. S. is doing for men.

Not so many years ago a training such as



PULL YOUR
OWN STICKS

the I. C. S. offers could be obtained only at college and at an outlay of a great amount of money. Such a thing as receiving a good, sound, practical training in one's spare time was unheard of.

Not only does the I. C. S. train men, but it advises them by suggesting most suitable courses and pointing out how easily obstacles may be overcome. *There's not a poorly-paid, ambitious man living that the I. C. S. cannot help—no matter how young, old or poor he may be, or how much or how little schooling he has had.*

MEN WHO HAVE EARNED MORE

Through the help of the International Correspondence Schools, thousands of men have acquired the training that has brought them rapid promotion and success. A case in point is that of H. A. Bankston, 216 Bright St., Macon, Ga., whose salary was *more* than doubled in a very short time. Bankston says: "I enrolled with the I. C. S. when I was working as a carpenter in a railroad shop. I am now a *contractor and builder* and have increased my earnings from \$2.50 per day to \$2,000 a year. The advantages of my course are too numerous to mention."

BOOKKEEPER BECOMES MANAGER

Kanston P. Cross, of Pembroke, Ky., was once a bookkeeper, and a good bookkeeper, too. But he wasn't satisfied. He saw other men filling big positions and thought it was "up to him" to better himself. He didn't wait for an opportunity, he *made* it by enrolling for an I. C. S. Course, with the result that when last heard from his salary had increased to \$1,600 per year. Cross writes: "I was a bookkeeper when I enrolled. I am now Manager of the Tobacco Storage Warehouse, Pembroke Warehouse Co., and of the Pembroke Light, Power and Water Co. Words cannot express my appreciation of what the I. C. S. has done for me."

When it is considered that the I. C. S. trains men without requiring them to leave home or give up work, and that they continue to earn while they learn, the success of these men is the more remarkable.

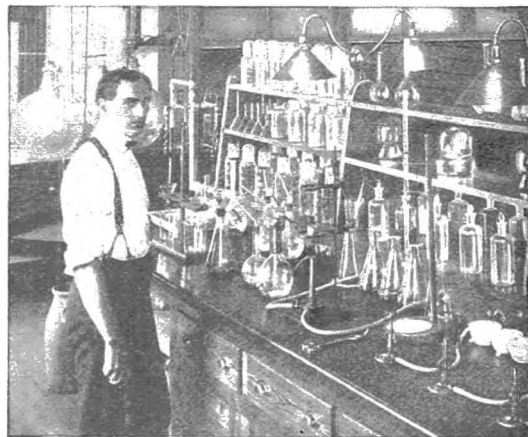
Another great advantage is that the I. C. S. reaches and helps men no matter how far

away they live, what they do for a living, or how long their working hours may be. This is clearly shown by the testimony of James B. Lund, 214 Baird Ave., Chicago, who through I. C. S. help advanced from

FARMER TO HEATING AND VENTILATING ENGINEER

Lund says: "When I started my Course in the I. C. S. I was working on the farm. I am now heating and ventilating engineer with the firm of Andrews and Johnson Company, and am earning \$1,400 a year *more* than I did when I enrolled. *This advancement is all due to the start I received from the I. C. S.*"

That's I. C. S. method—takes a man from the farm and places him in a good position at the work of his own choice—to say nothing of bringing him a raise in salary of \$1,400 a year. The motto of the I. C. S. "The Business of This Place is to Raise Salaries" is *not* something merely to catch the eye, but a *truth* behind which stands the testimony of thousands of once poorly-paid men who, like Lund, have achieved lasting success through I. C. S. help.



TEACHER TO CHEMIST

CLERK TO INSPECTOR

The story of Albert Sulhern's rise from clerk in a retail store to railroad inspector is particularly interesting, in that it shows what a man can accomplish in spite of long hours, provided he has *the right kind of help*. He says: "When working as a clerk in a retail store sixteen hours a day, I took out a Course in the I. C. S. My Course enabled me to get

rid of a position that was very burdensome and disagreeable to me, and to become an inspector for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. My earnings are \$45.00 a month in advance of what they were when I enrolled." Address 171 St. John St., New Haven, Conn.

That's another feature of I. C. S. training. It takes men from uncongenial positions and puts them at the work they like best. Still another advantage is that the I. C. S. way is so simple, and at the same time so thorough, that ambitious men are enabled to overcome every obstacle and to quickly fit themselves for better positions and bigger salaries. Suhern's experience proves this.

SCHOOL TEACHER TO CHEMIST.

It is wrong to suppose that the I. C. S. is only for men with little schooling. The I. C. S. also helps men who possess the advantages that a good schooling offers, but who wish to know more and earn more. To such men an I. C. S. Course is better than a college course because it leads to knowledge by the shortest route, eliminating all that is impractical or superfluous—with the added advantage that an I. C. S. training can be acquired in *spare time*.

While teaching school at Thomas, Ala., B. E. McDougle concluded that there was a much better position awaiting him somewhere in the world, and so he decided to reach out for it. His qualifications as a school teacher would have enabled him to secure many positions that would have paid better than teaching. But he didn't want them—he wanted work that besides paying well would be congenial. Consequently he took an I. C. S. Course in General Chemistry—a subject that had always appealed to him. Now he is first assistant chemist for the Republic Iron and Steel Co., *at almost triple his former salary*. McDougle didn't have to pack up and go to some other town in order to study chemistry. He didn't even have to stop working. The training came to him in his spare moments, without heavy expense or inconvenience.

RODMAN TO SUPERINTENDENT

Because of his knowledge the trained man is always in line for promotion. With him

advancement is natural. This is clearly shown in the case of Wesley W. Albee, of Augusta, Maine, whose letter speaks for itself. It reads: "When employed as rodman in the City Engineer's Office at Melrose, Mass., I enrolled for a course in your Schools. After a few months' study I received an advance in my earnings *without asking for it*; and, making good progress in my studies, received an advance regularly every six months. My advancement in my profession has been steady ever since, and I am now Superintendent of the Augusta Water Works and have increased my earnings greatly. *My Course has been worth thousands of dollars to me*, and I would recommend your institution to any man who is sincere in his desire to advance."

There's nothing padded about a testimonial like that. It rings true. It's a plain, straightforward story of advancement won through ambition, plus I. C. S. help.

SALARY INCREASED EIGHT HUNDRED PER CENT.

The story of how Harry J. Lebherz, Frederick, Md., had his salary multiplied by eight reads like a book. Young Lebherz when a mere schoolboy of sixteen enrolled for the I. C. S. Electrical Engineering course in August, 1900. Four months later he secured a position as tracer for the Ox Fibre Brush Co., of Frederick, Md., and gradually advanced to the position of head designer. He was recently made assistant superintendent. When last heard from his salary had increased 800 per cent. since the time he secured his first position.

Being of an inventive turn of mind Lebherz was able to put that talent to good account through the help of his I. C. S. Course. One of his inventions is an automatic brush machine which he designed one year after he enrolled.

STORIES OF SUCCESS

Nothing ever written is so replete with such dramatic history of success as the stories of the men who through the help of the I. C. S. have won higher places in the world. Contained in the I. C. S. book entitled "1001 Stories of Success," which is sent free to all who mark the coupon, are the

THE ARGOSY—ADVERTISING SECTION.

voluntary statements of men telling how they have succeeded in breaking away from poorly paid positions and connecting with the fat pay-envelope—how dissatisfied men have obtained congenial positions—how men long past their prime have got in line for promotion without having to start afresh—how the young man leaving school has stepped into a good position at the very outset—how men already in good positions have advanced to even better—how from a state of dependence men have gained independence—how salaries have been doubled, trebled, quadrupled.

The I. C. S. takes a clerk and makes him a chief electrician at nearly three times his former salary. That's what it did for A. G. Carpenter, Bakersfield, Cal., who says he is making rapid progress, and that the I. C. S. offers rare opportunities to all ambitious men.

While pegging away as a shoemaker, Ralph C. Tebbetts, of 7 Furber St., Rochester, N. H., enrolled with the I. C. S. for a course in engine running. He writes: "I am now assistant engineer, and my earnings are more than doubled. Previous to my taking your Course I knew nothing whatever about an engine. I consider your system of education all that you claim for it."

From toolmaker to chief draftsman is the experience of Eric J. Pilblad, 39 Cherry St., Attleboro, Mass. Considering that at the time of enrolling Pilblad's knowledge of English was very limited, his success seems indeed wonderful. Without the help of the I. C. S. he couldn't possibly have risen so rapidly. He says: "When I enrolled I had not been in the country more than a few months, and my knowledge of English was very limited. With patience and the assistance of a dictionary I understood my Course without any difficulty whatever. I have advanced from the position of toolmaker to that of chief draftsman, and my earnings have increased 133 per cent. since enrolling. I have never had occasion so far where I needed any help outside of my instruction papers."

Other examples of success attained through

I. C. S. are: Farm hand to chief clerk; laborer to assistant engineer; carpenter to draftsman; draftsman to architect; laborer to contractor, and so on—ever the story of up, up, up, with I. C. S. training behind it all.

WHAT WILL YOU DO AT 60?

That's a question that should mean something to every man. What does it mean to *you*? Are you taking advantage of the bright days of Opportunity by preparing for the dark days of old age; or are you satisfied to stay down while some other fellow steps up? The opportunity to advance is within your reach—have you enough ambition to grasp it?

Surely, if thousands of other men have won success through I. C. S. training, *you* can do the same. It costs you nothing to learn how the I. C. S. can help you—nothing for the information and *advice* that a few years ago you couldn't get for any amount of money. You're not too old. Lack of capital is no hindrance. It doesn't matter how much or how little schooling you have had. Distance, occupation, or place of residence need not prevent you. There are no embarrassing stipulations. The I. C. S. fits its method to your particular case. It helps you *in your spare time*.

Be a winner. You're too good a man to be kept down; and you wouldn't *stay* down if you only knew how easy it is to advance. Investigation is free. Are you ambitious enough to mark the coupon?

International Correspondence Schools, Box 800 W. SCRANTON, PA.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for a larger salary in the position before which I have marked X

Bookkeeper	Mechanical Draftsman
Stenographer	Telephone Engineer
Advertisement Writer	Elec. Lighting Supt.
Show Card Writer	Mechan. Engineer
Window Trimmer	Surveyor
Commercial Law	Stationary Engineer
Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Civil Service	Building Contractor
Chemist	Architect's Draftsman
Textile Mill Supt.	Architect
Electrician	Structural Engineer
Elec. Engineer	Mining Engineer

Name _____
Street and No. _____
City _____ State _____

This Coupon is for YOU.

You Can Build Your Own Boat by the Brooks System and Build Your Own Furniture

And Save two-thirds to three-fourths



MY GUARANTEE

Whether you buy boats or furniture of me, I absolutely guarantee that you will be satisfied. I will instantly refund your money if you are not. I stand back of every statement in this advertisement. I have made them as strong and convincing as I know how. The goods warrant it.

C. C. Brooks.

I have revolutionized the boat-building business. I have spent the last twenty-two years in building or sailing boats, and am a practical boat man.

Seven years ago I originated the Pattern System of Boat-building. To-day my customers are found in every civilized country on earth.

Over 50,000 boats (more than the combined output of all boat factories) have been built from my System, mostly by inexperienced men and boys.

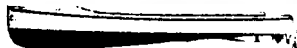
Over half of these have built several boats—a large number have established themselves in the boat-building business.

Boat Patterns

Anyone can build a boat by using my exact size printed paper patterns and illustrated instruction sheets, telling how to do every little detail. You cannot fail to build as good a boat as the professional boat builder.



A Set-up Frame



A Semi-Speed Model

My boat catalogue shows all kinds of boats, tells why the patterns cannot fail to be right and why anyone can build a boat from them. The price of patterns are \$1.50 and up.

Knock-Down Boat Frames

Many people prefer to buy my knock-down frames (all ready to put together) for their boats instead of working up the rough lumber.

Owing to my immense factory facilities, I can in many cases supply knock-down frames at a lower price than you would pay for suitable raw material.

Every piece of the knock-down frame is accurately shaped and machined ready to put together.

I also send free the patterns and complete illustrated instructions needed to finish the boat.

I can save you (1) boat-builder's profit, (2) labor expense, (3) big selling expense, (4) seven-eighths freight. You can figure this out yourself.

If engine is desired, I make a special combination price with knock-down frame.

BROOKS BOAT MFG. CO.

Originators of Pattern System of Boat Building

603 SHIP STREET

SAGINAW, MICH., U.S.A.

BROOKS MFG. CO.

(Originators of Knock-Down System of Home Furnishings)

Knock-Down Furniture

I have adapted to furniture practically the same idea that made my boat business such a success, and it is revolutionizing the furniture business. My high-grade, heavy art furniture is fast taking the place of the expensive factory product.

I have been selling this furniture for three years. Every customer is enthusiastic over it.

All pieces are solid oak and are machined, smoothed, fitted all ready, so anybody can put them together. You can make a beautiful Mission or Arts and Crafts chair, davenport, table or bookshelf in a few minutes. Apply the stain (only one coat—no rubbing) and you have a solid and handsome piece of furniture. Every piece and every result is guaranteed to be satisfactory in every way or money refunded.

You save (1) in the factory cost, (2) in the factory profit, (3) all dealers' profits, (4) two-thirds of freight, (5) finishing expense, (6) the expense of crating and packing—making a saving of two-thirds to three-fourths, according to the piece.



As she received it



Height 37 in.
Width 31 in.
Depth 27 in.

\$4.00 buys this chair (shown in cut) without cushion. Settee same style **\$7.00**.

By the Brooks System you can own \$14.00 chairs for \$4.00; \$25.00 davenports for \$7.00; \$12.00 porch swings for \$4.00; \$30.00 tables for \$9.00, etc.

Remember—my guarantee means just what it says. The boat you build or the furniture you make will be satisfactory—I guarantee it. I take all the risk.

This Morris Chair for \$6.00



\$9.00
Buys this Library Table.

Height 30 in.
Top 28 in. wide
43 in. long.

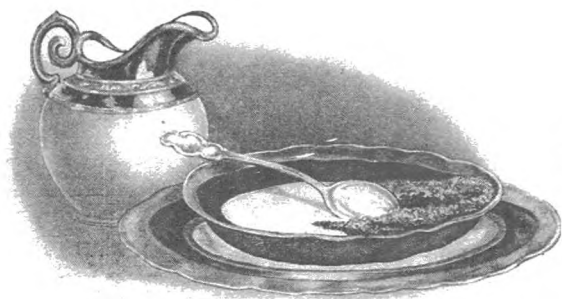


(Cushions Extra)

Height 35 in.
Width 27 in.
Depth 27 in.

Write me personally for my boat or furniture catalogue. Both sent free.

C. C. BROOKS, President.



For Growing Children

The intelligent mother of today looks carefully after the food of her growing children.

A natural appetite calls for wholesome food. The child who is taught early to like proper food, free from over-stimulating elements, is not likely to acquire the taste for strong drink later on. His appetite has been trained for that which is wholesome and truly invigorating.

Perhaps no food is so simple, wholesome and strengthening as

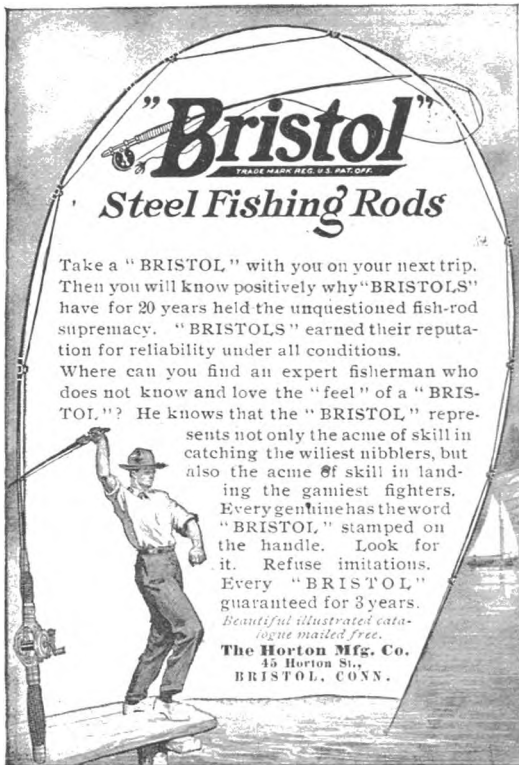
Grape=Nuts

It contains all the elements from wheat and barley, that build up tissues and store up natural, healthy energy in the body. It contains nothing injurious—is **all** food, and can be digested by young children who grow rosy and strong on it.

With cream or milk it is the **best** food for the growing child—and children quickly learn to love it.

“There’s a Reason ”

Postum Cereal Company, Ltd., Battle Creek, Michigan, U. S. A.



"Bristol"

TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

Steel Fishing Rods

Take a "BRISTOL" with you on your next trip. Then you will know positively why "BRISTOLS" have for 20 years held the unquestioned fish-rod supremacy. "BRISTOLS" earned their reputation for reliability under all conditions.

Where can you find an expert fisherman who does not know and love the "feel" of a "BRISTOL"? He knows that the "BRISTOL" represents not only the acme of skill in catching the wildest nibblers, but also the acme of skill in landing the gamiest fighters. Every gentleman has the word "BRISTOL," stamped on the handle. Look for it. Refuse imitations. Every "BRISTOL" guaranteed for 3 years. Beautiful illustrated catalogue mailed free.

The Horton Mfg. Co.
45 Horton St.,
BRISTOL, CONN.



MARTIN'S KINGFISHER FISH LINES

You can't catch most fish, or the gamiest fish, unless you know what kind of a fish line to use. For 25 years Martin's "Kingfisher" Braided Silk Fish Lines have been supreme as the smoothest running, best wearing and most successful. If you will mark X in the coupon below opposite your favorite fishing, and mail to us at once, we will send you

FREE SAMPLES

of the lines selected by experts as exactly right for that kind of fishing.

Whenever you buy fish lines, demand Martin's "Kingfisher" and look for the "Kingfisher" bird, or the word "Kingfisher." Show these samples to your dealer and say that you want those exact lines.

Send the coupon and get the samples.

E. J. MARTIN'S SONS
10 Kingfisher St.
**ROCKVILLE
CONN.**

Brook Trout
Lake Trout
Black Bass
Salmon
Grayling
Pike
Pickering
Maschong
Bait Casting
Fly Casting



Are Your Sox Insured?

We insure "Holeproof" Sox for Six Months. Our Guarantee is— "If 'Holeproof' Sox come to holes or darns in six months, we will replace them with new socks FREE."

We were the very first concern to knit "guaranteed socks"—and our "Holeproof Sox" are the *only* socks that *outlast* the guarantee.

"Holeproof" Sox are sold only in boxes containing six pairs of a size—all one color or assorted colors. Sizes are 8½ to 12—colors are black, light and dark tan, pearl gray and navy blue.

Buy from your dealer or direct from us.
Ask for *genuine*—

Holeproof Sox


and, if your dealer does not have them, cut out this ad, pin to it a \$2.00 bill (or remit in any convenient way) for each six pairs of socks you desire; specify size and colors, and we will fill your order promptly.

We pay the transportation charges, so that "Holeproof" Sox cost you only \$2.00 for six pairs. And the guarantee is always the same.

"Holeproof" Sox *outwear* the six months' guarantee and, being whole at the end of six months, they are *then* as good, or better, than cheap socks which wear out in a few weeks.

Order today or write for our little book, "How to Make Your Feet Happy." Send no stamps. Just ask for the book.

Holeproof Hosiery Co., 70 Fourth Street, Milwaukee, Wis.

How to Breathe

For Health, Strength and Endurance

Send for my 64-page illustrated book, **Lung and Muscle Culture**, the most instructive treatise ever published on the vital subject of Deep Breathing—Correct and Incorrect Breathing clearly described with diagrams and illustrations.

The information given in this book has led thousands into the correct path to health and strength. Over 200,000 already sold. Sent on receipt of 10c. (stamps or coin).

Address
PAUL von BOECKMANN
Respiratory Specialist,
880 Bristol Building,
500 5th Ave., New York



Geisha Diamonds

THE LATEST SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Bright, sparkling, beautiful. For brilliancy they equal the genuine, standing all test and puzzle experts. One twentieth the expense. Sent free with privilege of examination. For particulars, prices, etc., address

THE R. GREGG MFG. & IMPT. CO.
Dept. 15, 52-58 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill.



One Match Will Light It NO Light Will "Match" It.

CANTON Incandescent Gasoline LAMP

Pure white steady light: 100-candle power. Brighter and cheaper than acetylene, gas, electricity, kerosene. Safe, simple. No smoke, no smell. Beautiful fixtures—get catalog. Agents wanted.

CANTON LIGHT COMPANY
803 Ninth Street, Canton, Ohio

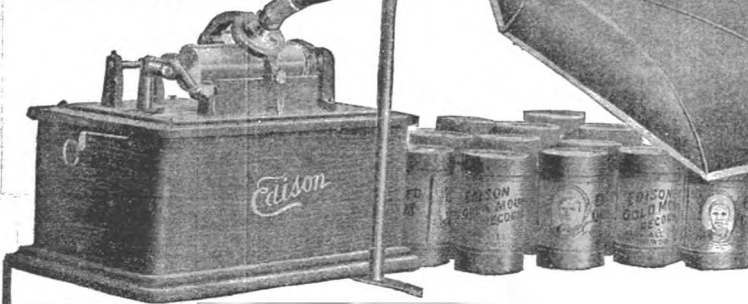
WONDERFUL

Edison Phonograph Offer

At any time you wish you can have a free concert in your own home—not a concert of one instrument or voice alone, but a concert of band and orchestra music, vocal solos, grand opera as well as comic opera—*anything you like.*

This is the regular Standard Phonograph with the regular horn—a fine outfit—but we furnish besides at only a slight extra expense our **Parlor Grand Equipment.** This we describe fully in our free catalog and circular.

TRADE MARK
Thomas A. Edison



Mr. Edison says:

"I want to see a Phonograph in every American Home."

FREE TRIAL!

WHILE this offer lasts we will send to any reader of this paper a Genuine Latest Style Edison Phonograph for **free trial in your own home**—a trial lasting two days to a week. Try the Latest Style Edison in your own home. Then if you do not want to keep this wonderful instrument, you may send it back to us at our expense and we charge you *absolutely nothing for the free trial.* If you like the instrument with its marvelous variations of entertainment, including the latest popular songs, side-splitting minstrel dialogs, beautiful operatic airs sung by the greatest artists, its dreamy waltzes and stirring two-steps, its orations and elocutionary recitals, you may keep the instrument and send either cash in full or the smallest monthly payments at the **Surprising Rock-Bottom Prices** on the finest Edison outfits.

\$2 a Month now buys a genuine Edison outfit including one dozen genuine Edison gold moulded records. The finest improved latest style Edison with our **Parlor Grand Equipment** added, at only \$3.50 a month. And at **rock-bottom price**, no matter whether you send cash in full or pay on our easiest terms.

For Cash in full, so many cash purchasers are getting the finest Edison outfits on free trial that we are obliged to announce again that we can allow no discount for cash. We have already given those who buy on easy payments the **lowest possible price** and we must treat all Edison customers alike.

LOOK FOR THIS
TRADE MARK
ON EVERY INSTRUMENT
Thomas A. Edison

**SIGN the
Coupon
Now!**

Edison Catalogs FREE

SIGN the Coupon and get

our great Edison catalog, quoting the rock-bottom prices—on the finest Edison outfits. Remember you get an absolutely free trial and can send either cash in full or easy monthly payments.

F. K. BARSON,
Edison Phonograph Distributors,
Edison Bldg.,
Suite 1073
CHICAGO

Name.....

Address.....

Don't bother with a letter; the coupon will do.

FREE
COUPON

F. K. BARSON
EDISON PHONO-
GRAPH DISTRIBUTORS,
EDISON BUILDING
Suite 1073 Chicago, Ill.
Without any obligations on me
please send me your Edison cata-
log free, prepaid.

CUT OR TEAR ALONG THIS LINE

**STYLE
NEATNESS
COMFORT
THE IMPROVED
BOSTON
GARTER**

The Name is stamped on every loop—Be sure it's there

THE *Velvet Grip* CUSHION BUTTON **CLASP**

LIES FLAT TO THE LEG—NEVER SLIPS, TEARS, NOR UNFASTENS

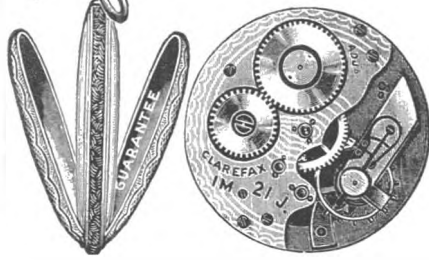
WORN ALL OVER THE WORLD

Sample pair, Silk 50c., Cotton 25c.
Mailed on receipt of price.

GEORGE FROST CO., Makers
Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

**INSIST ON HAVING THE GENUINE
REFUSE ALL SUBSTITUTES**

This \$20 Watch for \$5.45



These figures tell exactly what we are doing—selling a \$20.00 watch for \$5.45. We don't claim that this is a \$40.00 watch or a \$50.00 watch, but it is a **\$20.00 watch**. A leading watch manufacturer, being hard pressed for ready cash, recently sold us 100,000 watches—watches actually built to retail at \$20.00. There is no doubt that we could wholesale these to dealers for \$12.00 or \$13.00, but this would involve a great amount of labor, time and expense. In the end our profit would be little more than it is at selling the watch direct to the consumer at \$5.45. **This Clarefax Watch**, which we offer at \$5.45, is a **rubied jeweled**, finely balanced and perfectly adjusted movement. It has specially selected jewels, dust band, patent regulator, enameled dial, jeweled compensation balance, **double hunting case**, **genuine gold-laid** and handsomely engraved. Each watch is thoroughly timed, tested and regulated before leaving the factory and both the case and movement are **guaranteed for 20 years**.

Send us your name, post-office address, and nearest express office and name of this paper. Tell us whether you want a ladies' or gents' watch and we will send the watch to your express office at once. If it **satisfies** you, after a careful examination, pay the express agent \$5.45 and express charges and the watch is yours, but if it doesn't please you return it to us at **our expense**.

A **20-Year guarantee** will be placed in the front case of the watch we send you and to the first 10,000 customers we will send a beautiful gold-laid watch chain, **FREE**.

NATIONAL CONSOLIDATED WATCH CO.
DEPT. 730, CHICAGO

Only \$1.00 To introduce our new **EXCELSIOR SOLAR TELESCOPE**.

OVER 3½ FT. LONG
Circumference 5¼ inches

Price only \$1.00 by express

POSITIVELY such a good Telescope was never sold for this price before. These Telescopes are made by one of the largest manufacturers of Europe; measure closed, 12 in., and open over 3½ ft., in 5 sections. They are brass bound, brass safety cap on each end to exclude dust, etc., with powerful lenses, scientifically ground and adjusted. Guaranteed by the maker. Heretofore Telescopes of this size have been sold for from \$5 to \$8.

Our new catalogue of guns, etc., sent with each order. This is a grand offer and you should not miss it. We warrant each telescope just as represented or money refunded.



Count Cattle 20 Miles Away

I wish all to know how satisfactory the Excelsior Telescope is. Our farm is on the highest point in the surrounding country, one mile south of the junction of Walnut and Arkansas rivers. From our place we can see, with the aid of the Telescope, over into the Kansas Indian Reservation, nearly 20 miles; count the cattle and tell a horse from a cow; can see a large ranch 17 miles east that cannot be seen with the naked eye; can see the color and count windows with the Telescope. Again thanking you all for a square deal, I remain,

Yours truly, F. G. PATTON.
Arkansas City, Kan.

Hundreds of other, saying good things about these Telescopes GET ONE AND TRY IT. Booklet containing information about Telescopes, eclipses and planets, **FREE** with each order. Send \$1.00 by Registered Letter, Post-Office Money Order, or Bank Draft payable to our order. Sent postpaid for 10 cents extra.

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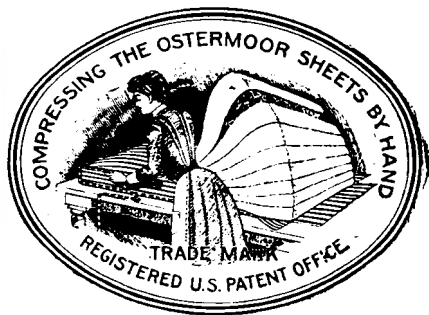
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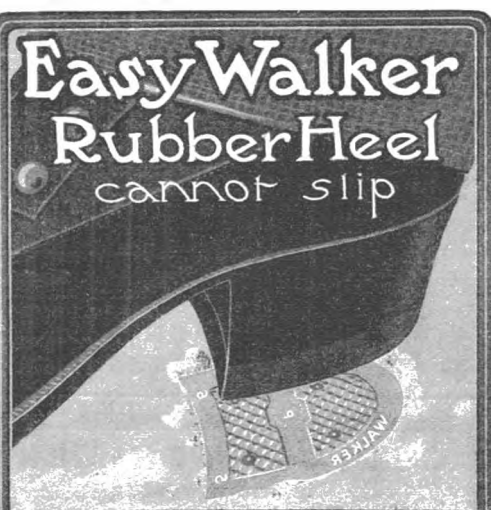
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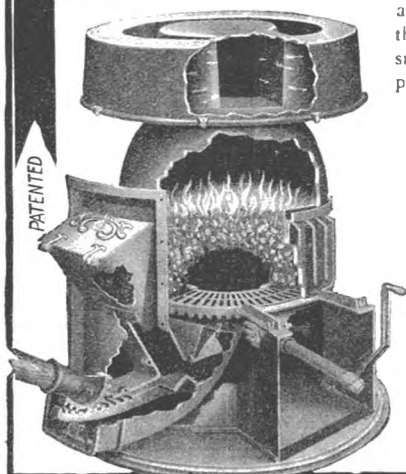
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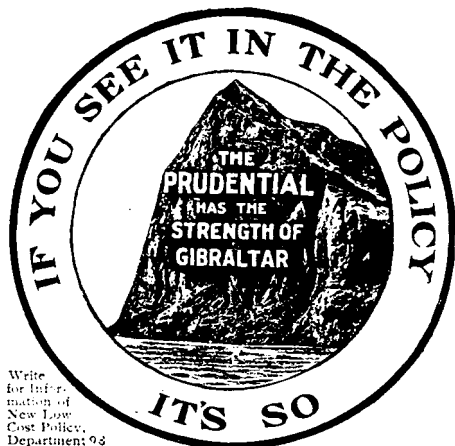
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—*Why* the machine that gives you *most for the money* is the Oliver Typewriter, the Standard Visible Writer.

Oliver agents are out for sales and seek only "success with honor."

Their competition is keen, but *clean*, and the men who meet you as our representatives are the pick of ten thousand salesmen.

Each man is given a course of training in *The Oliver School of Practical Salesmanship*—all expenses paid by the Company.

The Oliver Sales Force is a coherent Organization, held together in bonds of sympathy and fellowship—

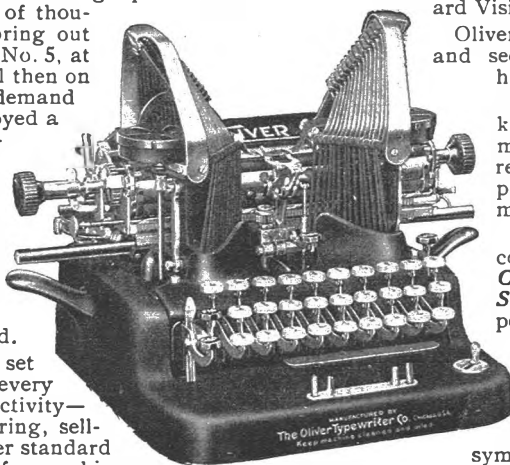
winning success by close adherence to the highest principles of Salesmanship.

Applications for positions as Local Agent for

The 
OLIVER
Typewriter

The Standard Visible Writer

should be sent in at once—before the ranks are closed up for another year of success.



THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY, 45 Dearborn St., Chicago

After Shaving

PONDS

EXTRACT



Take No Risk of Doubtful Mixtures

THE Health Commissioner of New York City recently found fifty barbers selling bay rum, witch-hazel, etc., mixed with poisonous wood alcohol.

USE POND'S EXTRACT

after shaving and **be safe.** It is soothing, healing, and delightfully refreshing.

"The Standard for Sixty Years"

Sold only in original sealed bottles; never in bulk.

LAMONT, CORLISS & Co., 78 Hudson St. Sole Agents NEW YORK.